

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

**BELOVED MAGICAL CREATURES:
Conflicts of romance in Harry Potter fan fiction**

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by

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Tutkielman tarkoituksena on selvittää, kuinka englanninkielisessä Harry Potter -fanifiktiossa käsitellään romanssin teemaa. Aineisto koostuu viidestä fanifiktioihin jotka on julkaistu kansainvälisellä englanninkielisellä fanifiktiosivustolla Internetissä osoitteessa ashwinder.sycophanthex.com. Tarinoiden päähahmot ovat alkuperäistekstin eli Harry Potter -romaanisarjan Hermione Granger ja Severus Snape. Tutkimuksessa näiden tarinoiden muodostamaa alagenreä kutsutaan H/S-fanifiktiksi. H/S-fanifiktio tutkimuksen motivaatio pohjautuu aikaisemmalle tutkimukselle fanifiktioromanssista jossa käsitellään laajalti homoseksuaalista fanifiktiota (slash). H/S-fanifiktio on esimerkki heteroseksuaalisesta fanifiktioista joka vaatii fanifiktiokirjoittajalta uuden kontekstin, tarinan kaaren ja hahmokuvausten luomista.

Tutkimusmetodi perustuu aineiston tekstien lähiluennalle keskittyen yhteneviin hahmokuvauksiin sekä narratiivisiin rakenteisiin. Aineistoa tulkitaan Janice Radwayn määrittämän romanssin kaavan sekä osin Henry Jenkinsin luoman slash-kaavan avulla. Tutkielmassa vastataan kysymyksiin: 1) Mitä ovat tyypilliset romanssin konfliktit H/S-fanifiktiossa ja millä tavoin ne lisäävät tarinan emotionaalista voimakkuutta? 2) Millä keinoin konfliktit ratkaistaan hahmojen ja tarinan tasolla? 3) Kuinka tarinalliset keinot liittyvät fanifiktiofilosofiaan yleisellä tasolla?

Tutkimuksessa käy ilmi, että aineiston tarinoissa toistuu samankaltainen rakenne hahmojen välisten konfliktien luomisessa ja niiden selvittämisessä: alkutilanteen vastakohtaiset hahmot tuodaan yhteen alkuperäistekstin aikajanan ulkopuolella. Tutkija tematisoi tämän prosessin luonteen kolmijakoisesti viattomuuden ja kokemuksen vastakkainasetteluksi, moraalien konflikteiksi sekä tunteiden ja haavoittuvuuden dynamiikaksi. Konfliktien ratkaisut vaativat fanifiktiokirjoittajilta joko merkittävää lähdetekstin uudelleen kirjoittamista tai kokonaan uuden luomista. Tämä johtaa tutkijan päätelmään siitä, ettei fanifiktio käsitteellistämiseksi riitä sen hahmottaminen alkuperäistekstin uudelleenkirjoittamisena tai -kontekstualisoimisena. Fanifiktio näyttyy aineiston tarinoissa kommenttina ja jatkeena toisen kirjoittajan luomaan alkuperäistekstiin, mutta myös uuden fiktion luomisprosessina. Tämä asettaa ilmiön tutkimukselle vaatimuksen suhtautua siihen vakavasti otettavana kirjallisuuden lajina.

Asiasanat: fan fiction. romance. Harry Potter. heterosexuality. slash. literary genres.

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1 FAN FICTION IN LAYMAN'S TERMS: AN INTRODUCTION

Severus Snape had been here for eight days. It felt like a lifetime... if you could call it that.

He was supposed to be her reparation. He was supposed to fill the void her parents had left when the Death Eaters struck last summer. He was her slave. The whole prospect made her sick to her stomach. She would have thought that her campaign for the welfare of house-elves would have told the Ministry what she thought of Snape's position. The man to whom she owed so much. The man who saved her life was her slave because he couldn't save her parents as well.

Dumbledore would have never let this happen.

For any *Harry Potter* enthusiast, or indeed for anyone who has read the *Harry Potter* series in its entirety, the names look and sound familiar. But this is not part of the *Harry Potter* novel series created by J.K. Rowling. This is fan fiction.

The lively existence of fan fiction can be found on the Internet: Google produces over a million hits for the search term *harry potter fan fiction* – just to give an idea of how the phenomenon presents itself. Taking a closer look at any of the first few websites that Google suggests shows that fan fiction sites are, fundamentally, archives of stories upon stories – archives of interpretation come to words that create and expand the world of original fiction.

A crude and simplistic definition of fan fiction goes as follows: it is fiction about various fan texts written by fans for fans. Naturally, this definition is only a scratch on the surface of a complex phenomenon that encompasses the concepts of fan, fan culture and fiction – all three of them concepts that are by no means easy to define or understand completely. However, despite its obvious flaws and simplicity, the definition above does capture the heart and soul of fan fiction, whatever its fundamental mechanics (more of which will be dealt later in this thesis): it is a creative piece of text that opens up to a particular audience and fulfills a specific purpose within that audience. This much is clear, even though the purposes of fan fiction remain, to some extent, elusive. Even its creative aspect is open to debate: how much creativity is involved in writing fiction based on already written or otherwise produced

fiction? Moreover, there are also the issues concerning author- and ownership that make fan fiction a strange practice, indeed.

The source text is central to the fan fiction phenomenon. The concept of text needs to be understood broadly, encompassing different types of media texts from television series, films, comic books, novels, songs, poetry, and music videos. The list could potentially be endless, as fan culture keeps on spreading. However, including the source text into the phenomenon neglects the type of fan fiction that centers on real, living people: celebrities. Whether or not fan fiction written on actors, athletes, musicians etc. is fan fiction in same sense as fan fiction based on, for example a film is debatable: does fan fiction have to derive from existing fictional narratives, or can the narrative of a living person be counted as text? This raises the issue of fan fiction being something more and something else than derivative and dependent on existing texts. Unless the concept of text is broadened even wider to encompass the constructed identities of people (that could be thought of as textual material), it has to be accepted that fan fiction can be independent of source texts. Moreover, fan fiction utilizes the source text, but does not necessarily comply with the canon of characters, storyline or time frame established in the source text. Rather, fan fiction stories may follow a certain shared and established fan interpretation, the fan canon (fanon). Canon and fanon are separate: fanon is the “noncanonical knowledge about the source text”; the sum of the community’s shared interpretive acts (Kaplan, 2006:136). In other words, fanon is fan-created material – new contexts and meanings within the source text’s universe.

In this study I focus on the relationship between fan fiction and the source text, the original that influences the creation of fan fiction. Specifically, I focus on fan fiction that centers on the characters of Hermione Granger and Severus Snape from the *Harry Potter* novel series. Hermione/Severus fan fiction is a popular subgenre of *Harry Potter* fan fiction, particularly because of the theme of romance and its complications are often associated with it. This study pays particular attention to the reconstruction of romance within H/S fan fiction and establishes a connection to published romance through careful consideration of similar narrative elements used in both.

Romance is a widespread genre in fan fiction, spanning from the most conservative pieces of fiction to the most explicit descriptions of sex, and everything imaginable in

between. The main idea of this study is to bring forth the as of yet almost entirely disregarded form of fan fiction romance: the heterosexual. Fan fiction that revolves around homosexual themes, slash, has been and still is the central interest within academic circles, along with the claim that heterosexuality in fan fiction has nothing to offer by way of resistance to patriarchal societal norms or the hegemony of producers who decide what media products the audience consumes. Perhaps so, but I believe the central question concerning fan fiction has to do with its origins and its meaning on a literary-philosophical level that can only be uncovered through careful consideration of all the types of fan fiction – including that which is thought uninteresting and traditional.

Several studies of fan fiction do include or at least mention the aspect of heterosexuality (these studies are dealt in chapter 2), but only to the extent of being part of a socio-cultural practice that either drives forward female empowerment or is directly connected to the fan writer's identity reconstruction. In other words, fan fiction is not an interesting phenomenon in itself, but as a manifestation of socio-cultural issues such as patriarchy and its resistance or problems of power and hierarchy on the axis of audience – producer – author. Yet, academic treatments of fan fiction with emphasis on the sociological and cultural aspects of it are *interpretations* of the phenomenon, not truths, and so is my study. This time, the emphasis is on the interpretation that fan fiction is literature and the key data are the fan fiction stories themselves.

However, a purely exegetical study is, to my knowledge, virtually impossible because fan fiction is never entirely independent of the source text, and therefore, fan interpretations are in a key role concerning this study. Since the subject of this study is not fan interpretations, but fan fiction stories, I can offer no definitive answers to what the fan interpretations truly consist of; I can only offer educated guesses of how I believe fans have interpreted the source text. Having said that, I also believe my guesses – interpretations – are rather accurate given that my status is not only a researcher's. I am also a fan and an enthusiast, and therefore I am part of the fan interpretation process, assuming the role of a fan-scholar.

In conclusion, the surface definition of fan fiction may be more or less clear, but the contents, the raw stuff beneath the surface, remains muddy despite many attempts at

explaining them. What *is* fan fiction, and where does it come from - historically, what are its origins? The next chapter deals with the theoretical, philosophical and historical issues of fan fiction, starting with the formation of the concept of fan fiction and its definition from a literary point of view, moving onto previous research on fan fiction and the interpretations that emerge from the scholarly tradition and finally ending up with the theoretical premises for this thesis. Chapter three illustrates the research design of this study, including motivation for the research focus, description of the data, the research questions and their explanations, and finally a take on the methodology I use in the analysis. Chapter four consists of the analyses of the five stories as described in the research design. Chapter five offers a concise conclusion of the analysis and aims at a summarized answer to the research questions. Finally, chapter five ends with a discussion, in which I concentrate on unanswered questions of this study and future prospects of both this study and fan fiction research in general.

2 THE FAN, THE FICTION, AND THE FAN FICTION

This chapter focuses on the definitions and theories of the phenomenon we call fan fiction. Chapter 2.1 looks at the main theories and academic definitions (social and literary) on fan fiction, and attempts at explaining the origins of fan fiction. I also offer my own view of fan fiction as art, and, more specifically, as literature. Chapter 2.2 discusses the emergence of slash fan fiction, its implications for other romance genres of fan fiction and research on it. In chapter 2.3, I offer an alternative view to romance fan fiction and review research on heterosexual fan fiction. Chapter 2.4 moves on to discuss romance fiction in general and theoretical views on heterosexuality that have contributed to its position as naturalized and subordinating to women, and finally, how recent feminist accounts are starting to rethink the position of romance fiction in light of new interpretations of romance as resistance. The synthesis I aim to form in chapter 2 in its entirety is that of heterosexual fan fiction as equal to slash in its reconstructing of romance and gender roles through careful consideration of romance fiction and its legacy to fan fiction. The purpose of this chapter is to offer a summarized cross section of studies that have influenced the topic of research of this study, and also to discuss fan fiction's existence as, on the one hand, dependent on and on the other hand, independent of the source texts it employs.

2.1 Fan fiction in theory, origin and definition

One of the most influential accounts of the practice and meaning of fan fiction, Jenkins's *Textual Poachers* (1992:23-24), offers the still dominant definition of fan fiction as re-interpretive action and active participation "in the construction and circulation of textual meanings". In this respect, fan fiction represents an interesting aspect of fandom; often, fans are thought of as a passive audience, completely at the mercy of the producers, publishers and/or authors. Fan fiction is the medium through which fans assume the status of the author and reclaim their place as active participants in popular culture. Further, Jenkins explains that fans understand that despite their active participation in creating new meanings in fan stories and making the original texts their own in some respects, the real ownership of media texts is out of their reach. This contradiction is at the core of the relationship between fans, media texts and their producers; as such, it presents as an ongoing battle for the possession of textual material. Moreover, Jenkins' disposition on fan fiction is that fan fiction is a rewriting practice with definable strategies. He determines that there are ten basic strategies to rewrite an original text into fan fiction (Jenkins refers to television shows as the source text; I believe the basic principles can be applied to any fan text written on any type of source text). Following his line of thinking, any fan fiction story can be seen as a rewritten version of the original. However, sometimes the reconstruction of a text is so complete that it is virtually impossible to distinguish the original text from the fan fiction story. However, the basics of rewriting remain the same. The ten rewriting strategies are summarized as follows (Jenkins, 1992: 162-177):

- 1) **Recontextualization** - filling in the missing scenes that take place behind the original text or between the lines; often these missing scenes explain the history, psychology and motivations of the characters.
- 2) **Expanding the series timeline** - focusing on the events that take place outside the original text; the (imagined or interpreted) past, present and/or future of the characters and the universe. Jenkins suggests that the original texts provide hints that function as openings for fan stories, for example a character's past may be hinted at, but never fully explored, and fans work on those hints in their own stories.
- 3) **Refocalization** - shifting a story's focus on secondary characters. Jenkins suggests that refocalized narratives often focus on women and minorities, but on the basis of my own experience as a fan and fan fiction reader I believe that morally dubious characters are now increasingly the focus of these fan stories.

- 4) Moral realignment - according to Jenkins, this is potentially “the most extreme form of refocalization”; fan writers question the moral universe of the original text, invert it or transform typically evil characters into protagonists in their own stories.
- 5) Genre shifting - this strategy necessitates that fans “read the [original] series within alternative generic traditions” and that “fan stories shift the balance between plot action and characterization”, focusing on specific character-defining moments in the original series that provide the starting points for fan stories. Basically, according to Jenkins “fan stories often choose to tell very different stories from those in the original episodes”, i.e. the original texts function as basis for romantic, horror, and adventure fiction (and so on). However, there is rarely any one generic model at use; fan stories employ several generic perspectives such as romance, poetry, Shakespearean drama, mystery, and so on.
- 6) Cross Overs - much in the same way as genre shifting, cross over-stories blur the lines between texts. For example, the *Harry Potter* universe may be combined with that of J.R.R. Tolkien’s Middle-Earth or the universe of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* - the possibilities are virtually endless. Jenkins observes that in addition to blurring the boundaries between texts, cross over -stories break down generic traditions in introducing well-known characters to radically different environments.
- 7) Character Dislocation - a strategy that takes genre-manipulation even further; characters are removed from their original environment, much in the same way as in cross over -stories. The characters are given new names and identities, and they can even be dislocated into various mythological or historical narratives. Character dislocation functions as a basis for alternate universe -stories.
- 8) Personalization - combining the realms of the original text, the fan story and the fan writer’s own identity, i.e. the fan writer places herself in the story, either as herself or as an imaginative, idealized version of herself. Mary Sue -stories are the most common personalizations, and Jenkins observes that there is a strong taboo against them in fan communities. Better attempts at personalization are, for example, stories that trade the characters of a film to the actual actors, or stories that transport fictional characters into our reality.
- 9) Emotional Intensification - fan writers build their stories upon moments of emotional crisis or conflicts in the original narrative; fan stories re-introduce those moments and show the fan-interpreted emotional reactions characters express in moments of emotional need. One specific genre of fan fiction, “Hurt/Comfort”, emerged entirely from that basis. Jenkins suggests that “these stories offer a way of working through the conflicts and personality problems” of characters, and also enable the fans to express their compassion towards them.
- 10) Eroticization - fans want to explore the erotic and sexual dimensions of characters that are often hinted at in the original narratives. As such, erotic fan stories either realize the erotic sub-plots that are already in the original

narratives, or they come up with their own plots that combine characters that are unlikely to ever become bedmates in the original text or between its lines.

Finally, Jenkins makes the observation that fan fiction stories rarely utilize only one rewriting strategy; rather, even single stories make active use of several of them. Moreover, there is some overlap in their use and content; for example, the line between recontextualization and refocalization is sometimes blurry, when a story is rewritten from a point of view of a minor character (refocalization, i.e. change in point of view) so that it fills in the missing scenes (recontextualization). A similar example is the line between genre shifting and eroticization: an original text that is rewritten as romance (genre shifting) may include erotic scenes between characters, but it is difficult to determine where genre shifting ends and eroticization begins.

From rewriting to textual poaching and back

De Certeau (1984:174) associated active reading as raiding of the literary preserve, and places readers in the position of travelers moving across the literary fields they have neither created nor have the right to despoil. Jenkins (1992:25-26) criticizes de Certeau's account as "a highly polemical one" and comments that "one does not have to abolish all reverence for authorial meaning in order to recognize the potential benefits of alternative forms of interpretation and consumption". Despite his criticism of de Certeau's analogy, Jenkins does hold to it to an extent in saying that similar to "poachers of old, fans operate from a position of cultural marginality and social weakness" (26). In this respect, fans are seen as consumers that form a specific marginal (in relation to a majority of "unaffected" watchers or readers) group in the audience, a powerless elite that are forced to remain at the mercy of producers, but who nonetheless take the material into their own hands and transform it, much to the chagrin of the producers and "normal" audience – the non-fans who are not as enthusiastic followers as fans. In contrast to this powerless elite there are, then, the producers who have the power to decide about the fates of characters or entire television series – either taking into account the fans' desires, or disregarding their views entirely. Fan fiction is seen as the fans' way of taking some of that power for themselves.

Referring to fans as a group lacking in power over the development of media texts constructs the concept of fan fiction simply as a means of voicing out fan desires.

Indeed, the key idea in Jenkins's account is that fan fiction is the product of fan desires and frustrations over the network's decisions concerning plot development of the fans' favorite television shows. Fan fiction, Jenkins (*ibid.*:155) suggests, "builds upon the assumptions of fan meta-text, respond to oft-voiced desires of the fan community". This adds an interesting twist to the phenomenon and in some ways even helps in understanding it: fan fiction writing emerges from shared interpretations – "shared" in the sense that every interpretation is likely to receive support from within the fan community. Shared interpretation does not omit the existence of idiosyncratic interpretations; rather, it can reinforce them by offering collective support. Hence, fan fiction writing is a community-based practice despite the solidarity associated with writing; the writing process is highly dependent on and inspired by the existence of a fan community that is eager to receive new stories.

Jenkins concentrates on television fans, but the same desires and frustrations concerning fan texts are present in other fan cultures, as well. There is one problem, though. Defining fan fiction solely as product of fan desires and frustrations is rather simplistic, and does not take into account the very human need for storytelling. Moreover, the notion that fans re-appropriate the materials to correspond to their desires inevitably creates and maintains the image of fans and fan fiction writers and readers alike as a strange bunch of people living in fantasy worlds with nothing sensible to do. The proclamation made famous by William Shatner (Jenkins, 1992:10) for fans to "Get a life, will you people?" prevails.

Hills (2002:43) challenges the notion of fans as a powerless elite by making the observation that cultural power is not located and re-located from one social group to another that simply; that cultural power, when transferred from one group to another, would mean the lessening of cultural power of another group, as cultural power does not operate as systematically as that. Moreover, Hills (*ibid.*:12-14) observes that fan fiction writing is not a practice that should be disregarded so easily as fanatic and informal; he suggests that fan fiction writers are 'fan-scholars' because of the enormous work they do in order to create their stories. Placing fans and scholars on the same line illustrates just how similar the practice of fan fiction writing is to scholarly work; it is the same type of intertextual referencing that scholars do, and the devotion associated with either is similar.

The powerless elite in search of identity: teenage writers

Through the aspect of devotion, we come to the issue of appreciation. Fan fiction seems to attract outsider opinions that deem the practice a product of fanaticism and laziness. However, in her study on fan fiction writers online, Angela Thomas (2006:229) observes that for fan fiction writers, the practice is not about being too lazy (or worse, unable) to create their own fictional universes and characters. Thomas refers to one fan writer's opinion voiced in a fan fiction forum:

At one of the popular Harry Potter fan fiction sites, The Leaky Cauldron (<http://www.the-leaky-cauldron.org>), it was reported that one of the members of the community, Heidi...argued strongly against fan fiction being nothing more than 'a lazy way to make the story come out the way you want.' Instead, she talked about fan fiction as a way of enjoying and exploring the multiple storylines and puzzles created by J.K. Rowling in her narrative.

Although this is the view of only one fan writer, it is most likely safe to say that many fan fiction enthusiasts share it; fan fiction writers are hardly lazy, given the amount of devotion they heap on the writing process. Many fan fiction writers research the textual material they use further than one might imagine: they dig up additional information on the basic principles of physics in order to explain the existence and functioning properties of magic, for example. The view also brings up a very valid point about fan fiction being more than just an exploitative practice; fan fiction writing is, fundamentally, an interpretive practice put to words. Thomas's point of view focuses clearly on the social and discursive literacy practices involved in fan fiction writing, not on the fan fiction text itself. Moreover, the focus is inherently on young fan fiction writers and on the importance of such writing to their skill development along with the suggestion that fan fiction offers young writers "a great, existing storyline; interesting, three-dimensional characters...and a wealth of back-story to both pull from and write about" (Lewis, 2004 cited in Thomas 2006:227). Moore (2005) offers a similar view and emphasizes the importance of feedback, but also reminds of the drawbacks of fan fiction writing and the desire for recognition: the collective number of fan fiction readership does not mean equal feedback, and the lack of it may discourage young writers. Overall, what Thomas's and Moore's views suggest is that fan fiction is an important creative practice for young writers, but not as fictional text on its own right. In other words, the real worth of fan fiction is in its writers. In

addition, what Lewis claims about the position of the source text is a rather short-sighted disposition, as it neglects the creative liberties fan fiction writers take, up to the point that the source text is visible only in character and place names and the rest is new creation. Many fan writers omit the existing storyline, shape the characters the way they see them, changing almost everything from looks to family history and dialect and create their own back-story. In this sense, the source text can be purely inspirational, from which very little is actually borrowed.

Granted, fan fiction is never entirely independent of the source text, but neither does it merely repeat the original storyline and/or character typology. Downplaying the role of writers as creators of *new* fiction reinforces the conception that fan fiction is a mediocre practice compared to writing ‘original’ fiction. It is either a useful stepping stone in a young writer’s career, or a practice of pleasure that glorifies borrowing or outright stealing of others’ material for the fan fiction writer’s own purposes, whether those be learning the art of creative writing or doing it just for fun. As important as I see this type of analysis of the social and discursive practices of fan fiction is, it also disregards the aspect of the actual fiction – the text that would give insights of its function as it is: as fiction among other fiction. Nevertheless, Thomas raises a crucial issue in referring to Jenkins’ (1992) use of the term ‘textual poacher’, suggesting that the idea of fan fiction writers as poachers should be re-conceptualized. Instead of thinking of the fan fiction practice as active borrowing and/or re-appropriating, it should be thought of as “active manipulating and designing of original texts”. (Thomas, 2006:277.) Of course, this raises the question of the source texts’ role. If their meaning to fan fiction is not the original out of which re-interpretations span, then what is it? My suggestion is, perhaps rather naively, to think of fan fiction as stories inspired by stories. It may be a naïve suggestion, indeed, given the issues of ownership already mentioned. Perhaps a similar approach could be taken as is already used in scholarly writing: a researcher cites another’s work, uses it with respect and expresses her own view. Essentially, in academia everyone’s thoughts and views are acceptable, and this I think would suit the fan fiction phenomenon well. Mostly, the principle of citing is already used in disclaimers in the beginning of fan fiction stories, in which the fan fiction writer clearly expresses that she does not own the material and no copyright infringement is intended.

Leppänen (2006) offers another point of view to young girls' and women's fan fiction writing, suggesting that fan fiction offers opportunities for identity negotiation and construction. Leppänen shifts the meaning of fan fiction from a practice of learning (learning another language, as the case is in Leppänen's study, or learning creative writing as in Thomas's) to a practice of re-imagining the writers' real, lived experiences and combining those with what they see or read in fictional worlds. Though Leppänen's approach is discourse-analytical, and to some extent, socio-cultural, the actual fan fiction stories produced by young female writers are the focus of the study. I see this type of text-centered analysis as an interesting, and important, diversion from the kind of fan fiction research that focuses on the practice of fan fiction writing without actually taking into account the stories and the answers they might provide.

In addition, Leppänen brings forth the genre of romance in fan fiction – not only the aspect of slash writing, but that of heterosexual romance, as well. The implications of Leppänen's study are, to my mind, reasonably clear: the practice of fan fiction writing, particularly that of the romance genre, plays an important role in the lives of young female fan fiction writers. Heterosexual romance specifically is presented as a way of making sense of relationships, and also as a site of gender negotiation. In contrast to Leppänen, Moore (2005) negates the importance of heterosexual romance in fan fiction, suggesting that teenagers can find published romance fiction in any library or bookstore, whereas gay romance is harder to find. Thus, slash offers escapism from what teens might experience as a dominant and repressive culture – other fan fiction romance reproduces the traditional heterosexual narrative. Be that as it may, the important issue, I believe, is what any type of fan fiction offers its writers and readers. Nevertheless, despite the implications that fan fiction is more than a practice of borrowing and reproducing, there is still missing the aspect of text for text's sake – the function of fiction in itself.

Fan fiction: a history

The view of fan fiction as a literary practice that produces original texts leads to one of the most recent theories on fan fiction: fan fiction as archontic literature and as an art form (Derecho, 2006). Derecho uses the term 'archontic' as a replacement for Derrida's 'derivative' or 'appropriative' literature, stressing ever more the concept of

texts being an ever-expanding archive that is never closed (Derrida, 1995; in Derecho, 2006.). Derecho (64, emphasis original) suggests that archontic captures the meaning of fan fiction better because

[it] better describes the intertextual relationship at the core of the literature than the words *derivative* or *appropriative* do. Although *derivative* and *appropriative* both imply intertextuality, an interplay between texts – one preceding and providing basis for the other – these adjectives also announce property, ownership, and hierarchy.

Essentially, Derecho makes the observation that archontic is not laden with meanings of “taking”, “stealing”, or indeed, “poaching” – it only refers to the archival nature of texts and narratives expanding as more narratives add to them. Moreover, Derecho suggests that not all texts function as archontic: “‘archontic’ describes only those works that generate variations that explicitly announce themselves as variations” (ibid.:65). Archontic writing, Derecho says, is not a new invention; its origins can be traced back as early as the fifth century BCE when Greeks rewrote Euripides’ *Medea* and other ancient myths to critique patriarchy, racism and xenophobia. However, Derecho begins archontic literature’s history in the 17th century when several female authors published their own continuations to previously published literary works, and the tradition has continued to this day and expanded to include postcolonial, ethnic and feminist writing (ibid.:67-70). The significance of archontic writing is that it has been established as the genre of the subordinate. According to Derecho, “the larger philosophical import of this type of writing is that it undermines conventional notions of authority, boundaries, and property” (ibid.:72); in these terms, archontic literature’s connection to fan fiction is evident. Fan fiction did not spring into being spontaneously in the 20th century with its onset of media texts – it has more history behind it than traditionally assumed. That history, Derecho suggests, is visible in several fan-scholar accounts of fan fiction’s history (two of such accounts can be found at the website The Fanfic Symposium): essentially, they are chronological lists of archontic writing.

Redefining fan fiction as archontic literature sounds like a reasonable approach to fan fiction, as the philosophy behind it re-establishes storytelling as everyone’s property – or rather, no one’s property at all. However, I would like to add that any and all demands for the total abandoning of hierarchy and ideas of ownership of texts should not be thought of as attempts of taking away the original authors’ rights to their texts like Derecho’s account seems to suggest. It needs to be remembered that authors have

as much a right to expand and change their texts as fan fiction writers do; denouncing hierarchy and ownership does not mean taking away the text from the author, but *sharing* it with the audience. Moreover, despite the fact that fan fiction's philosophy includes an idea of abandoning hierarchy, there will inevitably still be concepts of originality: archontic literature, and fan fiction as part of it, expands on *something* that is considered original, and as long as archontic literature's status is to remain the genre of the subordinate, hierarchy remains also. Nevertheless, Derecho's attempt at vindicating fan fiction through its relation to literature is admirable, and there are certainly several aspects that hold true. Fan fiction's value is in its appreciation of repetition and in the understanding that every repetition differs from the rest and delivers something new to the text.

Debating the origin of fan fiction, Derecho (2006:62) suggests there are three lines of thinking: 1) fan fiction's origins can be traced several millennia down in history in myth stories, and the phenomenon's continuation is seen in both works by fan authors and authors who write outside fandoms; 2) fan fiction is product of fan cultures, thus originating in the 1960s-1970s and the rise of Star Trek, or possibly earlier in the 1920s in Sherlock Holmes and Jane Austen societies; 3) neither, because the first option is too broad to consider and the latter too narrow; there are some other identifying characteristics of fan fiction that place the phenomenon within the field of literature. Derecho believes the third option is closest to the truth, and she bases her theory of fan fiction as archontic literature on the idea that fan fiction exists somewhere at a crossing point of fan cultures, media texts and the wide literary field of fiction.

2.2 Slash and the romantic debate

Amongst the myriad of fan fiction writing, one particular genre is often represented as the cornerstone of a social practice that is identified as radical and resistant both in terms of audience participation versus the media producers (i.e., essentially a power struggle of ownership of media products and the right to various interpretations of a media narrative) and reconstructing the patriarchal romance narrative. In fact, the resistance aspect associated with fan fiction writing is almost entirely a result of that one specific fan fiction genre; namely, slash. The term originally refers to a type of fan fiction that concentrates on romantic and/or erotic relationships between male

characters only; its name comes from the stroke employed to signify a same-sex pairing (Kirk/Spock, or in the context of *Harry Potter*, the popular Harry/Draco). However, it is also used in the context of lesbian fan fiction with a slight modification to the name, femmeslash. According to Jenkins (1992:185-186), slash's origins are in the *Star Trek* –fandom, and more specifically, in the relationship of Captain Kirk and Spock portrayed in the original *Star Trek* television show; the typical plot within slash stories saw its first light in Kirk/Spock –fan fiction. Jenkins represents the archetypical slash plot as “movement from male homosocial desire to a direct expression of homoerotic passion, the exploration of alternatives to traditional masculinity, the insertion of sexuality into a larger social context”. This seems the most important aspect of slash; the alternative it offers for traditional masculinity, and, perhaps more importantly, gender roles in general. In relation to male sexuality specifically, slash “posits an explicit critique of traditional masculinity, trying to establish an homosocial-homoerotic continuum as an alternative to repressive and hierarchical male sexuality”. (Jenkins, 1992:186, 206-219.)

Despite attempts at explaining slash's inherent meaning, the purpose or motive behind slash fan fiction seems somewhat elusive. The first impression is, perhaps, that slash is a genre that glorifies in explicit homoerotic scenes and functions similarly as pornography. However, the mention of placing this alternative sexuality into larger social contexts points to a different direction. Jenkins (1992:191) emphasizes that the sex scenes in slash are only a small part of the structure of which any individual narrative consists, and that despite the interest expressed by fan fiction writers and readers alike in the sexuality and eroticism evident in slash, the more important factor is that slash offers narratives that bend the limitations and expectations of male sexuality. Nevertheless, slash is first and foremost associated with female sexual fantasies – either sexual or romantic. In an attempt to define slash, Jenkins (*ibid.*:193-196) discusses the suggestions by Lamb and Veith (1986; in Jenkins, *ibid.*) that slash is a reconstruction of egalitarian romance; rather than female pornography (Russ, 1985; in Jenkins, *ibid.*:193) it is androgynous romance. Jenkins (*ibid.*) notes that Lamb and Veith see slash as “a reworking of the conventions of romantic fiction, an attempt at constructing a loving relationship between equals”, but that in their essay of slash writing they ignore the large numbers of heterosexual fan fiction that circulate within various fandoms. Essentially, slash's androgyny, according to Lamb and Veith, is

mostly “play with androgyny”; rather than both male characters being typically masculine, their gender and sexual identities shift between masculine and feminine.

The observations made by Lamb and Veith and Jenkins suggest that slash is a specifically female genre. The prime motive for slash writing is, in essence, that the female audience of any media products associated with fandom is left lacking emotional depth in the portrayal of male characters. The same lack does encompass female characters as well, and even more so: Somogyi (2002) suggests that the appeal of slash is connected to lack of strong fictional female characters in general. And indeed, research from as early as 1986 (Bacon-Smith, in Jenkins, 1992:191) shows that circa 90 per cent of slash fan writers are female. Moore (2005) arrives at a similar result: out of thirty fan fiction writers in her study, only two were male. Accordingly, the mentions of slash offering “alternatives to repressive male sexuality” and “resistance of male hegemony” have, perhaps, a distinctly feminist sound to them, which emphasizes the genre’s status as distinctively female. There is a certain amount of hesitance in connecting the slash phenomenon outright with feminism, and the more popular suggestion to justify the existence of the genre is that slash

offers its own particular challenge to normative constructions of gender and romance, as it allows women to construct narratives that subvert patriarchy by re-appropriating those prototypical hero characters who usually reproduce women’s position of social empowerment (Kustritz, 2002:371).

It is fairly easy to detect the same female empowerment and male hegemony – explanation here, too, that is implicitly prevalent in Jenkins’ research; however, the more crucial point is formed in the expressions “challenge to normative constructions of romance” and the general mention of constructing narratives. Romance, and the construction of it, is at the very heart of the phenomenon, no matter what else is included in the interpretation of the slash phenomenon. Naturally, the gender of the writers plays some part in the study of fan fiction. Given that fan fiction writing has been interpreted as a means of offering an alternative to repressive, hierarchical male sexuality, it is perhaps not very shocking that most fan fiction writers are women trying to voice out their frustrations and desires concerning the power balance in emotional and sexual relationships. Furthermore, fan fiction writing is so female-dominated possibly because slash fan fiction indeed borrows a great deal from popular romance fiction, making it thus easier for women to write in the same style.

Kustritz (ibid.) goes further in stating explicitly that slash brings down the age old heterosexual romantic narrative that suppresses the female character and creates instead a completely egalitarian dynamic between the male couple. The resulting narrative is radically different in terms of character typology and motives for creating the romance; instead of the (romance) genre's typical logic that beauty attracts love, in slash "the characters' attraction to each other is primarily intellectual or spiritual" and they are "deserving not because of their appearance, but because of their character" (ibid.; 378).

It should be remembered that fan fiction is an ever-growing phenomenon, and any research so far covers probably only a small fraction of it. Slash is at the very top of interesting topics earning serious research attention. The reason behind slash's dominant position in research is in part explained by the notion that despite the controversy surrounding it, slash is possibly "fandom's most original contribution to the field of popular literature" (Jenkins, 1992:188).

The formulaic structure of slash

Jenkins (1992:206) defines the structure of slash fan fiction as follows: most slash stories that focus on the romantic "first time" (meaning physical, sexual union) of the protagonists begin with the initial relationship, which has been formed in the original series. Fan writers find subtle hints in the characters' original initial relationship that they interpret as romantic. In the first stage, the characters are unaware of, or are just beginning to realize, their feelings for each other. The realization of the existence of romantic feelings leads to male dystopia, as the male characters believe that their feelings will never be reciprocated, and furthermore, because the surrounding society would not accept such romantic feelings for someone of the same sex. The existence of male dystopia may appear somewhat artificial, as the dystopic scenes are usually resolved quite easily in the story. However, Jenkins suggests that male dystopia is necessary in slash stories in order to intensify the up-coming moment of confession. The overcoming of problems increases the emotional intensity of the story, thus giving the story the dramatic twist that further separates it from the original series.

Every narrative has a life cycle. Coarsely generalizing, every narrative has a beginning, a mid-point and an end, or a sequence order that begins with a situation A that turns

into situation B. The mid-point is the moment of crisis, the turning point of the story. Traditionally, a narrative has a closure that ties up loose ends and presents answers and solutions to questions and problems that have occurred within the narrative. (Montgomery et al.,1992:216-218.) In slash fan fiction the mid-point is the moment of confession. The confession is a crucial part in slash stories, as it defines the direction of the rest of the plotline: the confession of romantic feelings either sparks up another series of dystopic scenes, or it is met with acceptance and reciprocation. In other words, the fan writer has endless possibilities in creating plot twists.

Jenkins (*ibid.*:206-219) analyzes slash stories in which the plot follows the formulaic structure of slash. However, he neglects the fact that fan fiction stories have differing structures and that the plot does not progress as chronologically as the formulaic structure proposes. Certainly most stories require some sort of initial relationship between the main characters, but in some cases the initial relationship is created in the fan story. For example, minor characters that are only mentioned briefly in the original series do not have a ready-defined initial relationship; the fan writer has to create it based on her own interpretations or presumptions. Furthermore, dystopic scenes may be missing altogether; the confession may have already been given; a story may begin with a romantic utopist scene that progresses to one direction or another – the point being that there is no chronological order that would apply *ad infinitum*, and neither is there a set of scenes that can be found in every fan story.

For Jenkins, the formulaic structure of slash is a narrative structure that is very genre-specific (in terms of fan fiction genres); essentially, he suggests that the structure is created in slash fan stories and appears only in them. However, my view is that the formulaic structure of slash could be added to the list of rewriting strategies – after all, it does serve the same purpose of rewriting or reconstructing an original textual narrative. Furthermore, the formulaic structure of slash can actually function as an umbrella strategy that includes, for example, genre shifting, emotional intensification, eroticization, refocalization and moral realignment. The possibilities vary depending on the story, but the main point remains: the formulaic structure of slash is a rewriting strategy that makes use of various reconstructive sub-strategies.

Curiously, slash fan fiction, in and despite its oft-perceived defiance and radicalism, greatly resembles popular romantic fiction. According to Jenkins,

both the rhetorical and narrative structures of slash are highly melodramatic, reflecting strong roots in traditional women's fiction; the issues of intimacy and commitment are raised with equal intensity within the popular romance, as recent feminist readings of that genre have suggested... Slash's all-too-often purple prose borrows much of its hyperbolic intensity from other popular writing targeted at a female readership. (Jenkins, 1992: 218-219)

This is an interesting suggestion, as it provides some insight into the purpose and especially the meaning of fan fiction writing. Some researchers (Jenkins, 1992; Kustritz, 2002;) have concluded that slash fiction, therefore, is an alternative to traditional romance in fiction - the type of heterosexual romance that promotes male hegemony and female sub-ordination - and offers its writers, most of whom are women, the chance to explore egalitarian romance as well as enjoy the more pornographic aspects of slash without feeling universally suppressed as women.

Woledge (2006) suggests that slash stories not only borrow from popular romance, but actually emulate it – an observation that challenges the possibility of slash being the most original contribution to literature. The unique position given to slash as romance rewritten rises from its historical context. The slash phenomenon came to attention through *Star Trek*, and at a time when strong female characters were indeed far and few between in mass media. In the lack of female characters, fans began to write romantic stories that featured two male characters as protagonists. The actual birth process and the “real” motive behind slash is perhaps far more complicated than that, and there is certainly a fair amount of feminist ideology behind it too; essentially, though, I am suggesting that slash genre was born out of a need to write the perfect romance story so lacking in mass media products. The time period may have played a greater part than is acknowledged: modern television shows, films and literature offer a wider variety of female characters than did *Star Trek* and its contemporaries. In addition, the fact that slash so greatly resembles popular romance perhaps indicates that slash is the very same romance reconstructed to include those characters that fans love and see the most, yet are left wondering what actually goes on in their love lives or behind the scenes.

Nevertheless, slash undeniably provides alternatives to male sexuality – but why does the alternative occur only in relationships to other men? Female sexuality has close to nothing to do with alternative male sexuality, which seems the opposite of what slash

aims at achieving. Was not the objectives mentioned by researchers that female writers write slash because they feel oppressed by men, and because female sexuality is so often forgotten in mass media? It does not seem logical that fan writers, in an attempt to reconstruct romance and change the sexual and gender power balance and characterization in general, exclude the female character completely. Heterosexual romance in fan fiction has gained little if any scholarly interest; the only notable exception is possibly the Mary Sue –genre. By definition, Mary Sue is a representative of the ideal woman, or more precisely, an idealized version of the female fan fiction writer – an autobiographical personalization (Jenkins, 1992). However, even a brief glance at the many fan fiction archives on the Internet reveals that slash and Mary Sue stories are not the only outlets of fan desires and frustrations. The Internet has had a huge impact on the sheer amount of fan fiction stories: they are now available to virtually anyone with a computer and an Internet connection, not to mention the easiness of writing and publishing of fan fiction stories. This increased awareness of the fan fiction phenomenon has encouraged more people to write their own stories and, consequently, heterosexual fan fiction with other female characters besides Mary Sues has gained popularity.

2.3 Echoes of the female

Studies of gender, science fiction television, and fan culture have often asserted that female fans resist patriarchy by negotiating cultural texts through such practices as fan fiction and interactive deliberation...specific motivation and context must be considered to advance such a claim, especially in light of undercurrents of misogyny contributing to such phenomena as “slash” fan fiction authored by women and dealing with romances between male heroes. (Scodari, 2003:111)

Scodari’s observation showcases the problematic relationship slash fan fiction has with notions of misogyny and female subordination, despite the stamp it has been attributed as egalitarian romance. Scodari raises a valid point in implying that slash is, after all perhaps not a means of creating an egalitarian romance, but may actually reinforce misogyny by ignoring the female body entirely. While it is true that male protagonists in slash stories are androgynous and can have characteristics of both sexes, it is not the same as having a female body involved. Consequently, Scodari (ibid.:114) notes that fans seem to celebrate the feminine only when it is attached to and performed by a male body.

Scodari also notes upon the systematic refusal among slash writers to accept that reconstruction of masculinity (and femininity, for that matter) can be included in a heterosexual romance. The lack of autonomous female characters in media texts suggested in some accounts of fan fiction (cf. p. 17 in this study) is a flimsy argument according to Scodari. It may have been the case during the time when the original *Star Trek* show aired; however, television shows that were aired during the 1960s and onwards (such as *Doctor Who*, *Blake's 7*, *The Professionals*, *Beauty and the Beast*) all had female characters. Furthermore, Jenkins (1992) reports that fans did write fan fiction centered on those female characters. In light of this, it seems rather simplistic to cling on to the outdated assumption that lack of female characters hampers fans' attempts of writing about female characters in heterosexual relationships. The situation is certainly different with television shows, computer games, novels and films of the late 20th and early 21st century. Leppänen (2007), Scodari (2003) and Somogyi (2002) report of fan fiction writing centering on female characters and heterosexual relationships in *Harry Potter*, *The X-Files* and *Star Trek: Voyager* fandoms. In essence, it appears that the foundations laid in fan fiction research twenty or so years ago are hard to reconstruct.

Moreover, Scodari (2003:112) reminds that one central problem with the assumption that slash writing is automatically resistive is that "one person's pleasure or its motivation can foster another's pain". Namely, she refers to the assertions made by slash writers that they are not purposefully depicting male protagonists as gay, but maintain that they are, in fact, straight men who cannot help their attraction to one another. Scodari expresses worry over this "denial of gayness" and observes that there is a possibility of slash "having a motivation comparable to that associated with male-targeted pornography featuring lesbian encounters" (114). This leads to the implication that slash is more about removing the female competition (however fictional) and having both male protagonists perform for the enjoyment of the slash writer and/or reader. Consequently, Scodari rebuffs any such notions of slash as a way for female fans to enjoy male bodies the same way as men might enjoy female bodies

because competition among women over men is such a pervasive and potentially disempowering cliché in mainstream culture, to celebrate a motivation in which even a fictional woman is perceived as the rival of a female fan whose chief aim is to fantasize about being the sole

devotional object of two similarly fictional men can be rather dismaying. (115)

In other words, slash can also reproduce the hegemony it is trying to resist by excluding the female character. The situation is hardly made better by suggestions that female rivalry extends to fictional worlds up to the point that women writers are unable to create female characters. What I believe is the case is that because heterosexuality is naturalized in our society, it does not have the same kind of appeal as gay romance. Therefore, its existence is not apparent. Somogyi (2002) has a similar view:

Relatively little has been written about male/female fan fiction. Its popularity is a more recent phenomenon than that of slash. It lacks a catchy name. But perhaps most importantly, as Russ said of [Kirk/Spock], elicit “shrieks of delight and paroxysms of embarrassment (81). [...] To the person who hears of the existence of such male/female stories, there is, perhaps, nothing surprising about women writing about heterosexual couples - nothing unusual, nothing subversive, not in a way new and different from commercial romance novels, which have already been combed (with, to my mind, limited success) for signs of rebellion and non-traditional desire. (399)

Somogyi suggests that heterosexuality in fan fiction is not as interesting as slash because it does not have the same shock value as male/male interaction. There is a further issue here that is left untouched. Namely, the implication that heterosexuality is traditional, whereas homosexuality (or bisexuality, as it probably is in slash; the denial of slash as gay fiction has been noted on previously in this study) is non-traditional. Slash has been given the status of a non-traditional genre, and specifically, male/male fiction (given that slash can refer to fan fiction that has female protagonists). The non-traditionality does not seem to encompass female/female fiction. However, Somogyi is, perhaps, correct in observing that commercial romance is not the best site to look for non-traditional desire or rebellion, as the genre is governed factors that limit the possibilities for deviant narration or character typology. As is already observed, romance fan fiction, be it slash or heterosexual, emulates commercial romance, but emulates only so far that it borrows structural patterns and narrative stylistics. Slash is, undoubtedly, the most clear-cut example of fan fiction that rewrites the romance in terms of character sexuality and behavior. However, if one wants to find alternatives for traditional heterosexual desire in terms of male and female behavior, slash is out of the picture.

Moreover, Somogyi (2002:400) suggests that the reason why so many fan fiction writers do not want to include female characters in their stories or neglect the possibility of male/female interaction is because in any heterosexual narration the power relations are asymmetrical: women are always portrayed as submissive, and men have the power. Thus, there is a need for strong, autonomous female characters. However, Lamb and Veith (1986, as cited in Somogyi 2002:399) suggest that the myth of female passivity and subservience enhances the impression that equality in heterosexual romance is unattainable. It appears rather counter-intuitive that fan writers would only write about female characters that are already portrayed powerful. Since fan fiction writing is a practice that requires working with the *subtext*, it is possible for the fan writer to reconstruct a character and give them more power within the narrative. It appears that heterosexuality is interesting only if the female character is powerful enough to resist male dominance – as if the only way to make a female character interesting is to provide her with enough male attributes so that she may rise above the male character. Furthermore, focusing like this on the female character and what she is and is not tells something of the conception of the male character's personality. One ought to look at the male character as much as the female in order to form an idea of heterosexual dynamics, and not just rely on ready skeletons of how a male character acts in proximity of a female.

The subtext in all of these commentaries seems to imply three things that are invariably intertwined. First, fan fiction writers, the majority of whom are women, are unable to construct an original female character without making it a Mary Sue (a self-projection or autobiographical). Second, since fan writers are unable to construct original female characters, they need ready-made, strong, powerful and autonomous characters – of which there is serious lack in media texts. Third, heterosexual fan fiction is not of interest, and consequently, that is where the female characters are all lurking. However, finding female characters and non-traditional heterosexuality is as easy as logging on to any fan fiction site and browsing the romance category – surely within archives of thousands of narratives one is able to find heterosexual romance fan fiction that is non-traditional.

Furthermore, reducing the modern Mary Sue to a mere self-projection degrades the literary talents and understanding of fan fiction authors. In reality Mary Sue is a

carefully crafted parody of the genre that inspires a lot of fan fiction writing: popular romance. The Mary Sue character is the traditional heroine of romance novels, and the plot is just as predictable. It most certainly shows the creativity of fan fiction authors in recognizing the underlying assumption and bending it, which goes on to show that non-traditional narratives and critique of patriarchal romance narratives is doing well outside mainstream media, as well.

2.4 Behind the veil: the structure of the heterosexual narrative

Analysis of slash fan fiction does not provide the academic with all of the answers, as it marginalizes and subordinates the need for heterosexuality and the possibility of heterosexuality in fiction as resistant. Heterosexual fan fiction can posit similar critique as slash: not only does heterosexual fan fiction redefine traditional masculinity, it also redefines traditional femininity and the role of the female in the relationship.

The inherent problem with heterosexuality is that it is naturalized as ‘the norm’, and everything and anything that goes against the grain is ‘non-traditional’. Consequently, since heterosexuality is so normal, there is no need to take a closer look at what fans are doing with it and to it in their fan stories. At the same time, the naturalization of slash as the non-traditional and resistive genre give way for an artificial hierarchy in romance fiction in general. Wilton (1996:127) asserts that heterosexuality “is a patriarchal narrative told about bodies and desires which polices women’s and men’s adherence to proper gender and erotic behaviours and makes women’s liberation unimaginable”. Essentially, I believe the dominant interpretation expressed by Wilton influences the way we see the heterosexual narrative. Radway’s (1984) view is similar, and she states that romance fiction, the ultimate heterosexual narrative, can be a site of resistance. I do not wish to go very deep into sexual and gender politics here, but I believe it is potentially harmful to maintain that heterosexuality is traditional and normal, and everything else is not, which appears to be the idea enhanced in placing slash ahead heterosexual fan fiction in issues of equality.

Moreover, it seems that the careful maneuvering of female writers as either jealous of any fictional rivals or as a suppressed fan elite is only masking the real issue. Fan fiction, when written by female authors, is seen as resistive action, or as realization of

female fantasies. What has so far been not taken into account in analyzing fan fiction is that perhaps the actual practice, and the actual motive, is something far different. Does sexuality and gender issues have to play such a big part in it? The possibility that fan fiction is actually about storytelling, about creating characters anew, is neglected, and fan fiction writing becomes a battle site of clashing ideologies. Ideologies are, naturally, a factor that has to be taken into account in scrutinizing any piece of text; however, in the commentaries quoted that is the prevalent factor contributing to analysis.

As romance fan fiction is so inevitably linked with published popular romance, it is necessary to take a look at the basic structure and interpretive patterns that govern it and resemble the similarities and differences between published popular romance and fan fiction. To do this, I concentrate on the structural pattern of the ideal romance by Radway (1984) that is constructed on the basis of female readers' interpretations of romance literature. Moreover, in order to raise the status of heterosexual romance in fan fiction it needs to be clarified that heterosexual romance and its implications to female subservience and male hegemony are fundamentally a construction of our subjectivities, and that romance literature in all its forms does not necessarily display male hegemony and female subservience in action. Heterosexual romance in fiction can, in effect, function as a setting for resistance.

Romantic fiction carries a stigma of being literary fluff with transparent and predictable plots and naïve characters. No one admits to reading it, and yet, romance novels are extremely popular and selling. While modern romantic fiction may be self-repetitive and cheap, it should be remembered that the origins of romantic fiction as known today are in the pioneer romantic novels of such literary giants as Jane Austen and the Brontë sisters. The stereotypical image most people have of romantic fiction was born in the 1970s during the second wave of feminism. Such feminists as Comer, Greer and Firestone were critical of heterosexual romantic love and its representations in romantic fiction (Jackson, 1999:114). According to Jackson (*ibid.*), especially Greer represented romantic fiction as "dope for dupes". This was the trend in feminist interpretation during the 1970s and onwards; during the last decade or so, feminists have opened up to new interpretations of romantic love and its representations in fiction.

Jackson (ibid.) demands for new interpretations that deny the simplicity of past interpretations of romantic love and its representations and suggests that

It is not necessary to deny the pleasures of romance or the euphoria of falling in love in order to be skeptical of romantic ideals and wary of their consequences. It is possible to recognize that love is a site of women's complicity in patriarchal relations while still noting it can also be a site of resistance. (1999:114)

Jackson (ibid.) goes on to explore the world of romantic fiction and its connection to female experience of love, and observes that feminists have learnt to avoid an interpretation that claims that the multi-million sales of romance novels all over the world prove the universal experience and interpretation of romance. Romance novels are based on the Western cultural tradition, and it seems shortsighted to assume that every female reader makes sense of romance novels the same way, especially given how subjective the experience of love is.

Moreover, Jackson (ibid.) notes that love is not directly observable, and appears analyzable only in discourse surrounding it. If romantic fiction is separated from the discourse, it is easy to see that the structure of fictional romance as well as the motivation for reading romantic fiction tells a significant, and surprisingly similar, story of love and romance, or at least of the constructed interpretation of them. Romantic fiction traditionally constructs love as passionate, tumultuous and compulsive, but never routinized or fading – which does happen in reality. Furthermore, Jackson (ibid.:116) suggests that the compulsive passion is individualistic and selfish rather than caring of the other (as in an established relationship), and the excitement connected to the passionate love blossoms with the promise of challenges on its way. Curiously, this is parallel to how the slash structure works in the narrative: in order for the romance to reach its culmination in physical intimacy, obstacles are put to its way, and the resolution of those obstacles strengthens the emotional intensity of the romance narrative. Often this is not just a plot device, but the main idea behind a fan story: the more emotionally intensive the narrative is the better. An example of the use of emotional intensification is the fan fiction genre hurt/comfort that centers on the interaction between characters in an emotionally stressful situation. One protagonist is emotionally wounded, and the other offers him/her comfort, which then proceeds to romance. The typical pattern of romance in fiction ends with marriage, and what Jackson describes as an asymmetrical union

where power struggle is imminent. Marriage is seen as a means of subordinating women – both in terms of the power struggle within marriage, and women’s desire for marriage.

Radway (1984:134) defines the narrative structure of the ideal romance as a list of functions that transform the heroine over the course of the narrative from an innocent and insecure young woman to an adult woman worth marriage. Essentially, the ideal romance ends with marriage – a state which, according to Jackson (1999) is stereotypically highly desirable for women. Radway’s (ibid.) complete list of functions is summarized below:

- 1) The heroine’s social identity is destroyed.
- 2) The heroine reacts antagonistically to an aristocratic male.
- 3) The aristocratic male responds ambiguously to the heroine.
- 4) The heroine interprets the hero’s behavior as evidence of a purely sexual interest in her.
- 5) The heroine responds to the hero’s behavior with anger or coldness.
- 6) The hero retaliates by punishing the heroine.
- 7) The heroine and hero are physically and/or emotionally separated.
- 8) The hero treats the heroine tenderly.
- 9) The heroine responds warmly to the hero’s act of tenderness.
- 10) The heroine interprets the hero’s ambiguous behavior as the product of previous hurt.
- 11) The hero proposes/openly declares his love for/demonstrates his unwavering commitment to the heroine with a supreme act of tenderness.
- 12) The heroine responds sexually and emotionally.
- 13) The heroine’s identity is restored.

The functions clearly reveal the inclusion of narrative elements that forestall the emotional and sexual culmination of the relationship. The structure also shows the breaking of communication halfway the story, which leads to emotional intensification before the act of declaration of romantic feelings. It is clear that slash repeats the structure, although Jenkins (1992) has simplified and combined the movements

somewhat. In this sense, slash is part of the tradition of popular romance, and thus, differs structurally and thematically very little from heterosexual romance, if at all.

Moreover, in addition to the repetitive narrative structure, popular romance is often typecast as stereotypical and naïve in its narration, and not least because of its reliance on specific structural and narrative patterns. Moreover, characters in popular romance are more often than not very similar and even archetypal. Radway (1984) defines the archetypal characters as the hero, the heroine, the male foil and the female foil, which form two adjacent pairs in the narrative. Consequently, the hero is the opposite of the male foil, as is the heroine the opposite of the female foil. Furthermore, often the hero and the heroine have oppositional characteristics and attributes (e.g. the heroine is virginal, whereas the hero is promiscuous).

The ideal romance portrayed in popular romance fiction emphasizes the euphoria of falling in love and the lust and passion associated with it. The relationships in popular romance fiction rarely transform from the passionate falling-in-love –stage to routine. This observation has particular significance in identifying the underlying motives of the female reading audience: women read because they are unsatisfied in their own relationships. The act of reading a romance is assumed to be an attempt to attain the ideal romance and the emotional intensity of it. Moreover, recent feminist thinking have given birth to the interpretation that the act of reading romance fiction can, in fact, be seen as a form of resistance rather than manipulation into male hegemony and subservience (Jackson, 1999). However, Jackson (*ibid.*:118) criticizes the underlying assumptions behind the interpretation and warns that there is a danger of “revalorizing what might be symptomatic of [women’s] subordination”:

It is all too tempting to simply accept that men are emotional inadequate and thereby treat women’s emotional desires and capacities as given, or even as a form of feminine superiority, particularly since women have for so long been undervalued because of our imputed emotionality...we should not treat emotions as given. Hence, whether we are talking about nurturant caring love or passionate romantic love, we need an explanation of the ways in which these emotions are constructed at the level of our subjectivities.

There is no need to go very deep into the subjectivity of emotions here; it is sufficient to note that Jackson comes to the conclusion that romantic ideals and realism can, and in fact, do coexist. Female readers of romance do not carry a torch for the ideal

romance; they are perfectly aware that the sort of romance depicted in romance novels is completely unrealistic. Maintaining romantic ideals does not exclude criticality of them. (ibid.)

Nevertheless, heterosexual romantic fan fiction may well be one of the key discursive practices that open up the emotional need for love and romance and function as an outlet for that expressed need for fantasy and romance unattainable in reality. Heterosexual fan fiction is significant because it is interpretation in action; it is not the only the source of interpretation for other readers, it is the interpretation itself in the flesh, the story and the objective experience of a singular person that could be anyone. It makes a difference, because it includes none of the complicating issues inherent in published texts: the publishers' demands as well as the audiences, the financial issues and the worry that it may offend. Fan fiction is, in a sense, safely marginalized and outside published fiction's limits. Despite heterosexual fan fiction's appearance as traditional and patriarchal, there is always the other side of the coin:

“Fanfics that adhere to heteronormative ideals of social and sexual interaction, that privilege ‘romance’ as an ideal narrative form, are also subversive of patriarchal culture in the same way that Janice Radway argues, in her 1984 *Reading the Romance*, that print romance novels are subversive.” (Derecho, 2006:72)

Essentially, Derecho suggests that by submitting to heteronormative ideals, heterosexual fan fiction is subversive when interpreted so. Moreover, it seems unnecessary to play the card of subversive over again, when the real meaning of romance fan fiction is always dependent on the reader and/or writer of said fan fiction. Bringing forth the topic of heterosexual romance in fan fiction requires no other motive than that of “not having been researched”; it is part of a complex phenomenon with potentially massive implications that needs to be researched from several aspects. The next chapter illustrates the research design of this study and its position in the field of fan fiction research.

3 FAN-SCHOLAR IN SEARCH OF NEW INTERPRETATIONS

In this chapter I explain the starting points of this study from my own point of view as a student of English and literature and as an avid reader of *Harry Potter* fan fiction,

and from the point of view previous research. My own interest in *Harry Potter* fan fiction is the main catalyst for this thesis, and through my reading of it I found myself intrigued by the phenomenon - not just on a personal level through my fandom, but on a more scholarly level of interest triggered by my studies in English and literature. My studies in literature especially explain my interest in fan fiction as art, and specifically as a literary phenomenon: the question of literary genres and their emergence is perhaps one of the most important questions in the field of literature, and fan fiction challenges the more common-sense notions of genres and literary classifications with its tendency to cross over several genres and literary traditions.

This study has very little to do with the actual *Harry Potter* phenomenon or the original novel series by J.K. Rowling, other than the obvious connection between fan fiction and the source text. For this reason, and also because *Harry Potter* is a well-known phenomenon of today's popular culture, I do not deem it necessary to summarize the entire novel series here; rather, I assume that anyone interested in this study is familiar with the original text and the fan fiction phenomenon associated with it.¹

In this study I explore the reconstruction of heterosexual romance in English *Harry Potter* fan fiction. Romance is one of the most popular genres both in published fiction and in fan fiction, but it also shows the most growth and evolution as a genre. Fan fiction researchers say that fan fiction's most original creation, slash, has permanently changed romance fiction – at least in the world of fan fiction. In this study I aim at suggesting a continuum ranging from published romance and slash fan fiction to heterosexual fan fiction. In other words, the goal is to connect the dots and come up with a synthesis between published romance, slash fan fiction and heterosexual fan fiction.

¹ For the same reason, I do not include in my analysis citations from the original novels – and also because I admit and am aware that my own interpretation of the original text is crucial to my analysis of fan fiction. Anything I say of the original characters or the storyline is my interpretation, born from several readings and re-readings of all seven novels, and therefore I cannot point to single points in the original text to illustrate my view. Therefore, when referring to the original text, I do not mention singular novels, but refer to the source text as a whole, i.e., “In the source text...” or “In the Potter novels...”.

3.1 Research focus: the fan fiction narrative as new fiction

“Fan works can be analyzed as individual works of literature, or collectively, for genre-specific analysis” (Kaplan, 2006:135).

Fan fiction writing has been under scholarly scrutiny as a social and cultural practice and as an intriguing part of media fandom. The narrative part, however, the actual fiction, the story itself has been heavily neglected – perhaps because fan fiction writing as a practice negates the existence of a sole author, or even an original one. Everything written is borrowed (even the fan writer’s own creations, in a way), not produced as an original fictional work that would merit the attention of narrative textual analysis. Typically, fan fiction has been seen as a product of fans’ shared desires of the object of fandom and as a practice that merely borrows its raw material from published texts; Jenkins (1992) determines fan fiction writing as ‘textual poaching’, as alternate meanings produced by fans on the basis of original fan texts. However, when fans write fan fiction they produce more than just new meanings; they produce new fiction, new literature in a new format, challenging the traditional concept of literature and genres. Fan writers have artistic ambition, more so than given credit for. Often, fan fiction stories are novel-length and novel-quality, and they can be as challenging for the reader as published fiction. From the reader’s point of view, fan fiction functions like published fiction. Moreover, fan fiction is notoriously intertextual, which in turn can guide readers to other fiction, as well. Quite possibly, fan fiction invites readers to participate more in the interpretive process than does published fiction because it is easy to review stories on websites, make suggestions for the writer and even engage in the actual writing process. In addition, fan fiction is “new” in the sense that it brings back some of the story-telling tradition of old – stories passing from one person to another over generations, undergoing changes and evolution as they passed from mouth to mouth. Although fan fiction still is a relatively marginal phenomenon, I see it as revolutionizing the idea of fiction as something quite unattainable for the average reader both in terms of reader interpretation and participation in the story-telling itself.

Fan fiction research, in my view, has tended to focus specifically on the fan practice of fan fiction writing in the expense of ignoring the prospects of fan fiction as a new medium of literature, and only recently fan fiction research has expanded to recognize and include the artistic side of fan fiction. Therefore, the focus of this thesis is the narrative of fan fiction, the story, not the *fan* fiction story, but the fan *fiction* story.

Naturally, the aspect of fans as writers (active participants and interpreters) is not entirely absent. The fan writer is always an important part of the story, but the purpose of this study is not to interpret the motives for fan fiction writing. In the data of this study I see the fan writers existing between the lines of the narratives, as interpreters of the source text and as creators of new narratives. The narratives offer insights into the fan interpretations, but also showcase the literary talent and ambition of the fan writers.

The fact that the present study is very text-orientated might well be a point for criticism, as it disregards the social aspect of fan fiction almost entirely. However, within the framework of this thesis, consisting of a space of a hundred pages or so, I feel it is not possible to include every aspect of fan fiction in this study. Fan fiction is a valuable field for research also for its literary merits, its narrative contents as well as the complicated social practices it involves. I have chosen to focus on the former because of the importance of exploring a phenomenon that has become, in a way, alternative literature.

It is crucial to view and interpret fan fiction in the light of the literary genre it has created; to view it against the very background formed by fan fiction itself. Fan fiction resembles published fiction in its stylistics and themes and also in its “publishing” protocol – in some cases at least, since not all fan fiction web sites have elaborate sets of criteria for stories. For example, the web site from which this study’s data is taken has a strict language policy: each story must be read by a beta-reader who checks the grammar, punctuation and structure of the story, and only then can the story be uploaded. However, the mechanics of “publishing” a fan fiction story are different, as are the criticism and interpretation aimed at fan fiction. First of all, fan fiction is not as heavily censored as published fiction, nor is it at the mercy of the publishers, consumers or prevalent trends. This, I believe, is the ultimate power of fan fiction: ideally, anyone can write anything without worrying whether it is going to offend or alienate readers. Second, fan fiction publishing is not profitable, nor is publishing dependent on sales figures or popularity among the readership. The success of any published novel is dependent on the critical response it receives, how well it reaches its potential audience and how well it sells. Fan fiction is published no matter what, it always finds an audience and does not receive critical reviews the same way as published fiction. That is not to say that fan fiction is not subject to critique in general,

although Jenkins (1992:155) claims that fan stories are “beyond the status of criticism and interpretation [and that] they are satisfying narratives eagerly received by a fan readership”. In fact, fan fiction communities function by elaborate sets of rules that resemble those of the publishing industry. The differences are that fan fiction communities are open to constructive communication, and the fan writers are not, in theory, superior to the fan readership, since any fan can write a story. However, it may be that some fan writers have more prestige than others, particularly those who have written several or even dozens of stories. Nevertheless, it seems that most fan writers have their own readership, so no one is excluded from the joys of writing and receiving constructive criticism. In addition to this, fan fiction is a fan community-based practice in which communication, peer reviews and recommendations are in key position. This ensures that word of new authors and stories circulates fast, and the reception of new stories is enthusiastic. In this sense, every fan writer is accepted equal. Good reviews and a wide readership helps, of course, but generally each story attracts at least some readers.

Some fan fiction sites on the Internet do not place any rules on the quality of the fan stories, but others are more adamant on the proper use of language in terms of grammar, punctuation and language varieties. For example, *Harry Potter* fan fiction is often required to follow the spelling and phraseology of British English. In addition, its style should sound arcane and somehow magical; for example, any curse words or exclamations such as “Oh, God” are often replaced by the more magical exclamations like “Oh, Merlin” or “in the name of Nimue” that associate strongly to the mythological and magical past of Britain. The linguistic correctness of fan stories is revised and controlled by beta-readers, volunteer fan readers and writers who read the story before it is submitted to the fan fiction web page. Beta-readers must have excellent command of the language and also of the original text, so that they are able to spot any plot holes or canonical mistakes. Furthermore, authors collaborate with their beta-readers: they work on story ideas and plots and often write a whole story together.

3.2 Stories of love and honor

The present data consist of *Harry Potter* fan fiction stories written in English that focus on heterosexual romance. I have limited the number of stories to five, but have placed no limitations on their length. There are thousands of *Harry Potter* fan fiction

stories and naturally it is impossible to analyze more than a few within the framework of this study. The stories chosen vary in their length and number of words, but all of them are between six and ten chapters. I do not perceive this variation in length to be a problem, since length is really not a topic I focus on - I rather aim at pointing out the structural similarity in fan stories, whatever their length. There was one condition concerning length, though: the stories had to exceed the minimum of five chapters or 5000 words. There is no scientific method behind this, just my own observation that most stories require several chapters or several thousand words in order for the storyline to develop properly, i.e. so that the romance has time (or, rather, space) to grow. I focus specifically on stories and exclude fan poems and songfics (stories based on songs) for two reasons. First, the practice of interpreting prose fiction differs greatly from that of interpreting poetry, and second, it appears that stories best capture the essence of literature in terms of plot, length and character typology.

Harry Potter is not the only lively fandom there is on the Internet, but it is certainly one of the most popular. In fact, the fiction site fanfiction.net (accessed January 4 2008) lists well over 330 000 *Harry Potter* stories, which is easily over ten times more than *Star Trek* stories, for example (some 12 000 uploaded on the same archive), and the number is on constant increase. In addition, the sheer number of sites dedicated to *Harry Potter* fan fiction alone is quite amazing. Even Google (November 15 2007) alone provides roughly 140 000 hits for the search term "harry potter fan fiction". It seems that not only has *Harry Potter* inspired thousands of people to read, it has also given the fans inspiring material for fan fiction writing, which is hardly surprising given the length of the original novel series and the active fan community surrounding it. Such an active fandom is hard to ignore, especially as fans produce that many stories that only serve to prove the point that fan fiction is supplementing literature.

I chose fan fiction written by adults only, as the theme of romance requires a certain level of maturity from writers. The stories are taken from a general *Harry Potter* fan fiction site, Sycophant Hex. The site is age-restricted: all members have to be over the age of eighteen and reading and publishing stories there requires registration as a member. This, of course, does not mean that actually entering the site is forbidden for anyone underage; the site relies on the honesty of registered users and I, in turn, rely on that and my own interpretation about the authors' ages based on their writing styles.

Furthermore, the data source is an Internet site, which means that there is no sure way of knowing the age and gender of the writers. Some writers can be traced via their own links and e-mail addresses; others can not, so in some cases I can only make educated guesses. However, since I am not interested in fan fiction writing as a social fan practice and focus solely on the interpretation and literary analysis of the stories, I think that essentially age and gender are not matters of importance in light of my research questions. Even if the issue with the authors remains unresolved, I could at least trust the content of the website, since it has a strict code of conduct with stories: each story has to be read, reviewed and corrected by a so-called beta-reader before it is published. After a story is beta-read, the site administrators have to accept it before it can be uploaded. This submission process differs greatly from that of fanfiction.net (the largest general fan fiction site), which has virtually no rules whatsoever concerning the submission of stories on their archive.

A chosen couple: Hermione Granger and Severus Snape

Naturally, heterosexuality and romance are the first two criteria for choosing the data. However, the romance genre in fan fiction includes a myriad of different stories in terms of plot, character typology, themes and stylistics. Often, the content of a story is most heavily influenced by character choice, and characters can be seen as the main element that dictates the story's structure and style. In this sense, fan fiction stories that center on a specific character pair often follow a certain formulaic. This is evident in the data of the present study. The most popular and long-enduring heterosexual couples in *Harry Potter* fan fiction appear to be: Albus Dumbledore and Minerva McGonagall, Hermione Granger and Ron Weasley, Hermione Granger and Severus Snape, Harry Potter and Ginny Weasley, Harry Potter and Hermione Granger and Draco Malfoy and Ginny Weasley. In other words, there are several popular "ships" (the term "ships" is derived from relationship) or "pairings" among fan communities - some of which are more canon than others (Hermione/Ron and Harry/Ginny, for example, are canon). Curiously, Hermione's character seems to be a favored choice as the female protagonist; she is paired romantically with more male characters than any other female character in *Harry Potter* - an interesting point, given that in the source text, Hermione is often excluded from the action (but included in the final showdown of each novel).

Moreover, it appears that the most popular heterosexual pairing at the moment is Hermione Granger and Severus Snape. The Sycophant Hex archive dedicated to this pairing, Ashwinder, boasts more stories than any other Sycophant Hex archive (ashwinder.sycophanthex.com, accessed January 4 2008) and FanFiction.net (accessed January 4 2008) currently lists 258 pages with 25 stories per page featuring Hermione and Severus as the main pairing. Consequently, I have chosen to concentrate on this specific pairing in my study. Popularity alone is not enough by way of criteria for choosing one pairing over another; luckily, there are other plausible reasons. First of all, the source text does not offer overly much by way of clues or hints that these two characters could ever be together, and it seems clear in the source text and the final conclusion of the novel series that there is no possible future together for these two characters - if not because of their twenty years of age difference, then for its moral dubiousness: he is her teacher. Moreover, there is certain ambiguity in Severus' character in the source text: in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* it is revealed that Severus works as a double spy both for the Order of the Phoenix and for Lord Voldemort. As events develop throughout the fifth and sixth book in the series, Severus' true loyalties are an on-going debate, both for the other characters and for the reader. This moral ambiguity renders it nigh-on impossible for any kind of clues towards romance between Severus and Hermione. Curiously for some reason, though, this relationship has become part of the fanon. It seems that, despite the apparent lack of support for romance in the source text, there is still enough substance to have given fans the idea that Hermione and Severus are meant for each other.

The fan community's adamant interpretation that there is a possibility for romance alone makes this particular branch of *Harry Potter* fan fiction an interesting research topic; what makes it even more so in my view is the extensive rewriting required to make the romance happen. Of course, sometimes characters are paired together simply for the joy of the "what if" -factor: what if the evil Professor was romantically interested in a student he appears to hate, and who is twenty years younger and Harry Potter's best female friend? In my view, the popularity of this specific pairing suggests that there is something more to these two characters than meets the average reader's eye, something that is visible to the fan reader who pays closer attention to clues in the characters' behavior. I do not intend to go very deep within the issue of fan

interpretation, but I do believe it is important to pay attention to a few characteristics in Severus and Hermione that make them, in my view, especially interesting to fans.

First of all, Hermione's character is probably easy for female readers to identify with and relate to, because she is a realistic character in terms of looks, morals and actions. Secondly, she is often described (in the source text) as bookish, smart, loyal and disinterested about her appearance - traits that are not associated with female characters in general, I believe, and that also make Hermione a character strong enough to hold onto as a fan. Finally, below the surface she is far more sensitive and feminine than she lets Harry and Ron see. Fans are able to tap onto this underlying trait in Hermione's personality, and expand on it in their own stories. Indeed, in fan stories Hermione is most often described as extremely feminine in appearance, but naturally so and without the extra attention most women give to looking good. The source text does not describe Hermione's looks very extensively; she is described as having bushy brown hair and brown eyes (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*). The interpretation that she is plain is the fans', as Rowling does not explicitly describe her as plain (nor does she say Hermione is pretty). In fan fiction, what fan writers make of her is something quite completely different: her intelligence is always there, it is heavily emphasized. However, what is striking is the fact that Hermione's plainness is transformed into a non-disturbing, calm beauty - a transformation that suggests that despite the insistent references to her intelligence, beauty is somehow still more important and has to be one of Hermione's key features. Intelligence, however important and emphasized, is simply not enough. Thus, the point of view of the writers, or their attitude towards the female character is ambiguous; they want to rewrite Hermione into a thinking, independent woman, but for some reason the appearance perspective sneaks in with the elaborate descriptions of Hermione's physique, which is more often than not described as pleasing to the (male) eye. Often, when her looks are described, it is not altogether clear whose point of view is in question, and what the gender of the story's narrator is (although the writer's gender is known). Descriptions of Hermione's looks, and her body especially, are often so elaborate and so focused on her feminine sexuality, that it appears as if the narrator is describing her from a distinctly male perspective. Moreover, what links Hermione (potentially) romantically to Severus is her faith in him: in the source text she often

defends him to Harry and Ron despite the animosity she creates between her and her friends by doing so.

Severus' character, however, is somewhat trickier. It is puzzling that he is the one so often matched with Hermione, given that they are, as characters, so opposite. Moreover, they are not merely opposites, as that would suggest that there is a correspondence in their characters. Rather, they seem disproportionate in relation to each other in age, power, and morality - at least on the surface. However, fan writers find consistency and equivalence between them. My experience of reading Hermione/Severus fan fiction is that fan writers tend to interpret and emphasize the following attributes of Hermione and Severus as either opposite or similar:

1) Hermione reminds Severus of himself when he was young, 2) Hermione has the same need to belong as Severus did when he joined the ranks of Lord Voldemort, 3) Hermione is equally intelligent as Severus, 5) Hermione is equally stubborn as Severus, 6) Hermione is as soft and gentle as Severus is hard and cruel, 7) Severus is often compared to a snake whereas Hermione is a lioness. However, the list of juxtaposing and similar characteristics does not offer an equally comprehensive explanation of Severus as is presented of Hermione. Severus is easily the most mysterious character in the source text, which means that the source text allows fans to use their imagination extensively in creating "their" Severus. Not much of him is revealed by way of history, personality or private life, which is understandable since he is, for the most part, a minor character. Naturally, the final addition to the *Harry Potter* series turns it around and Severus becomes one of the main characters and crucial to the plot, but the point remains that much of Severus remains unknown.

What is revealed in the source text, however, seems to remind many fan writers of a famous male character who is equally an enigma: Jane Austen's Mr. Darcy. It is difficult to find a fan story that does not draw comparisons between the two and many fan writers even go as far as transform Severus into a perfect example of a Byronic hero, complete with a set of Victorian clothing and courting manners. However, in the source text, Severus is not so much portrayed as a Byronic hero as he is a cruel, bullying villain and the antagonist of Harry Potter. In his original, source text persona, he does not seem to be a great romantic match for Hermione. Apparently, though, his

original persona is one deciding factor in the romance fan writers create. Millman (2006:39) suggests that the Hermione/Severus –romance

“is based in part on schoolyard lore: if a boy picks on a girl (and vice versa), it means he likes her. In the Harry Potter books, Hermione is the only female student whom Snape singles out for verbal abuse and humiliation...And if Snape verbally disciplines and humiliates students, maybe he would physically discipline and humiliate them as well.”

Millman’s suggestion implies only the sexual nature of Severus (and his relationship to Hermione), not necessarily the romantic aspects that fan writers see in him. Nevertheless, it seems that there is an “opposites attract” sort of principle at work when fan writers pair Hermione with Severus.

3.3 Questions of a conflicted romance

As multifaceted as the world of fan fiction is, the dominative focus in research on fan fiction is slash. Moreover, the general impression seems to be that fan fiction is seen as a by-product of fan cultures and practices associated with them. What has been lacking, as Derecho (2006) puts it, is the study of fan fiction as an art form. I build my study on the assumption that fan fiction is art, or more specifically, literature. Moreover, I wanted a fresh(er) point of view than what has been presented in previous studies on fan fiction, and have decided therefore to abandon slash as my primary research topic. Since it also seems that the field of fan fiction studies is little by little starting to change its research paradigm from slash-centered to cover various other topics, I feel that this study is very much in line with the more recent direction in fan fiction research.

Despite its various genres, fan fiction is dominated by romance stories. Slash fan fiction is often referred to in fan fiction studies, and there is a danger that all fan fiction is associated with the one genre. However, as I have illustrated in chapter two, the unique position of slash has recently been challenged by scholars. In this thesis I aim at taking a similar point of view as Jenkins (1992) in his study of the structure of slash fiction. I do not aim at applying the entire slash formulaic, but one of the four movements. Jenkins uses the term ‘masculine dystopia’, which as a movement parallels the conflicts that Jackson (1999) and Radway (1984) assert intensify the romance and its conclusion. Since in this study the focus is on heterosexual

protagonists, I abandon the concept of ‘masculine dystopia’, as it refers only to a male character’s emotional conflict. Instead, the term used in this study is ‘conflict’, as it better describes the obstacles of both characters that ultimately function as intensifying elements. Further, the terms *character* and *storyline* are used in the context of fan fiction as literature, the first describing the way a character develops throughout the story and the latter referring to the story’s structure (i.e., how a story begins, what are the crucial moments in terms of change and how the plot develops, how the story ends). Moreover, in this study the concept of character has two meanings: in addition to character development and change, it also refers to the characters’ original persona in the source text. Therefore, my research aims can be summarized as follows:

1. What are the typical conflicts in Hermione/Severus fan fiction romance and how do they contribute to the emotional intensity of the stories?
2. How are the conflicts solved on levels of the characters and storyline?
3. How is the process of solving conflicts in Hermione/Severus romance significant to the theory of fan fiction as new fiction?

The mechanics of creating the heterosexual romance in fan fiction are especially interesting when the original text has to be heavily reconstructed. The lengths that fan fiction writers go to in making a romance happen reveal the fan community’s attitude towards the original text and the characters; in other words, the fan writer will come up with explanations that make possible the emerging of romantic feelings between characters that are enemies in the original text, for example. This requires the utilization of different reconstructive strategies as defined by Jenkins (1992:162-177; see chapter 2.1 in this study), three of which I utilize in my analysis: expanding the timeline, recontextualization and genre shifting. Timeline expansion is visible in the set timeframes of each story: all of them are set to take place after the events of the original text (excluding the epilogue in the seventh novel, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*). Recontextualization is the main strategy used in all stories in aspects of character typology, their shared and separate histories and their futures. Genre shifting is evident in the theme of romance: characters from an original story that is prevalently of the adventure-genre are set in a romantic story that could, essentially, feature any characters as protagonists. Utilizing these strategies carries

particular significance in the shaping of each story; ultimately, they function as the agents that solve the conflicts created between the main pairing.

3.4 Method in madness, or how to interpret fan fiction

In her analysis of three fan stories from different fandoms, Kaplan (2006) focuses on genre-specific traits and character development through the use of different narrative techniques. My own method of analysis parallels Kaplan's, but I concentrate on five stories that represent same fandom (*Harry Potter*) that center on the same pairing (Hermione/Severus – in this study I refer to the pairing as H/S). In addition, all five stories focus on romance, and I pay particular attention to how the romance is constructed in the narrative and how character description and development influence the process of romance reconstruction.

Jenkins' (1992:206-219) slash formulaic offers a backset for my analysis, though I do not actively use it as an application into the mechanics of heterosexual romance in fan fiction. What I find interesting and useful in the slash formulaic, is the second movement (masculine dystopia) that is similar to the functions that appear in Radway's (1984:134) list: the breaking point of communication and the emotional separation that follows. In the data, similar movements are seen as conflicts. As is already mentioned in chapter 2.4, fictional romance traditionally flourishes at the threat of conflicts and challenges, because they increase the emotional intensity of the story. The romance is, for a while, suspended and the despair the characters feel increases; once the conflicts receive their solution, the character's longing and desire for each other has been stretched to the point of breaking. The romance's conclusion has the effect of a rubber band being stretched: once released, it snaps back with incredible force.

The reason for choosing this approach is that I attempt to illustrate the general structure of H/S romance and its connection to popular romance. A preliminary analysis shows that H/S fan fiction is especially conflict-driven, which I believe is the result of the source text and its denial of romance especially for Severus's character. The rewriting strategies step in when the conflicts need to be solved in order for the romance to happen, and this is where fan fiction writers get creative. However, and curiously enough, the stories are similarly structured despite all the creative energy writers have to bestow on completing the H/S romance. Fundamentally, this might

evidence the suggestion that fan fiction expands upon itself, as well, not only upon the source text.

The method of analysis used in this study is first and foremost interpretative. The interpretation method is inseparable from the research questions, as they function as the basis. The research questions are a framework for the analysis; they provide a specific looking glass through which I look at the stories. Moreover, the already mentioned formulaics of Jenkins (1992) and Radway (1984) provide a backset of plot movements for which I search within the data.

Rewriting or reconstructing?

The observation of H/S romance repeating itself, and its implications to the creation process of fan fiction stories in general, leads to the issue of fan fiction as a rewriting practice. In my view, the term ‘rewriting’ is misleading, as it suggests that fan writers literally write anew or write again the original text. Furthermore, it downplays the role of the fan writer as a creator of new fiction, as it emphasizes the importance of the source text. While it is true that fan fiction writers do not create new fiction in the same sense as publishing authors, there is still a great amount of creativity and imagination involved in fan fiction writing. It is not merely a practice of writing a story again, as ‘rewriting’ perhaps suggests, and the fan contribution is certainly far more extensive than that. What perhaps causes confusion outside fan communities is that fan fiction writing, as time-consuming a practice as it can be, seems a futile attempt at creating fiction with its issues of textual borrowing, poaching and even stealing. It may appear to an outsider (if such a derogatory term can be used) that the fan writer is wasting her talents in fan fiction, when she might as well start creating a fictional universe of her own instead of borrowing from someone else. To the fan writer the motivation, I believe, is altogether different. This is not the actual topic of this study, but I feel I need to clarify my take on this. A more appropriate and accurate way of reference would be to say that the strategies are reconstructive; fan writers take elements, “construction material” from the original texts and build their own stories on them – they not only transform the original narrative into something else, they create new narratives and new meanings and often shape the characters in directions not hinted at in the source text. This is especially visible in the data: all five stories are heavily reconstructed and in a similar manner from the original in order to create the

romance between Severus and Hermione. As such, the stories go beyond rewritten “versions” of the source text and become independent narratives (as independent as narratives can ever be of other texts given the intertextuality of fiction) in the sense that they do not continue or rewrite the *Harry Potter* saga, but form a new story arch told from Severus and Hermione’s point of view in a different timeframe than the source text’s.

4 IMAGINATION UNLEASHED: FIVE STORIES

This chapter reports on my interpretative analysis of five H/S romance stories retrieved from the fan fiction archive Ashwinder (ashwinder.sycophanthex.com). The writers’ nationalities are not mentioned on the site, and it seems to bear little relevance given the fact that Ashwinder’s language policy is that every story goes through at least two language checks. In any case, the site administrators seem to require from the writers a fairly good grasp of English in order to upload their stories. I interpret each story individually, and draw together the conclusions in chapter 5. My aim is to answer the research questions in a logical order that covers all the stories at a time, and therefore the purpose of this chapter is not to answer the research questions directly within the analysis. Rather, the purpose is to present the analysis first and then come to a synthesis of the conflicts of romance and their solutions in chapter 5.

4.1 Master of Enchantment

Master of Enchantment begins in the summer after Hermione’s (and naturally, Harry and Ron’s) seventh year in Hogwarts School. Hermione, as a recent graduate of Hogwarts, is wondering what to do with her future and with her feelings for Severus. Hermione returns to Hogwarts to assist Severus in a work project, and finds out that she and Severus are connected with ancient magic, the Enchantment, that has caused her to feel extremely attracted to him. It is soon revealed that the Enchantment is more than just attraction; it is ‘true love’ and an imperative for Severus and Hermione to be together. There are problems on the way, however, the worst of them being Hermione’s innocence.

From the beginning, Hermione's recent graduation is given particular emphasis in the beginning, perhaps to stress her now adult status:

It was the summer after seventh year, and the war was at its peak. Hermione was taking her turn in rotation, and manning Headquarters, along with Minerva McGonagall.

Furthermore, Hermione is in the company of her former teacher, not as a student but as a sister-in-arms and ally, which also indicates Hermione's transition to adulthood. However, when Severus Snape and Remus Lupin, both older men and ex-teachers, enter the story, it is clear that the teacher-student -relationship still lingers between Severus and Hermione:

Hermione heaved a terrific sob, and Lupin grasped her hand. Impatiently, Snape turned his back on the teakettle, and pulled a bottle of brandy from a cupboard. He poured a measure of brandy into the waiting teacup, and pressed the cup into her hand. "Drink this, Miss Granger. Slowly." His voice was quiet, but commanding. Hermione turned her tear streaked face up to look at him; after seven years as his student, she was used to obeying his will. Snape's face was impassive, but his eyes were fierce.

Severus still addresses Hermione as Miss Granger and tries to remain impassive in front of her and her possible loss of parents. However, he has already taken a step toward a more personal relationship to Hermione in trying to make her feel better and helping her cope with the situation. Hermione, then, still takes his words as a command and *obeys* him, like a good student. It is not clear whether the mentioned fierceness of Severus's eyes has any impact on Hermione, and indeed, for a page or so Hermione is comforted more by Remus's company than Severus's. It is only after Remus leaves and Hermione is left alone with Severus that her awareness of Severus takes a noticeable turn, despite his dispassionate demeanor. Like so many stories in the Severus/Hermione -fandom, *Enchantment* portrays Hermione first as an eighteen-year-old whom Severus perceives as a 'silly little girl' unable to tell the difference between a childish crush and adult love. Hermione insists otherwise and Severus doubts her confession – a typical pattern in almost any Severus/Hermione -fan story. Moreover, Hermione is not aware of her feelings at first, but she gains an understanding of a beginning desire for Severus in the face of an emotional disaster – that of losing her parents. She seeks comfort in Severus, and it triggers her deeper feelings for him:

“If you have finished your tea, Miss Granger, you may try to sleep now. I will not be sleeping, and will cover your shift.” Snape’s tone was matter-of-fact. His manner implied that he was not offering kindness or assistance, simply stating reality. Hermione stood up, feeling dazed, and frightened, as well as a little drunk. She swayed on her feet, and Snape stepped closer, to place a steadying hand on her elbow. She could smell the shampoo he had used to wash his hair, and his shaving lotion. He was a full head taller than she, and for the first time, she was aware of the breadth of this man's chest, and the wiry strength in his arms. An unfamiliar energy seemed to pour out of him; she felt the power surround her, enter her very being, and her heart began to race. She noted the angle of his jaw, with a surprising fascination, and knew the urge to press her lips to the pulse beating in his throat. When he touched her, she felt her tummy turn over.

Their relationship changes with the sexual awareness Hermione experiences: Severus is no longer her teacher, but a man she desires to touch. Moreover, it is almost as if this scene is Hermione’s final initiation into adulthood. She accepts the power Severus has over her, and her initial fear lessens - much like a child’s fear would in the embrace of a parent. However, Severus is at this point, from Hermione’s point of view, a potential lover rather than a parent.

This scene specifically resembles masculine dystopia, the second basic movement in the slash formulaic. Hermione’s desire for Severus is activated when they embrace, but she has no time to act on it. Had she had time, the dystopia may have been realized: Severus feels uncomfortable about the situation and would probably not have welcomed Hermione’s affections. Moreover, the text implies that Severus may feel something for Hermione, too, but is reluctant to admit it:

Snape stood, rigid in her embrace. Hermione was oblivious to his discomfort; she felt safe, and comforted, and some other emotion for which she had no name... she could see neither the expression of agony on his face, nor the clenched fists held deliberately by his sides.

Although Severus’s inaction can be interpreted as reluctance against Hermione, the description of him having an “expression of agony” and holding his “clenched fists deliberately by his sides” implies that he is physically straining to keep himself from returning Hermione’s embrace, and thus, from revealing his emotions. Furthermore, when in the same scene Hermione is whisked away by her friends to celebrate the finding of her parents and Severus is left behind, he is still unable and possibly even unwilling to act, and they are separated:

Hermione was only minimally aware of the smiles and arm pats bestowed upon her by the other Order members... Snape stood motionless, the crowd separating them, as Ron tugged on her hand and Harry herded her from behind... She did not see him again.

At the end of the prologue Hermione loses contact with Severus on both physical and emotional levels, and this scene also marks the beginning of dystopia from Hermione's point of view. The appearance of Hermione's friends and her nearly forced separation from Severus interrupts the conventional narrative development from initial relationship to dystopia on the one hand, and on the other it functions as a barrier that initiates the actual story and intensifies the story's thematic. Without it, the storyline would have required that Severus act on either his hidden feelings for Hermione or on his reluctance of them - in other words, the end result would have to be, in any case, either the culmination of the romance, or emotional separation. Clearly, the romance cannot reach its culmination this early, especially with these characters: there is so much that is unsaid and still incomplete between Severus and Hermione that romance at this point would seem illogical. Therefore, separation is necessary for the story's development. Curiously, and somewhat uncharacteristically of Hermione/Severus – stories, their separation is not the cause of an argument or a power struggle within their relationship, and it is also not caused by Severus's reluctance to love (as it often is in these kind of stories), but by an outside intrusion. The separation happens before either character has the chance to explore their feelings, which in turn postpones the inevitable clash between them when feelings are finally laid bare for both to see.

Furthermore, as the story progresses on to the first chapter, the timeline expands further several years and leaves open the events taking place after Severus and Hermione's embrace. In the beginning of the first chapter, Hermione has been struggling with her feelings for Severus ever since their last encounter and it is revealed in her conversation with Dumbledore that she still wants him and has been trying to reach him:

“He is a difficult man, my dear. Are you certain there is not another future you would rather pursue?” Hermione used the handkerchief to blot the damnable tears, careful not to smear her make up. “I'm not certain that I have any choice in the matter, sir. He doesn't respond to my owls, and he's not here. He has no interest in my future. Obviously.”

It seems that Hermione has made some form of confession in her letters to Severus, which indicates that she has not built any barriers for her feelings. This seems a common way of building Hermione's character in fan stories: she is usually depicted as a self-assured young woman who is not ashamed or afraid of her feelings. The braveness usually associated with Hermione (which comes from her being in Gryffindor house, whose one characteristic is bravery; see Rowling, 1997:88) is seen in the way she has approached Severus by letters (owls) and has not, until this scene in the story, been intimidated by his unresponsiveness. From Severus's point of view, Hermione's behavior is, perhaps, indicative of her youth and innocence - to him, her attempts at approaching him may seem naïve and childish. Taking this character analysis further, Severus's character is most often described in fan stories as a private man and paranoid about other people's feelings. This time, too, the underlying reason for why he has not responded to Hermione may be that he believes her attempts at approaching him are a joke on his expense.

Severus's unresponsiveness to her is met by a movement that places Hermione in his proximity at Hogwarts. Her time away from the school is necessary for the story: it stresses her maturity and echoes the underlying moral values of the story. Severus is a tricky character in the sense that his reluctance is, from the fan point of view, so all encompassing that it requires a lot of explaining and rewriting to change his mind. In this case, it means that Hermione must be mature enough for Severus to notice her. Her maturity, however, is not enough: no matter how attracted he might be to her, he is reluctant to make any moves. Therefore, Hermione has to be placed at Hogwarts, but this time as an adult and Severus's colleague, so that there is no question about the morals of their romance. Hermione returns to Hogwarts, per Dumbledore's request, as Severus's assistant - a role that not only has her working in the same building with Severus, but physically very close to him. Hermione's coming to Hogwarts is not easy on Severus, who does acknowledge on some level that he feels something for her:

Severus sat forward and poured another goblet of wine, then drained half of it. He did not enjoy reminiscing. There were very few fond memories from his past that he would voluntarily recall. However, a crisis was upon him now, and he was brooding.

Hermione Granger. The insufferable, buck-toothed, bushy-haired, know-it-all little pain-in-the-arse of a Gryffindor student, with that preposterous name, had become an alluring, educated, enticing woman, with a head of soft brown curls, perfectly proportioned teeth - hell,

perfectly proportioned everything, as far as one could discern in those damn robes – and eyes the color of amber in firelight. She was a threat and he was giving her hell for it, but he needed a plan.

Severus identifies Hermione as a threat because of the feelings she causes in him. Severus does not elaborate on his emotions here, but elsewhere in conversation with Dumbledore, in which it is revealed that there is magic involved:

Severus stopped, at an uncharacteristic loss. Of all the people in the world, only in the presence of this man could he let own his guard. It did not, however, make it any easier for him to expose the least particle of vulnerability.

“Yes, Severus, I witnessed your moment with Hermione Granger when she was in fear of losing her parents’ lives. No, she has not been invited to Hogwarts to assist with the Education Symposium as a matchmaking attempt. I am fully aware of your sentiments on the subject, in spite of the – let us say, Special Circumstances – that exist between you. I do not, however, see why Miss Granger should be penalized when she wishes to accept the temporary position of Assistant Symposium Coordinator.

The ‘special circumstances’ Dumbledore refers to are later in the story revealed to mean the Enchantment – “Muggles call it Love at First Sight, Hermione, though a more accurate description would be love at first touch”, as Remus explains it to Hermione later on – rare magic that exists between two people, and in this case, between Severus and Hermione. For Severus, the enchantment means very little, because he feels love is a sign of vulnerability.

The Enchantment introduces the magic of the Potter universe into the plot and it is embedded in the plot as a crucial element that drives the story onward. It is rather curious how the element of magic is used to construct the romance between Severus and Hermione: it appears as if the construction of romance between these two needs every explanation possible to make it believable. Yet, at the same time the including of magic as the driving force behind the romance is a rather remarkable attempt at rewriting the internal rules of the source text’s universe concerning magic: if everything and anything else is possible in the Potter universe, why not this? Moreover, perhaps this is more than rewriting - perhaps this is a case of creating new in based loosely on the original universe’s basic functioning principles. If there are no formal, expressed rules to how magic really happens and exists within the source text, and if its terms of existence are ambiguous, fan fiction has numerous new options to

create and explain and repair the damage done by the author by not giving the reading audience a sufficient enough explanation of the universe's existence. This is one example of the reconstruction the *Harry Potter* universe goes through in fan fiction.

The Enchantment's purpose in the story is, without a doubt, to ensure that Severus and Hermione end up together, but before that can really happen, there are further issues that need to be resolved. The most important of them, Hermione's age, has already been solved by establishing that she is an adult. However, Severus seems intent on coming up with obstacles that complicate their relationship. Hermione's virginity is one of them:

It was a brave attempt, but Hermione paid him no mind; she was staring at Snape's face, now very attentive and focused on her. "I didn't take a tumble at Hogwarts. I haven't. Ever. Yet."

Merlin's beard! A virgin, a twenty-one-year-old virgin, of all the freaking bad luck... Well, that was a sobering thought, if ever he had one. Damn, damn, damn.

It is not entirely clear whether Hermione's virginity is a barrier in the sense Jenkins means; Severus thinks her virginity is unfortunate, but for whom? For him, or for Hermione, or for their increasing attraction to each other? The meaning behind 'sobering' seems rather ambiguous, as well: there is no certainty whether Severus means it in a very literal sense (the scene takes place in a pub; Severus, Hermione and their friends are inebriated) or with reference to his more romantic or sexual motives concerning Hermione. Severus has knowledge of the Enchantment from the beginning, and he spends a lot of time convincing himself that it would be a very bad idea to enter into a relationship with Hermione. The fact that she has never been with a man sexually possibly indicates that she is still waiting for the right one to come along, and that thought either scares or assures Severus. There is no indication that Severus would want Hermione only for sex. Rather, he seems intent on protecting her and not forcing her to be with him despite the Enchantment.

Severus is curiously contradicted in his feelings for Hermione: he does not want her, but he feels possessive and jealous of her, especially when she is in contact to other men. Severus's jealousy is partly explained by the Enchantment's power that is described as a feeling of "safety and security, of blinding passion, and of the inviolable rightness of [the pair's] coupling". Severus is clearly more aware of the magic's effect

than Hermione, but is at the same time rather less aware of his true feelings for her. Hermione, on the other hand, has accepted her attraction for him a long time ago – from the first time they embraced. However, the appearance of the Enchantment raises the question of whether Severus and Hermione would end up together without magic, and whether they are, after all, merely the victims of coincidence. Furthermore, although their ability to choose whether they want to obey the Enchantment is emphasized numerous times in the story, it appears they actually have no real choice. Severus in particular realizes this, as he is the one trying to resist it:

Severus had known, upon reflection, what had happened with Hermione in the kitchen at number twelve, Grimmauld Place, on that night three years before – Dumbledore could use the epithet “Special Circumstances,” but Severus knew it was the Enchantment. In the intervening time, Severus had tried to convince himself that it was something else, something less decisive, that he had felt with her when she embraced him.

Soon Severus gives up on trying controlling the Enchantment’s power over him:

Severus was conscious of a sensation as if the entire situation was spiraling out of his control with ever-accelerating speed. No longer was he agonizing over the choice he had to make; it was painfully clear to him that the choice had been made.

Evidently, the story’s main theme revolves around Severus’s need to control his emotions and reject the Enchantment’s power: at the opposite pole there is Hermione with her emotional freedom and unawareness of the magic that is binding her to Severus. The title of the story, *Master of Enchantment*, echoes the paradox of wanting to control the uncontrollable – the Enchantment, like emotions, has no master. In this sense magic functions in *Master of Enchantment* as a metaphor for emotions, and in this case in particular, for love.

Severus’s behavior, his need for control and the fact that his control is slipping, confuses Hermione. When she finally finds out about the Enchantment and Severus’s awareness of it, her fury has no limits: she lashes out on him and slaps him for the insult he hurls at her suggesting that she is sexually involved with Remus. Severus’s jealousy is revealed to Hermione, and she accepts his apology, but not his act of abandoning her after finding out about the Enchantment. Emotional separation and ambiguous reactions to the other’s emotions are typical of romance, as Radway

(1984:134) observes in the formulaic, until finally the hero opens up emotionally and treats the heroine tenderly, like Severus here:

Snape stepped in front of her, so that he could make full eye contact with her. “I’m not making fun, Hermione. You have quite a lot to be angry with me about. I just thought I’d address the slapping-offense first, so that we can move on to the things you’re REALLY angry with me about.”

To her amazement, she could clearly see that he was serious. He was not sneering or smirking or snarling; he was speaking to her with complete sincerity.

How totally unnerving.

Although Hermione is further confused by Severus’s sincerity, she is not willing to forget his resistance of the Enchantment’s imperative. She questions his motives for leaving her, and, fundamentally, the conversation becomes a negotiation of control and Hermione’s right to choose with whom she wants to be:

Snape took a deep, somewhat shaky breath. “That night, on Grimmauld Place...” his voice faded, almost as if he hoped she would pick up the narrative and begin speaking. Instead, she continued to stare at him with an unchanged expression.

“You were my student!” He knew it was a cowardly defense, but couldn’t help the urge to dodge her unwavering regard.

“Former student.”

“You were a child!”

“I was of age.”

“You were on your way to Bulgaria! To Krum!”

She stood so quickly that he actually cowered back in his chair before he caught himself. “I was on my way to UNIVERSITY. Viktor just happened to BE there. And you KNEW I would never... After feeling that... and you LET ME GO ANYWAY!”

He let the words hang between them for a moment. When he spoke, his voice was steady and unruffled. “I let you go. Yes.”

“You didn’t want me.” It was presented as a statement, but he heard the hurt, the uncertainty.

“Whether I wanted you or not was immaterial.”

Severus’s prime motive for letting her go is revealed later on, when he suggests that Hermione might want to reject the Enchantment’s power. Hermione takes a defensive stance and reminds Severus that she has a right to choose for herself – Severus does not need to make her decisions. It seems that Severus and Hermione represent two

different eras: Severus's value system is patriarchal, whereas Hermione is a modern female heroine. A clash of value systems is inevitable when all Severus wants is to be a knight in a shining armor rescuing a damsel in distress, even if he must rescue her from himself, and Hermione requests the right to choose her own fate. Severus's quest does not get its fulfillment, but his nobility is emphasized nonetheless: even with magic involved and, therefore, no questions asked about his morality, he is still reluctant to pursue a relationship with Hermione, because she might think him too old and ugly for her. Severus's insecurity is revealed, and Hermione's role becomes almost that of a selfless savior who gives Severus the love and comfort he has been lacking. When Severus acquiesces to her desire to comply the Enchantment, she gets the control and assumes an altogether different role than what Severus had in mind. She becomes his source of comfort, and ultimately, she saves him.

The universe's magical aspects intensify the romance's conclusion: Severus performs a mind-reading spell that allows both of them to see the other's memories, thoughts and emotions before the physical consummation of their relationship. Magic provides the story with uncharacteristic emotional openness that may serve as a distinguishing feature of fan fiction romance from popular romance. The ability to see to the other's mind guarantees that the romance has a genuine emotional basis, because the characters can share their emotions without having to describe them potentially inaccurately to each other. However, the use of such magic also paints a rather black-and-white picture of the characters' morality, as if everything either has ever done is accepted by the other once they see each other's motives. Hermione sees in Severus's mind his past as a Death Eater and accepts it without question, accepts his choice as necessary for him and forgives him. Similarly, Severus readily accepts Hermione's association with Harry though he dislikes him greatly. Moreover, Hermione is displayed to him as virtually flawless. Then again, perhaps this type of fan fiction that has no limits within the universe it exists is able to convey the most idealistic models of how romance should be and how love affects people. Severus and Hermione see no flaws in each other, and is that not the romantic ideal? Nevertheless, the scene is necessary in emphasizing the vulnerability of the characters and their complete trust in each other before they can be with each other spiritually and physically. The conclusive sex scene intensifies their mind link, but also shows the more traditional aspects of the story in the sense that it happens after an emotionally intense

conversation, in which the terms of the relationship are solved. There is no awkwardness afterwards, only the inevitable decision of marriage, which by default they both want as soon as possible. The implied ending in marriage parallels Radway's (1984) romance formulaic, and also repeats Jackson's (1999) suggestion of marriage as a highly desirable state for a woman.

4.2 Calling Card

In the beginning of the story, Hermione returns to England to meet Severus and inform him that she has completed the task he gave her last time they met. Ten years prior to the beginning of the story, Hermione had revealed her romantic feelings for Severus; he rejected her and told her to grow up. Hermione, now in her thirties, renews that confession and is on a mission to finally have Severus. Severus is still unbelieving of her feelings, and shoos her out of his life. Hermione leaves him a token, a mystery box sealed by powerful magic. By the time Severus has managed to open the little box, he has finally realized his true feelings for Hermione, and goes after her to Japan. A typical story structure is repeated in *Calling Card*: Hermione announces her emotions and intentions to Severus, who does not believe her because she is, in his eyes, ever the naïve little girl. She finds a way to prove herself to him, and he finally acknowledges his feelings for her.

The reader is pulled straight into the story with no previous information – other than the fact that the protagonists are Hermione and Severus. Severus is presented rather typically, as a man who values his privacy and does not wish to socialize:

“Get out, Miss Granger,” snarled Severus Snape as he looked at the woman comfortably ensconced upon the leather couch in his private chambers. He'd hoped never to have to see this particular witch again. It was far too uncomfortable.

In fanon it is established that Severus does not appreciate uninvited guests in his chambers at Hogwarts, and that only few people would feel comfortable in his presence. Therefore, it is noticeable in the first paragraph that Hermione appears to be quite comfortable despite Severus's negative reaction to her presence. Moreover, Severus feels uncomfortable in his own chambers because of her; the juxtaposition of comfortable and uncomfortable this early in the story, and particularly this way, reveals that this is not an ordinary meeting between Severus and Hermione. His wish

to never see Hermione again also reveals that he has not seen her for a while; therefore, she does not work at Hogwarts or possibly even at close proximity (the traditional locations are either Hogwarts, the Ministry of Magic or London). Further, the fact that she makes him uncomfortable and that he would have hoped to never see her *again* suggests that there is something left unsettled between them. Their shared history and the source of his discomfort are soon revealed:

Something had indeed changed over the course of ten years... Hermione Granger was no longer the trembling, but courageous, twenty-one-year-old who'd met the Dark Lord at the side of her closest friends – and Severus – in the final victorious battle between the Death Eaters and the Order of the Phoenix. [...]

Grudgingly, Severus had to admit that she'd matured into a self-assured, striking woman. Nothing was left of the student, save her intelligence and her bright, inquisitive brown eyes. Somewhere deep in his mind, he missed the forthright eagerness of the young woman she'd been.

However, intelligent or not, former student or not, this was a witch who'd infiltrated his privacy, a transgression he didn't accept lightly from anyone [...] She was too unsettling to his equanimity. Fury all but pulsed in the room as it radiated off his body, while he addressed her once again, condescension firmly in place.

“I believe I was quite explicit in my rebuff of your...affections... ten years ago, Miss Granger. With your much vaunted intelligence, although notably absent when you chose to invade my home, I am more than certain that you will understand that you are not welcome now. Get out, immediately.”

Although it is not explicitly stated, Severus clearly feels emotionally threatened by Hermione, as he feels she is “too unsettling for his equanimity” and refers to her visit as “a transgression” and an “infiltration of privacy”. He hides whatever positive feelings he might have for Hermione, and there is rarely a reason for it, other than his personal issues with feelings and the vulnerability he associates to them. Moreover, it seems that Severus is angry over the fact that Hermione has managed to invade his home – clearly she has not been invited – without his knowledge. Hermione's invasion to his home might also be a metaphor for her invasion in his thoughts, which Severus enjoys even less because he likes to be in control.

Hermione's almost unusual confidence is visible in her behavior: she appears calm and collected in front of Severus, and even the reader is fooled for a moment. Yet, a careful shift in point of view reveals Hermione's inner turmoil:

“Charming as ever, Severus,” Hermione coolly replied as she bent to retrieve a small box she’d set on the pile of books which littered his coffee table. This entire trip had been speculative, and Hermione Granger never gambled with something she was unprepared to lose. But he’d never been hers to lose. That was entirely the point. Her heart beat rapidly, and she struggled to maintain her formidable composure. Severus would’ve been surprised to know that she’d learned how from him. [...]

To Severus, Hermione remains cool and composed, but the reader is let in on Hermione’s hidden feelings and nervousness – which effectively remind that this cool and calculating appearing heroine is still the fanon Hermione who wears her heart on her sleeve and usually lets her feelings show. It is also notable that Hermione keeps Severus in high regard and looks up to him: she attributes her confidence and her skill of masking her inner feelings as something she learned from him. He is ever her teacher, and she possibly wishes to please him by becoming like him; if she becomes more like him, he might respect her more and grow to care for her. Her compliance and way of thinking about him is visible her literal interpretation of his wish to leave and grow up (italics original):

“I simply wanted to inform you, Professor, that I have, at long last, yesterday in fact, completed the final assignment you gave me. August 30, 2011.” [...]

“Let me see if I recall the exact wording, Professor Snape. The date of the assignment is indelibly etched into my memory. June 25, two days after the fall of Voldemort, and the wholesale death of many of my friends. We were in your office and you shouted, *‘Leave my sight, Miss Granger. Go out into the world. Conquer your field, whatever you determine that to be, you silly little girl. Spare me your histrionics and grow up. Fall in love, get your heart broken by someone equally immature, attempt to use your brain instead of regurgitating facts and information, and perhaps, in time, you will actually fall in love as an adult. But, whatever you do, Miss Granger, spare me your puppy-like enthusiasm and delayed school girl crush. It is not appreciated, nor requited. You waste my time. Get out, Miss Granger.’*” [...]

“I left your sight, spared you my *‘histrionics’* and *‘puppy-like enthusiasm’*. July 30, 2001, I left England to go out into the world to *‘conquer’* my field. It’s taken some time but, gratifyingly, I’ve found some measure of success.”

What first seemed like a regression to patriarchy (when she leaves him and obeys his command) on Hermione’s part is effectively turned around by her sarcastically over-literal interpretation of his “directions” to her. Hermione, in quoting word for word

Severus's speech to her, shows a sense of humor perhaps rarely seen in H/S fan fiction and also a different sort of self-awareness (and an ironic awareness of the traditional fanon characterization of her). It is clear that Hermione misunderstood his words on purpose, as if saying to him: "Fine, if that is what it takes..." and now Severus is in a position where he cannot complain or rebuke her. She has done everything he ever asked and shown her respect by complying him. She has gained enough life experience to be deemed worthy of Severus, and yet, her persona has grown different from what he would have expected. In fact, Hermione's entire character is built differently from the other stories. Maturity is one of the key issues nearly always present in H/S –fan fiction, and all five stories in this study touch on the subject one way or the other. Hermione's young age is a major conflict that causes dystopic emotions in Severus.

Hermione's gained maturity is emphasized in all the stories in her age or her status as an adult and/or Severus's colleague. *Calling Card* is an exception: Hermione gains maturity outside Severus's orbit, and yet, he is instrumental in her personal growth. She is not made ready for him, and his opinion of her is hard to change. Essentially, in *Calling Card* they seem to have very little common ground from which to expand, and that is exactly the point: Hermione and Severus must learn to know each other as adults. In this sense, *Calling Card* remains loyal to the *Potter* canon; there is no artificially crafted emotion between Hermione and Severus in their past, other than Hermione's feelings for him which seemed as unbelievable to Severus as it would have seemed in the source text.

Severus's reaction shows just how different Hermione is: he is surprised into speechlessness by her words, which traditionally in H/S fan fiction does not happen during their initial encounter. Then again, this is not their first encounter; Hermione is reliving a similar instance ten years prior when Severus was not at all surprised or flattered by her admission of feelings for him. That was a different Hermione, the fan writer might say, and indeed it was: Hermione has spent the ten years she would, in any other H/S story, get to spend with Severus, in Japan with another man. Those ten years away make her a 31-year-old woman, which is a notable exception even in the canon of *Harry Potter* fan fiction, as fan stories traditionally concentrate on the teenage years or the immediate future after the end of the school years of the original series' protagonists. Even within the H/S –fandom, Hermione is usually portrayed as a

young woman – young meaning any age between 18 and 29. Thirty seems to be the near absolute limit, possibly because thirty seems an age when Hermione, from the fan writer's point of view, should be married and have children (in H/S –fandom with Severus, of course). Exceptionally, Hermione is a widow, too, and her deceased husband is neither Ron nor Harry. The ten year gap in the story's history, her time away in Japan, add depth to Hermione's character, as she can now say to Severus with complete sincerity that her feelings for him are real, and not the imagination of a silly little girl. During those ten years, her feelings for him never went away, despite her marriage to another man. They may have changed at the onset of her adulthood, matured with her experiences, but stayed with her nonetheless.

If Hermione's feelings are still intact, so is Severus's reluctance to open his heart to anyone. The same ten years that served to strengthen Hermione's resolve made Severus even more guarded in his emotions. It is revealed that Severus had not been entirely alone during those ten years, and perhaps he had his mind set on another woman already when Hermione approached him. The reason why Severus does not welcome any intrusions on his privacy or his feelings is that he was deceived, and he still lives within the dystopia it caused:

When his engagement to Narcissa had been broken, Severus had been stripped of his last sustaining illusion. Even now, he found it difficult to believe that he'd had any remaining illusions which could've been tarnished. He'd been wrong. Painfully wrong. Severus had initially followed Lucius Malfoy into the depths of servitude and debasement for what he'd believed was the requited devotion of a witch with whom he'd fallen in love when he was seventeen. He'd thought that by remaining in Lucius' favor he could be near the object of his teenaged devotion. Narcissa had, for two decades, judiciously fed the lie that she'd married Lucius only because of familial obligations, never fully declaring herself to Severus until after Lucius' death. Severus had remained faithful, ruthlessly crushing any potential penchant he might have formed for another witch during the long years that he'd cherished his teenaged ideal.

After he'd severed the engagement, Severus berated himself harshly for not recognizing the signs of her insincerity, but had ruefully acknowledged that he'd been only too happy to claim what he'd considered was just his reward for twenty years of heartbreaking loneliness and life-threatening espionage. Narcissa Black was his first love.

There appears a curious correspondence in Narcissa's character with Radway's (1984:131) analysis of the ideal romance and the typical female characters in it:

“the heroine's sexual innocence, unselfconscious beauty, and desire for love are contrasted in the ideal romance with the female foil's self-interested pursuit of a comfortable social position...the female foil is perfectly willing to manipulate [men] by flaunting her sexual availability. [...] This rival woman is the perfect incarnation of the calculating female whom the hero detests and thinks he sees hidden behind the heroine's beguiling façade.”

It seems Severus is unable to distinguish Hermione from Narcissa, especially since Hermione has matured into a self-assured woman and is no longer naïve and innocent. When Severus sees Hermione for the first time in ten years, he even finds himself missing the young girl Hermione had been, perhaps because she was more predictable ten years prior. Moreover, the narrative of Severus's past with Narcissa while Hermione was gone parallels the original series: Severus turns to Lord Voldemort and finds himself the victim of deception, and the same happens with Narcissa. Hermione now offers herself to him again and gives him a second chance like Dumbledore offered him a second chance as a spy when he had joined the ranks of Voldemort; she is the real “reward” for his sacrifice for the Order.

Yet, he lets her go once again – or rather, does not stop her from going. She leaves him a token, a little box that is tightly sealed with magic. He wonders what the box might contain, and his first reaction is to destroy it, as he believes there is nothing in the world she could give him. The box refuses to be destroyed by any means he tries, and becomes a puzzle he intends to solve. “Severus had always enjoyed a good puzzle,” the narrator reveals, and the link to Hermione is established. The box becomes a metaphor of Hermione and her meaning: Severus has a hard time believing that she could love him and wonders what her real motive is – or in other words, what her “contents” are. At the same time, he is trying to open the box and determine its contents. Every new step towards opening the box brings him closer to Hermione and her devotion to him, and soon she is a fixed part of his thoughts. The box becomes Hermione in Severus's thoughts, and he deals with his issues concerning her simultaneously with the task of opening the box. Mostly he battles with uncertainty over her feelings for him and frustration for not being able to solve the puzzle; what

remains constant is the box's unharmed state no matter what he does and similarly, Hermione's love for him despite his flaws.

The magical box and its functioning principles is a good example of how magic aids romance in the *Harry Potter* –fandom. Magic, and in this case the box in particular, enables the use of a different story structure and use of characters: as has already been covered, Hermione's absence is rather exceptional and made possible by the box – the symbolical Hermione. Moreover, the box represents Hermione in other ways, as well: it is an example of her work in Japan (which raises her value in Severus's eyes), a personal gift from her (and symbolical of her respect for him) and its opening is regulated by passwords that are linked to Severus as a person (which shows Hermione's devotion to him). In addition, since the magic of the *Potter* universe functions so ambiguously and sometimes illogically, it is easy to come up with new charms and spells; in *Calling Card* Hermione has come up with a way to include taped messages to the box that are repeated either after Severus solves pieces of the puzzle, or on specific dates. The box contains an aspect of the real Hermione, her voice.

The point of view of narration is somewhat ambiguous in *Calling Card*. Most of the story is told from Severus's point of view, but occasional shifts to Hermione's point of view are not uncommon. A possible explanation for narrative ambiguity and shifts from one point of view to another is that it ensures the familiarity of both characters. If *Calling Card* were narrated from Severus's point of view only, Hermione's character would become distant and cold – both attributes that are rarely, if ever, associated with Hermione. The same applies to Severus: if his inner thoughts were not revealed in the narration, his character would remain as distant as it is in the original text. In this sense Severus's point of view is more crucial than Hermione's: from the fan author's point of view, Severus needs every bit of vindication and repair he can get after the damage he has been done in the original text, and therefore, he is given a more pronounced narrative voice in fan fiction.

Even though the story itself is not narrated entirely from the point of view of a female character, it is notable that Hermione is in a sense the very focus of narration – the focus of the story, as the reader is pulled into Severus's mind. The story is heavily centered on the relationship between Severus and Hermione, and it focuses particularly on Severus's thoughts and memories of her. The use of different points of view, or that

of Severus, is not exceptional, but Hermione's physical absence is noteworthy. More often than not she is in Severus's physical vicinity, and her nearness turns out fatal for Severus's resistance. This time she is physically far away from Severus, but emotionally closer than in many other stories; moreover, it turns out that Hermione does not need to be close to him to get under his skin and into his thoughts. She is not altogether away from him, however; the box she leaves behind functions as a sort of facsimile of her, or at least on a symbolical level represents her. I believe Hermione's absence from the actual story (or her character's physical absence, as she is present in Severus's mind) serves a point: from Hermione's point of view, the romance has already developed near its conclusion. She has given her confession to Severus and has settled any issues she might have had concerning Severus and the possible relationship with him. Severus, however, begins the process of developing towards romance in the beginning of the story, and he must come to terms with his issues and obstacles before the romance can come true. Hermione's character would be a distraction in Severus's development, and on the other hand, her not being there intensifies Severus's need for her.

The change that takes place in Severus as the story progresses is palpable. At the beginning, there is the familiar Severus, snarls and sneers and all, who displays a significant amount of impatience in front of anyone whom he deems is merely trying to humiliate him by making him vulnerable. His anger towards Hermione is not necessarily personal, but he is able to personify it easily when he finds out that despite her misfortunes in life, she has had happiness, too. Anger is his way of getting closer to her; his thoughts of her are, at first, grudgingly respectful. She intrigues him after her visit, but it only serves to subdue his anger minimally, and whatever positive thoughts he has of her he suffocates:

As intriguing as the box was, his anger at Hermione simmered, ready to boil over if she returned. He carefully outlined scathing remarks to put the impudent witch in her place. She didn't return. Severus would scowl at the box, thinking of the brown-eyed chit, rocking the palm-sized trinket in his hands, epithets swirling in his brain. Bushy-haired swot. Know-it-all. Gryffindor brain. Brilliant. Innovative. When his thoughts turned complimentary, he'd snort derisively and put the box out of his reach. Invariably, and only moments later, he'd pick it up once more. [...]

His emotions progress in stages, and Hermione seems aware that if she gives him enough time to make up his mind, he will eventually come to him. Indeed, his irritation is soon replaced by jealousy of Hermione, then appreciation of her talents as he manages to solve pieces of her puzzle (the box), and soon enough, he dreams of her and misses her presence. When he decides to go after her to Japan, it is clear that the romance's conclusion is coming. It is refreshing in H/S –fan fiction that Severus pursues Hermione in the end, that she has the power to imply that if he wants her, he should come and get her, and not the other way around. Hogwarts is Severus's home, and it is remarkable that he would leave it in order to get to Hermione, given that he is portrayed as unwilling to sacrifice any more of himself for anyone. His willingness to open his heart to her does not come out of nowhere, however. He feels no one really respects the work he has done or acknowledges the sacrifices he has made – perhaps a reference to how fans feel Severus is treated in the source text – and he chooses emotional isolation. Hermione's gift, when finally opened, reveals that she understands:

Severus felt the unfamiliar sting of tears prick his eyelids [...] Hermione had given him her Order of Merlin, First Class. Her medal. A medal she'd earned, and one he'd coveted all his adult life...the true recognition for his sacrifices. By Mithras' Golden Horns, she'd truly understood. She'd acknowledged the debt to him.

[...] How could he ever repay her, to thank her for this gift? It was so much more than a memento, or a polite social gesture. It was an acknowledgement that someone, some where knew just how much he'd deserved the medal, and had rectified the injustice. It was more than anyone else had done.

Gods, but he admired the witch, the remarkable, stubborn, brilliant witch who'd tormented him with her enigmatic puzzle that had led him on a path to self-realization... and who would never come to him again.
[...]

Hermione's gesture finally assures him of her love, and he takes a risk in going after her when he is not sure whether she would still have him. Moreover, it is now evident that this story, although emphasizes romance, is really about Severus and the wrongs he has had to endure (again, in fanon and according to fan interpretations of the source text). It is a story of Severus and his humanity as is never told in the source text.

In conclusion, Severus's journey to Japan is rewarded: Hermione accepts him and the romance receives its ending. Genre-typically, the explicit sex scenes are placed in the

end as a strengthening element to the romance, and are preceded by a conversation between Severus and Hermione to make sure that the sex is a manifestation of their love and not a mindless act. Afterwards, the story ascends to true utopia in Severus's suggestion that he quit his job in England to be with Hermione; he states that he does not have to work, that he can retire and that he has never really liked teaching. In closing, the story has a distinct feel of salvaging Severus from whatever horrible fate he is given in the source text, and Hermione's character is recreated for him as his reward more so than in any of the other four stories.

In *Calling Card* Severus' objectives and actions make him a good man – if not in the eyes of the entire world, then at least in Hermione's eyes. This is one crucial instance of the interpretive practices of fan writers: in stories of Severus and Hermione, Hermione's feelings are almost always explained by her respect and admiration for Severus, which, for the fan community, are visible in the original series. Any vile action against Harry or his friends Severus has to commit in the original series is often explained by his need to keep his guise as a spy for Harry's nemesis, the evil Lord Voldemort. Further, many fan writers in the Severus/Hermione -fandom depict Severus as a penitent man with a grudging respect for Hermione's intellect. In *Calling Card* he appears as a loyal man, embittered by the disrespect and ungratefulness of others. This is a typical setting in fan stories of Severus and Hermione: Hermione has never doubted Severus' morals and always stands up for him in front of her friends (namely, Harry Potter and Ronald Weasley) or anyone else doubting Severus' loyalties. Severus wants that appreciation, but not from Hermione because he thinks she is only joking and playing with his emotions. The key point is that Hermione rarely questions or doubts Severus – an instance that shows the way fan writers possibly wanted the series to end: in complete absolution of Severus in the face of the revelation that he was working for the good side all along. Severus does receive his retribution in the original series (Rowling, 2007); however, the conclusion of the original series is immaterial, and fan writers have been preparing for their own “damage control” of Severus's character for a long time.

4.3 I Have a Secret

The story begins with the narrator's opening: “I have a secret”. The narrator does not illustrate or explain that secret any further than that, but given the nature of the story

and the pairing it focuses on, it is easy to assume that the secret has something to do with Severus or Hermione. Leaving the secret hanging like this sets the mood of the story: it is expectant, but at the same time, it radiates a sense of certainty that the secret will be revealed in due course. Consequently, the thematic of the story emphasizes the meaning of the secret, and the story arch is built upon it.

Right after the admission of the secret, the narrator launches into the story, and it becomes clear that the narrator is Hermione. It is now the summer after her graduation from Hogwarts, and Voldemort is gone. Hermione explains her plans briefly and moves on to her previous relationships with Ron and Harry:

Ron and I had tried to date, in our sixth year. It hadn't worked. I pointed him at Luna's direction; she's as mad for Quidditch as he is... Harry and I had tried to date, in our sixth year. It had worked only slightly better – Ginny was a better match for him, and I made sure both of them were aware of that. They still blushed when they held hands; it was very sweet.

Hermione's short reference to Ron, Harry and her matchmaking make her seem grown up: she handles the situation with adult-like calmness, not offended in the slightest over her break-ups with either boy, and has even pushed them to the direction of other girls. Most Severus/Hermione –stories have to deal with Hermione's relationship with either Ron or Harry, or like in this case, both. Often, it is Hermione who realizes very quickly that she is not right for Ron nor Harry, and that she needs a man instead of a boy. This story is no exception: with both boys having dealt with quite conveniently, the reader has only to wait for Hermione's confession of wanting Severus.

Severus does not appear in the story's beginning; Albus Dumbledore, the headmaster of Hogwarts, visits Hermione to tell that Severus has gone missing, and Hermione has to substitute him as Potions professor. Albus assures Hermione that she is the best option he has, and that she is capable of teaching. That Albus is hiring Hermione right after graduation with what seem like flimsy grounds (“You're the best one I could find on such short notice”, “You're more than capable” and “The fact that you know it's a great responsibility alone is reassurance enough”) emphasize Hermione's unusual intelligence, sense of responsibility and, what is most important, her adult status. The importance of Hermione's adulthood is explained later on.

First glimpses of the secret are echoed in Hermione's reaction when she hears about Severus's disappearance:

Albus gave me a sober look and said, "It's Severus. He's...well, he's missing."

It was a good thing I didn't already have a cup or saucer in my hands, as they would've tumbled either to my lap or to the floor at that point. Pressing a hand to my sternum to try to suppress the pounding of my heart, I stared at the Headmaster, stricken...I rubbed at the flat spot above and between my breasts, my palm sliding over the knit cotton of my tee. My heart still hurt. Snape, missing? Possibly in danger?

Hermione's concern over Severus is an indicator of her feelings; in the original novels, Severus does not earn much caring from others, especially from his students. Hermione is not, of course, his student anymore in this story, and furthermore, Hermione does express some concern and respect for Severus in the original novels. However, the pounding and hurting of her heart implies that her concern is rooted deeper and in emotions of the romantic type – after all, heart is traditionally associated with romance. Moreover, Hermione repeats the gesture of rubbing her sternum three times, and every time it is connected to Severus.

Hermione's feelings for Severus are confirmed in a conversation with Minerva McGonagall, a fellow teacher:

"If he ever got over being such a sourpuss, I think he'd be perfect for late-night radio. You know, the kind where they play all the romantic songs, and the announcers speak in sultry, bedroom tones..."

"Minerva!" I gasped, and tried to make it a mockery with my hand pressed to my upper chest once again. "For shame, lusting after a fellow teacher like that."

Use of the word 'mockery' reveals that Hermione is trying to keep her feelings secret, but the reason behind it is not elaborated upon. Curiously, what happens in the story in Severus's absence is Hermione's gradual transformation into a teacher like she never thought to become. Hermione's ideal as a teacher clashes with her inexperience and need to succeed:

I'd imagined myself as a teacher, of course; it's an appealing line of career for someone as bookish and interested in education as me. I'd be utterly unlike Severus Snape, of course; I'd be kind, and generous with House points, and ever so patient with my pupils...except these weren't my pupils. These were my friends, and they'd give me hell, without remorse.

Hermione's quest for authority is connected to the writer's need to portray Hermione as an adult and equal of Severus, not only because of their impending romance, but because of the additional plot twist of having Hermione teaching pupils only a year younger than she is. Interestingly, the two seem to go hand in hand; Hermione ventures into Severus's bedroom, finds a talking portrait of him (everything is possible in this universe) who demands to know why she is in there and refuses to consider Hermione as Severus's equal. Hermione quickly recovers from the portraits comments and finds her authority:

“Miss Granger – “

“ – Professor Granger, to you!” I snapped, and was astounded when Painted-Snape subsided into silence.

And there it was. My key to authority and discipline within the classroom. I was going to be teaching Snape's classes...so why not teach them the Snape way?

Hermione not only obtains her authority (and therefore, power) with the help of Painted-Snape, but with the help of the real Severus as she becomes more like him. Severus's implied dominance as a male character becomes Hermione's strength and ticket to equality, first in the eyes of the pupils, and later on in the eyes of Severus himself. As Hermione progresses in teaching, she begins to position herself both as the opposite of and identical to Severus. This double-position is most apparent in Hermione's appearance: she gets a set of teaching robes similar to Severus's, but in midnight blue instead of black because she wants to appear feminine (in contrast to Severus's masculinity) and imagines her “cinnamon brown eyes” sweeping the classroom with “an echo of stygian black”. In the classroom she adopts a tone of voice that resembles Severus, and her warmth (usually associated with Hermione in fan stories) is replaced by the contrasting coldness of Severus. Hermione's transformation into a facsimile of Severus is a good example of how fan fiction stories make use of androgyny and the blurring of gender characteristics. Hermione has masculine attributes that appear in her teaching mode, but she remains female all the same. Moreover, the masculine traits are not just any masculine traits, but those she identifies as apparent in her romantic interest. Hermione modifies herself, both consciously and unconsciously, to suit Severus's tastes, or what she might imagine are his tastes, based on his personality.

As the story progresses, Hermione finds a way to track Severus: by blackmailing the portrait. Hermione as a Gryffindor in the original text would most likely not resort to such morally dubious acts. However, in the realm of fan fiction Hermione is often given certain edginess in terms of morality, especially when she is romantically associated with Severus. Blackmailing the portrait leaves Hermione with a clue that the key to finding him is something he wants, but which Hermione will not give him. Somewhat ironically, the trigger to getting the information she needs from the portrait in order to find Severus is connected to her own realization of the depth of her secret:

“...God, she is worse than the Potions master! It’s like we traded Snape for Mrs. Snape!”

I whirled on the hapless idiot who dared profane my – I paused, subduing him with merely a hard glare, a tumbling whirl of thoughts in my head. Mrs. Snape. Marriage. Longing, and wistfulness.

My secret.

Through this, Hermione realizes that what Severus wants from her is exactly what she wants to give him, but what she thought he would never accept: a kiss from her, symbolizing her love. The portrait accepts the kiss and tells Hermione where Severus is. Severus’s confession of his feelings to Hermione is inevitably tied to her finding him: by giving him what he wants from her – love – she is able to find him. Severus takes no risks; the only way for his feelings to be revealed, Hermione will have to do the same. There is more than insecurity behind Severus’s reasoning, but before it is revealed, Hermione’s secret gains more depth.

The real Severus has been absent from the story so far. When Hermione finds him in Argentina under the alias Sebastian Portio, Severus’s physicality is described for the first time through Hermione’s eyes. Her first look at him is somewhat objective:

The man sitting at the desk in the office across from the entryway looked only somewhat like the man I’d known for seven long years. The nose was still his, and the black hair still fell to his shoulders, but his sallow skin had darkened considerably with exposure to the South American sun.

From here, Hermione’s account of him becomes rather subjective and colored by her emotions; she describes his smile as “devastatingly charming” and “masculine” and observes him “rising to his feet with more grace than he’d ever displayed before”, noting how she had always thought of him as “more of a hungry panther than a

flapping bat”. She herself assumes a false identity, Belladonna, and transforms her appearance so that he does not recognize her. She wears a translation amulet that allows her to speak and understand Spanish, and incidentally, the amulet has Severus’s face carved on it. Severus as Sebastian agrees to teach Hermione as Belladonna the tango, and things progress from flirty to heated quite rapidly:

By the end of the dance, I was anticipating his every move...and in such a state of heated longing, when the music ended and he flung me over in a dramatic dip, I clutched at the back of his head and pulled us together into a kiss. Lungs heaving, lips panting, I devoured his mouth.

If Hermione’s actions seem rash, so is her cried out confession “Te amo!” as the kiss goes on. Severus stops the kiss at this, and notices the amulet she has and tears it off her neck. Hermione runs away before he has a chance to realize her identity.

After her encounter with Severus, Hermione’s secret is revealed completely, and so are her motives for running away from Severus at the crucial moment:

I was thinking only of myself, of course. Myself and my own sordid needs. My own sick little obsession.

I had a secret, all right.

I have been in love with my dreaded, nasty, sour, acerbic, greasy-haired, black-hearted bastard of a Potions Master since Day One. That first Friday at Hogwarts, in my very first year. Oh, it probably wasn’t love back then, more like puppy love. The kind of damned little rugrat-dog love that yips and barks annoyingly, until all you want to do is stomp on it to put it out of its misery...but you can’t. Because it comes with those big, adorable eyes, and you know in your heart it’s a fragile little thing. And even when *he* kicks it, reminds you that no one likes a know-it-all, and mocks your teeth, and is cruel to you and your friends for seven long years, you know it’s sick, and wrong, and some twisted mockery of the universe that you could be in love with *him*, obsess over *him* for a good chunk of your life...!

Hermione’s moral dilemma over her love for Severus keeps her from revealing her true feelings and casts a realistic shade on the story. Hermione, despite her young age and inexperience, is not portrayed as naïve. She is vulnerable, certainly, but her inner monologue is an indication of her maturity and understanding – both characteristics she needs to be Severus’s equal. Moreover, Hermione acknowledges the cruelty she has had to endure from Severus, but instead of it dampening her love for him, it only strengthens it. The way she refers to her loving him as an obsession echoes the unease she feels about the potential problems of her being much younger than him and him

having been her teacher. Worry over the same issues is also apparent in the way her maturity is emphasized throughout the story: the writer has taken excess care that Hermione is made an adult, not a student or an apprentice.

The same pondering of morality is evident in Severus, too. When the story shifts to his point of view, he begins with the same line “I had a secret”, and describes his love for Hermione. His feelings are revealed much earlier than hers, perhaps as a marker of his maturity over hers. He is quicker to admit his feelings, and quicker to feel guilt over them:

The damned thing had haunted me for years. I deserved every epithet thrown at me, by my enemies and my so-called allies and friends. Bastard. Traitor. Pervert. Well, they didn't accuse me of that last one very often, at least not to my face, but it applied. Oh, it applied to me, alright.

I was watching her turning into a young woman right in front of my eyes...and I had a disturbingly hard time looking away. That was when I first suspected the depths of my perversion. I'd turned away from it as forcefully as I could, was as cruel and mean to her as ever...

The way he tells about his interest in her and calls it a perversion parallels Hermione's thoughts of her love for him, an obsession. On the one hand, obsession and perversion both imply the moral problems Hermione and Severus fear; on the other, naming their emotions as such creates barriers that, when broken, intensify the culmination point of the romance. Curiously, the first time Hermione reveals her secret and her obsession is when she feels she has ruined every chance of being with him – as if to explain that there was never any hope because she is obsessed. The same happens with Severus:

I wanted to replace every last memory of her that I could, to root out the perversion in my heart. I even tried dating women, real adult women...

And there was this treacherous voice deep down inside that whispered, *she's an adult now...and no longer your student*. Yet I knew that she'd never see me as I saw her. Not after the way I'd treated her, for all I'd had no other, palatable choice. Not when I knew very well how much older I was than her – old enough to be her father – and how much uglier I was than her young, delicate beauty.

So I stayed, because I could not go back while I still clung to my secret, unable to let go.

The secret they share is not only their feelings for one another, but also the obsessive and perverse nature of their feelings. Hermione's obsession is in the way she becomes

more like Severus when she teaches his class, and Severus's perversion is in his disinterest for "real, adult women" and inability to forget Hermione.

The shift in the narrator's voice allows the reader to gain a more objective impression of Severus. It becomes clear rather early on that the attributes associated with Severus – cruelty, coldness and selfishness in dealing with others – are almost entirely absent. The depth of his feelings and his account of them makes him both softer and more vulnerable – both traditionally female characteristics. Moreover, his non-traditionalism as the male protagonist in romance is evident in his protecting of Hermione: rather than act on his growing attraction, no matter how illicit, he leaves England in order to save Hermione from himself. His concern for her and his own love for her is seen in his disinterest in other women, and in his encounter with the disguised Hermione. He feels shame for wanting someone other (he thinks) than Hermione, and his final decision to refuse Belladonna is made because of his love for Hermione.

What further distinguishes Severus as a non-traditional male character is his emotional openness and desire for Hermione's love – even if it is only for the reader's eyes:

Not only do I love Hermione Granger, meddlesome know-it-all and holy teaching terror – oh was (sic) a delicious combination! She's smart and sexy and utterly delectable as a colleague and fellow adult, far more so than she ever was as a forbidden student! – I know that she loves me, too.

The issue of equality is raised here again; only this time Severus gives Hermione the absolution that she is his equal. Her equality is, perhaps unnecessarily, emphasized also in his wish for her to pursue whatever profession she likes. Moreover, he places himself as her equal in dealing with emotions: he observes Hermione's emotions quite clearly and reassures her accordingly, revealing his own insecurity to level the ground:

She hesitated, still looking a bit panicky, and inclined to flight. I was feeling a bit panicky too, if I were honest. So I closed in for the kill, still holding her gaze as I brought her hand to my sternum, and flattened it against my hard-thudding chest.

"...Do you feel that? The rhythm of my heart? How fiercely it pounds at your touch?" I whispered, as she slowly relaxed in my grip.

Both characters are a mixture of traditional and non-traditional traits. Hermione is a traditional romance heroine in that she is virginal, intelligent and rather unconcerned of her appearance, but still beautiful. Severus's traditionality is seen in his possessive side

and in the way he realizes his status as male and older and thus more mature than Hermione. He is sexually experienced and more confident than Hermione. His untraditional traits emerge as insecurity of Hermione's feelings for him, his freedom in expressing his emotions to Hermione and his self-control of sexuality. Despite Hermione's innocence, she is, however, the one who initiates the sexual intimacy:

...when the music ended and he flung me over in a dramatic dip, I clutched at the back of his head and pulled us together into a kiss. Lungs heaving and lips panting, I devoured his mouth.

Her suddenness surprises Severus, and as is evident, he was not expecting her to act like she does. Here, the narration shifts to Severus:

An apology hovered in my mouth; I parted my lips to deliver it –
She startled me by devouring it, throwing her arms around my neck and pressing herself tightly to me.

Basically, the roles of male and female are occasionally reversed within the story, giving Hermione the power she needs to be Severus's equal, and also giving Severus the emotional depth he needs in order to give Hermione enough space in the relationship. In addition to this, Severus is the one expressing his desire for marriage to Hermione, and Hermione's reaction to his request is rather unusual one:

“I think I can get a special marriage license before the end of the year...”

Her head lifted from my shoulder, and a touch of the tartness of the classroom colored her voice. “Funny, I don't recall you asking me to be your bride.”

Hermione's response is a clear indication of her desire to have some control over their relationship, and Severus's acquiescence to her will further distances him from the traditional male character. Severus takes the role of the female even in his wish to have children with Hermione when he decides that their additional bedroom would be spared for “any children that resulted”. Of course, the narrator is now Severus, and Hermione's point of view on the matter is never expressed. Nevertheless, Severus's wishes of marriage and children are those traditionally associated with women. The story is traditional in its conclusion: at the end Severus and Hermione are engaged, but not yet married, and their relationship is left at its budding stage. In conclusion, Severus and Hermione's characters are equalized to correspond to each other, and their

equality as adults and teachers is emphasized, as is their sharing of living space, office and the secret that began the story.

4.4 Playing the Game

Like *I Have a Secret*, *Playing the Game* is told from both Severus's and Hermione's point of view. The structure of the story is not as clear-cut in terms of the narrator; the point of view shifts unexpectedly within the chapters. The story begins with Severus's point of view at the beginning of a new school term at Hogwarts. He sees Hermione moving "towards him with infinite grace" and realizes she has come back to Hogwarts to teach. Severus is described feeling instantly drawn to her:

There was something so untouched about her. She still had that indefinable quality that he had lost so long ago, and for one unguarded moment he forgot the irritating child she had been, forgot the many times his impatience had been like a whip, and instead he found himself drawn in. Rather like a weary, old moth to a sparkling bright flame.

Severus is contrasted to Hermione right here in the beginning: Severus still associates her with the child she was, thus remembering her innocence and noting that she still has it, whereas he has lost it. Moreover, her innocence and his jadedness are connected to their ages in general – Severus thinks himself as a weary old moth, whereas Hermione is still young and sparkling as a flame. Her youth and innocence attract Severus, because he has neither of those qualities. Further, Severus has difficulties forgetting Hermione's child persona, despite his reaction to her and the knowledge that she is an adult:

For the first time in many years, Severus felt something warm and distantly familiar uncurl in the pit of his stomach. He stomped on it immediately, like a stray Billywig under his shoe. The languid sensation was immediately recognisable. He was strangely pleased to discover himself still capable of desire, but he *knew* this girl...*woman*...he'd be cured of the sensation the second she opened her mouth.

What is noteworthy at the beginning of the story, is that Severus has not felt sexual desire for some time, and it is Hermione that awakens him despite their shared past as a teacher and a student. Moreover, the immediacy of his physical reaction to her emphasizes the extraordinary quality of Hermione that is present in many Severus/Hermione –stories: he is cold and cruel, and has been that even more towards Hermione in the source text, and yet Hermione now melts his coldness quickly. This is

a familiar plot device in this particular fan fiction genre, and it shows the fan interpretation of Severus and Hermione being perfectly matched because of their shared intelligence and for their oppositional qualities.

Severus's reaction to Hermione is ambiguous: he reacts to her with desire, but does not want to acknowledge his desire or his jealousy when Hermione greets the Hogwarts' staff affectionately. His spiking jealousy is masked as regret over his past choices (becoming one of Lord Voldemort's Death Eaters) that have excluded him from the company of friends. He acknowledges the feel of isolation from others, but not his obviously growing interest for Hermione. When Hermione finally reaches him at the staff table to greet him, the first impression of Hermione's character is revealed:

Suddenly she stood at his elbow, her eyes on his face. He was uncomfortably aware of her nearness but years of controlling and concealing his emotions assured him he would not betray himself now, not over something this trivial. She watched him with confidence, as though she expected no less than a warm welcome, which surprised him since there had never been any real kindness between them.

This reveals a curious contradiction in Hermione's character as seen through Severus's eyes, and that echoes his ambiguity for her: she is simultaneously innocent (untouched), infinitely graceful and confident. Traditionally, the female character is unsure of the male hero's intentions, whereas the hero exudes confidence and charm; here, the roles are reversed and Severus feels insecure in comparison to Hermione and her calmness. Moreover, it becomes clear that the roles are reversed further, when later on in the story Hermione expresses her intent to Severus to pursue him romantically – normally an act of the male hero. Her announcement is explicit enough and does not very much room for misinterpretation; she tells Severus clearly and without doubt that she wants him. Her straightforward attitude is exceptional for a female character, and the heroine at that; traditionally, the heroine's innocence and chastity keep her from saying such things up front to the hero. Hermione's character is exceptional (and realistic, too) in the sense that despite her innocence (virginity, as is later revealed) she knows what she wants. Sexual inexperience does not mean inability to express desire.

Hermione's announcement of her intentions and her independence irritates Severus for two reasons: first, he feels out of control himself, and second, his insecurity and self-consciousness make him believe Hermione is fooling him:

Severus hated being wound up almost as much as he hated being laughed at. He knew perfectly well that he was considered one of the Wizarding World's least eligible bachelors...

There was no excuse for this woman to stand there and mock him. Just because he was neither attractive nor companionable didn't mean he still didn't have a man's needs! He gathered his breath to put the spiteful tease in her place.

Severus's masculinity is emphasized in his mentioning of "a man's needs" that seem to suggest his needs differ from Hermione's. Perhaps the expression means to imply that Hermione is after emotional commitment, whereas Severus concentrates more on his physical needs (trademark of the traditional male hero). Moreover, Severus's intent to "put the spiteful tease in her place" suggests that Hermione, because she is a woman, should not attract men in such a sexual manner when she clearly is after more than sex. However, despite the fact that Severus is drawn to Hermione's physicality, there are deeper feelings involved: he feels protective of her, and is jealous of any other male that gets her attention. His jealousy is perhaps most visible in his doubt about Hermione being involved with Harry. Severus's emotions are curiously contrasting and ambiguous; he does not welcome Hermione's advances, but is overcome with jealousy and possessive feelings when she gives her attention to other men. In a sense, Severus plays the part of a traditional heroine: he is playing hard to get (however unconsciously) and secretly likes being pursued by Hermione, despite his insistence that he is not interested in her.

Hermione, however, is not discouraged of Severus's reluctance, but takes it as a sure sign that he is simply in denial of his feelings. Hermione is more in touch with her feelings, but shows surprising logic in dealing with them when she ponders whether she really is in love with Severus. Moreover, she is rather critical of her feelings. She isolates them from herself as an independent entity and blames them for settling on Severus. Yet, she is never unsure or hesitant of her intentions, and she is happy to declare the age-old "all is fair in love and war":

The fact that he was avoiding her told her that he wasn't completely immune to her. She sighed heavily. Still, he was obviously trying to prove himself unmoved by her declaration of intent...*or war?* She smiled to herself. Well, a little thing like resistance was not going to deter her.

Hermione breaks free of the mold of the traditional female heroine in her actions toward Severus: despite her virginity, she focuses on overt seduction by way of ascertaining Severus's interest in her. She does not expect him to declare his undying love for her, but trusts that she will see the physical evidence of his interest once she gets close to him. Her endeavor to seduce him rather than wait for him to act is unusual in traditional romance, where the heroine is utterly at the mercy of the hero. Moreover, the story exploits the traditional and the expected characterization of romance rather well; it is visible in Hermione's actions and understanding of what is stereotypically thought of the male psyche – that men are first and foremost interested in sex and not emotions.

In the face of the impending seduction, Severus does not act accordingly to what a traditional male hero, perhaps, would. Hermione wants to wish him happy Christmas by sleeping with him, which does not go well: Severus declines her offer and wounds her emotionally, too:

Severus' senses were returning, as were his suspicions. There was usually a catch when a woman wanted to sleep with him.

“Is that your gift then?” he sneered, stepping away from her. “Do you usually give your body away for Christmas? Perhaps I am not interested in recycled presents.”

Severus watched the barrier come crashing down over her expressive features. She struggled to speak, her voice low and choked.

This scene echoes the impression of the traditional romance's heroine: if she is interested in sex before the actual relationship, she is promiscuous and therefore morally dubious. However, it is not necessarily that Severus really believes her to be promiscuous; he is unsure of her motives and even more insecure of himself, which leads him to assault her verbally. Nevertheless, there is a slight revert here to the traditional romance in terms of characterization, at least in Severus. Furthermore, although the reference to Hermione's promiscuity is merely Severus's interpretation, and not even that since he does not believe it himself, there is the underlying assumption that if Hermione indeed had offered herself to men before, the act would not be respectable, no matter how willingly done. There is also the fact that Hermione really is virginal in the story that echoes the characterization of the traditional heroine.

Curiously, the emotional distancing that would be expected after such an episode as that, never really happens. Hermione, though angry at first because of the rejection, is able to think somewhat logically of the situation and work her mind around it:

Despite her impotent fury, Hermione could not help but relive every delicious moment of the ninety seconds during which his mouth had caressed hers. The memory rolled through her mind as clearly as if she were watching it in a Pensieve. The sensation of his warm lips, and the wet heat of his tongue, caused a renewed shudder of pleasure to run through her. The way he had pulled her into his arms, molding her against him, as she pressed up against the hardness of his...

Hermione froze and re-ran the thought. She was certain. He *had* been aroused by her – very aroused if the strength of the evidence was anything to go by. *So then why had he said...?*

Oh, you idiot! she berated herself. *Of course!* She had caught him by surprise and he was a man who liked to be in control. No wonder he had reacted badly.

I can work around this. She smiled, much calmer now. As her mind started working through the options, she wondering if her tactics were slightly Slytherin after all.

Although Hermione's thought process here resembles the ideal romance – the heroine interpreting the hero's cruelty as the product of previous hurt – her grasp of Severus's personality goes beyond that. She knows Severus's nature, and applies that knowledge in a logical manner that has very little to do with the traditional heroine who is, despite her intelligence, incredibly naïve and slightly illogical in her behavior.

Of course, Severus aggressive reaction is an indication of how he perceives the situation in general: from his point of view, Hermione is offering nothing but sex – or, perhaps that is what he wants to think in order to avoid any emotional issues. Traditionally, showing sexual interest is associated with the hero, to which the heroine responds with anger, and here the roles are reversed. However, Hermione's initial reaction to the rejection resembles the romance formulaic: she responds with anger when he thinks she is offering sex only. Essentially, then, their reactions are the same; both think that the other only wants sex, although their interpretations of the situation are different.

What is remarkable is that Hermione's tactic of approach is based on a very masculine view of romance – that of physical desire and sex – and she disregards the need for deep emotion as the beginning point of a relationship. She thinks, rather

uncharacteristically for a female character, that desire is as much a starting point as anything else. If sex is what makes Severus interested in her otherwise, then so be it – and not just in a self-sacrificial way, since she feels the same desire for him. Overall, Hermione is a very modern heroine who, perhaps, reflects the change in women's sexuality in general: she is allowed to desire a man, but also allowed to keep her virginity a little longer until she finds, not necessarily her one true love, but a man whom she deems worthy of her body. Severus, however, represents a more traditional male character in the sense that to him sex and sexuality seem more sacred. His reaction to Hermione's suggestiveness and attempt at seducing him indicate that he is not ready to give Hermione, as a woman, the right to decide for herself. He decides for him, or tries to, that he is not deserving of her. Then again, perhaps his reaction reflects the personality given to him so often in fan stories: he sees himself as a lonely and embittered man with no future, and he certainly does not deserve any kind of happiness because of his past as a Death Eater. AS the male hero, Severus is somewhat uncharacteristic in his sense of honor and morals. The story depicts a very familiar battle between that sense and his human desire for Hermione – not just as a lover, but also as an emotional and spiritual companion.

Severus meets Hermione's adamant wish to spend one night with him with resistance, until he is driven to breaking point. This is a classic example of how the emotion of the romance intensifies and thickens as it is met with obstacles. Moreover, Severus's reasons for not wanting Hermione are rather realistic, at least from a fan's point of view, so the story does not suffer from extensive artificiality in terms of plot movement. Despite the obvious familiarity in Severus's character typology, the story deviates from traditional romance, and even traditional Hermione/Snape –fan fiction in its treatment of sex and desire: Severus does not initiate anything physical between himself and Hermione, not even when she explicitly wishes to spend the night with him. Severus eventually acquiesces to Hermione's wish and the necessary sex scene takes place. However, the sex scene does not end the story, and the pair is not united for good, which is almost entirely against the romance formulaic (and even the fan fiction formulaic, if there is one). Afterwards, the pair is separated as Hermione leaves Severus before he wakes – again an action usually associated with the male character. Hermione gives Severus the freedom to choose whether he now wants to be with her,

and is ready to accept his answer either way. Severus still agonizes over the choice he has to make, and the depth of his insecurity shows clearly:

She had vanished, and all that remained was her scent on his pillow and a scrap of parchment containing four words – words which simultaneously filled him with hope and despair. She clearly didn't know what she was saying, and it was just sex after all, wasn't it?

Severus noticed the empty dungeon corridors with a dull satisfaction – he was in no mood to deal with people. His world had been turned on its ear. He was too old for her, too empty. The life he had led, the things he had seen...she didn't deserve that darkness. She was young and pure and, Gods help him, she was too good for him.

But he wanted her. After holding her in his arms, his solitude was going to be all the more empty for it. Perhaps he would have been better off if he had never touched her at all. He had the luxury of being selfish, but he knew she deserved better. His face twisted bitterly.

His choice is not altogether clear, though his consideration implies that he is willing to give her more than the one night, because “she deserved better”. His thoughts show a more serious side of the story that goes beyond the moral issues implied; there is the careful deliberation on what it really means to him to care about her. He cares for her enough to want to protect her from the darkness he brings. On the other side of the coin is his own need for emotional safety that he finds in solitude; more than anything, he is afraid of getting hurt by her. That Severus is tuned to his feelings indicates that the emotional incapacity so often associated with masculinity is a myth, or at least the writer's perception of it implies so. The tradition of romance is perhaps best seen in Severus's depiction as an insecure man who believes himself unworthy of Hermione; after all, it is rarely the other way around. Moreover, Hermione is from his point of view almost angelic, a being of light he does not want to ruin. Darkness is still associated with masculinity and the male character, and the female character is the bringer of light and purity.

Given that the sex scene does not lead the couple together permanently, the story needs to feature another distancing element that adds to the emotional intensity. After the sex scene, Severus runs into an argument with Harry who blames him for playing with her and luring her to him. Severus, being face to face with his nemesis, loses his temper, and the scene ends badly:

“What I have done?” Severus snarled at him, and his temper snapped.
 “That woman has been a thorn in my side since the two of you arrived! I

have done nothing but attempt to preserve my privacy and dignity, neither of which she appears to respect. She has been a constant nuisance since the day she set foot in this castle with her romantic whims and idiotic ideas about some imagined nobility that she wants to find within me.”

They were nose to nose now, and Severus was almost shouting.

“I am not interested in *anything* she has to offer me. All I want from HER and from YOU is to be LEFT ALONE!”

Hermione overhears their conversation and misinterprets his comment to mean he really does not want her. It is curious how she comes to the conclusion, given that in so far she has shown understanding in his personality and has been confident in her dealings with him. Hermione’s actions are juxtaposed in the sense that she abandons logic and follows her emotional reaction, and does not give Severus a chance to explain. The innate curiosity she is so often attributed is suddenly gone, and she runs from him. This creates the final, story-intensifying conflict between them. The separation is, of course, necessary to intensify the romance and to move the plot along, but there is a hint of artificiality in the plot device.

Moreover, the final showdown of the story includes a set of scenes in which Hermione is fatally injured before Severus has the opportunity to resolve the situation. Hermione lies unconscious for days, and he stays by her side. Finally, at the last minute, Severus pleads for her to come back, and she regains consciousness. Severus leaves her to wake up, afraid that she would not want him anymore. Hermione, then, believes that he does not care for her since he is not by her bed, and the final resolution is suspended again. When finally she finds out that he was there all along, she goes to him. The final confrontation is a repeat performance of the entire story, only this time both characters see the other’s point of view. For the reader, this seems an unnecessary repetition, which is the weakness of a story told from two points of view. The characters’ true emotions are revealed to the reader early on, but they still have to share that knowledge with each other.

Despite the fact that the story’s focus is mainly on Severus’s resistance that would appear to pave way for a non-conclusive ending, the story ends in Severus and Hermione’s wedding. Although fan fiction is generally free of pressure in terms of genre-typical plot solutions, there still appears to be a need for a sense of finality and closure that marriage brings to the romance. In this sense the story, and many

Hermione/Snape –stories in general, are in accordance with the tradition of popular romance. What seems rather exceptional, though, is that the wedding is seen only from Severus’s point of view, with particular emphasis on the joy he feels:

And now he stood waiting for her. He could hardly believe this beautiful, brilliant young woman would become his wife today. Severus was grateful for her tenacity and determination that had ultimately led them both there.

The story does not let on how much time has passed between the last chapter and the epilogue; nevertheless, only the culmination points of the romance are described, as is traditional of romance fiction. However, the epilogue ends before the wedding ceremony has even begun, thus leaving open the story’s conclusion. Therefore, the closure only goes as far as implying matrimonial bliss, and what follows from the wedding is left open, which in turn makes it possible for other fan writers to continue the story. In this sense, fan fiction feeds on itself in a never-ending spiral of new story choices.

4.5 Like You Mean It

Like You Mean It begins with the familiar movement of relocating Hermione at Hogwarts. This time, though, she does not return there as a teacher, but as librarian. Hermione’s position as Hogwarts’ librarian is significant because of the connection it creates to Severus. Hermione is described as bookish in the source text, and according to the fanon her love for books and reading rivals that of Severus’s. Bookishness is usually the one factor that unites Severus and Hermione and levels the ground in fan fiction; once Severus realizes Hermione’s interest in literature, he starts to think of her on a more equal basis. Moreover, placing Hermione as the librarian puts Severus in the position of being temporarily under her control, and in addition it gives Hermione her own territory within Hogwarts. Her need to have some control over him is mentioned at the very beginning:

All term long, she had been waiting. Patiently, she watched. She suspected that his private collection contained more than enough to keep him informed, but still... there must come a time when he needed it. When he needed her in order to get it. Because now, she was the one in control. Now she was the only one who could give out the password to enter the Restricted Section without assistance.

Furthermore, her thoughts express a desire to be needed by Severus that is directly connected to her feelings for him. Similarly to the stories already introduced in this study, Hermione knows she wants Severus and has known it for some time (ever since she was seventeen). Now, as an adult, she is free to act on her desire. Severus, then, again reacts ambiguously to her reappearance at Hogwarts – not because it is her in specific, but because his character typology dictates his behavior. If he reacted any differently, he would be out of character. Severus sees Hermione as nothing but an annoyance who is now restricting his entrance to the library's limited part and wants to damage her self-esteem on account of that, without realizing that Hermione is romantically interested in him:

Snape's plan to damage Hermione's self-esteem and make her miserable for his own entertainment might have been effective, had Hermione in fact been unrequited of a love for either Harry or Ron. As it was, he just grew more confused, over the next few days, as Hermione breezed happily about the near-empty school, admiring the Christmas decorations, leaving little presents for the staff members, and pulling crackers on Christmas morning with as much enthusiasm as the students and Dumbledore. He tried making cutting remarks about her friends at every opportunity, but she seemed unruffled by it, seemed in fact oddly eager to continue conversing with him.

Curiously, Severus's behavior seems to herald his impending attraction to her: if he were truly uninterested, he would not pay any attention to her. His attempt at hurting her is typical behavior that seems to translate in fanon into a display of interest. After all, as Millman (2006) observes, there is a connection to the traditional playground romance when a boy picks on the girl he likes. Severus is surprised by the lack of a specific reaction in Hermione, and rightly so: in fanon, Hermione often defends her friends heatedly when commented upon negatively. However, when she is paired with Severus, she seems to acquire what in fanon is thought of as additional maturity and neutrality that appeals to Severus. Moreover, Hermione's personality is slightly different from usual fanon in this story; she seems ever more confident and, on the other hand, full of good humor and appears modern in her view on men, romance and herself. Her attitude is particularly visible in a conversation with her friend Ginny, who asks her about her plans on Severus:

“What next?” Hermione made a show of removing her cloak and brushing snow off it. “Nothing serious, I suppose. I don't think he really notices me, so it's all just for amusement value at this point anyway. Poor thing, he's really a little dense, isn't he?” Ginny nodded.

“Aren’t they all. More’s the pity. Still, otherwise they wouldn’t nearly be such easy prey, would they?”

Although the latter comment on men being easy prey is Ginny’s, the tone of the conversation implies, perhaps, that Hermione’s view on men is similar. In any case it indicates that Hermione does not take herself too seriously, which is untraditional behavior of her even in fanon. Then again, it appears the story itself is not very serious, but focuses more on the playful aspect of romance. Playfulness is present in the way the plot develops, and especially how Severus’s character transforms from the familiar insecurity and coldness to flirtatious and almost upbeat: in the beginning his thoughts of Hermione are rather snarky and sneering, until he realizes she is flirting with him. In comes the traditional incredulity of her motives, until the final shift to acceptance of her and his emotions takes place rather quickly in comparison with other similar romance stories of Hermione and Severus.

The humor of both characters is seen in particular in an exchange that happens in the library, with Hermione explaining her approach to magical subjects and Severus commenting her oddness:

“Hermione, you’re... an extremely odd woman,” he said, with the same intensity. It didn’t sound quite as much like an insult as he’d suddenly feared it might. At least, she didn’t seem to take it as such. She considered his words briefly, weighing her response.

“Severus.” She paused, giving him the chance to challenge her familiarity before going on, “Are you attempting to tell me I’m unlike any woman you’ve ever met?” Her soft, affectionate tone made it clear she was genuinely asking, not challenging.

What is particularly noticeable is that Severus worries over the interpretation his words might cause; clearly, he no longer wants to make her miserable. Moreover, he is still unsure of how she might see him, but seems willing to take a risk in responding to her flirting. In addition, Hermione’s response implies that she is, again, familiar with Severus’s personality, and is able to identify his comment as slightly suggestive. Her understanding of him is especially visible in her pause that gives Severus an opportunity to correct her the way she addresses him – Severus is usually portrayed as protective of his privacy and detached from others, and dislikes being called by his first name until a close enough relationship is established. Strangely, Severus’s first name is rarely used in the story – the writer instead uses the more distant “Snape” and

only occasionally refers to him as Severus. Likely there is no correspondence between the use of his surname and the level of intimacy between him and Hermione, but it is a curious observation, nonetheless, that is possibly connected to the fan perception of Severus and his personality.

The conversation between Severus and Hermione initiates a set of events that transform their relationship, beginning with the identification of similar emotions:

His eyes held hers in a stare that was longer than strictly appropriate for colleagues, and each suddenly recognized the other's intensity for the raw want that it was.

After this, they implicitly address each other's desire by working out an arrangement: Severus agrees to help Hermione oversee a detention at the library with the promise to help her clean the library. Of course, their arrangement is intended to save them both in case they have misinterpreted the situation, and furthermore, it is also a diversion for the rest of the staff and the students. It seems that Severus and Hermione are both reluctant to make their interest in one another public knowledge just yet. The scene may also be a conscious decision on the part of the writer to suspend the culmination of the romance a little longer. Indeed, it seems rather traditional of Hermione/Snape – fan fiction that the romance does not reach its conclusion too quickly. Given that the storyline does not provide any obvious obstacles to the romance by way of additional characters (such as the female foil or an added male character as competition), the delaying element has to be constructed otherwise. The story progresses rapidly to a seduction scene that begins in the library (chapter 4), but takes a somewhat surprising turn towards a more emotional scene:

“Trust me,” he whispered into her ear, nibbling lightly and ending with a firmer nip on her earlobe that sent an almost painful jolt of arousal down both her legs.

“To do what?” she laughed in a strained voice, almost sobbing with need, and then in a ragged whisper, “I’ve always trusted you.”

His eyes flew to her face, but she had her eyes closed, head thrown back against the row of books, exposing the smooth line of her throat; he could see her swallow convulsively, and the flicker of her rapid pulse below her jaw.

“To do what?” He whispered back, and she blinked in surprise. He was staring at her with a wholly uncharacteristic look comprised of suspicion, horrified fascination, and a hint of yearning that had little to do with passion. The sudden drastic shift threw her off.

Hermione's admission of trust alludes that there is more at stake here, and the way Severus clings to it and requests explanation suggests that he is, perhaps uncharacteristically of a stereotypical male hero, interested in more than sex. For plot development this moment carries particular importance, as it shifts the story back from what is beginning to resemble the explicitly pornographic (and nothing more) plot-what-plot –fan fiction, to romance. Although it is apparent that sex and physical intimacy are an important part of romance fan fiction and that they no longer have to be placed into a specific order, a romance story needs the emotional aspects to make sense of the sex scenes. This seems to apply particularly to Hermione and Severus; Hermione is rarely characterized as a promiscuous man-eater who is emotionally detached, and Severus is likewise rarely interested in only sex. Therefore, any (and many) sex scenes between the pair have strong emotional grounds, and the necessary clarifying of feelings and motives coincides with their increasing desire and attraction.

The emotional separation is similar to the scene in *Playing the Game*: Severus loses his temper when he and Hermione are interrupted by Hermione's ex-colleague, de Sortilege, whom the reader knows is an old wizard and like a grandfather to Hermione. Severus, of course, is not aware of Hermione's relationship to him, and misinterprets the situation entirely, thinking that Hermione arranged for de Sortilege to appear at the crucial moment. He accuses her for playing games and humiliating him, even though he can clearly see that de Sortilege is not a threat to him. He storms out of her room, and soon it is revealed that he realizes the reason for his behavior is rooted deep:

Snape knew he'd been a prat.

At some level, he knew that his leaving had little to do with any real or imagined slight from the obviously congenial and benevolent de Sortilege, and everything to do with his sudden terror at realizing how jealous he had been. In a few short weeks, without even having bedded the girl, he was brought to a place where his emotions seemed suddenly too much with him. Emotions he'd spent most of his life working to suppress, to sublimate to turn to his own purposes or forget altogether. Emotions he usually felt *able to control*.

Two points in particular are important here. First, there is the mentioning of control and the implication that Severus and Hermione's relationship is, essentially, a battle for control – not necessarily control over the other, but control over one's self. Hermione feels the need to be in control of herself when she first meets Severus, and Severus, when he realizes his feelings for her, feels reluctant to let go. Second, the

theme of the story – the acquiescence and the “everlasting yes” – is echoed here, when Severus refuses to believe Hermione, or in other words, give her the “yes” that would be required for their romance to develop. Moreover, when Hermione requests his everlasting yes in the library (“yes” being the password that is problematic for Severus) and tells him to say it like he means it, she is not only referring to the password; she means that he needs to mean his “yes” in order to have her, and mean it in a sense of relinquishing control to her.

Overall, Hermione appears more certain in her feelings for Severus, and is therefore more prepared to work on correcting the situation they are in. Uncharacteristically for a female heroine, she goes to Severus, and the decision to pursue a romance with him is hers alone. Moreover, she goes to him with the intent to finish what they started physically, which is another indication of an atypical heroine:

“What is I you want from me, Miss Gra-” At her warning sound, he stopped, but couldn’t bring himself to say her name.

“I want to have sex with you. I thought I made that abundantly clear. Say what you like about workplace involvement, we’re going to be colleagues for a long time, and I don’t intend to spend what may be a lifetime lusting after you silently.”

Clearly, Hermione is no innocent virgin in this story. In fact, the subject of sexual innocence is never touched upon. It is rather surprising, since Hermione is, more often than not, virginal and also insistent to give herself to a man who deserves her. Her desire for a man is often expressly emphasized, but in this story there is no emphasis on Severus’s sufficient maturity and intelligence to become her sexual partner. In that sense, the story’s focus is rather realistically on human sexuality in general, and not on Hermione’s noble quest to provide Severus with love and comfort. This story deviates from the others in its treatment of the heroine: she is allowed to have a sexual nature and express her need and/or desire for male company without any implicit reproach.

Hermione is, thus, in many ways rather masculine a heroine, at least in terms of behavior. She does not display typically feminine insecurity over her appearance or the meaning of sex to her relationship with Severus, and she is fully prepared to use her sexuality to have her needs met. However, her sexual confidence is nothing new in fanon: hers and Severus’s roles are quite often reversed similarly as can be concluded from the stories included in the analysis. What is dissimilar in this story is that

Hermione's role as the initiator is constant to the end. From a more feminist point of view, the story features scenes of female enabling, the most impressive of them including Hermione taking advantage of the (perhaps) stereotypical idea of men losing all self-control in front of an undressing woman. Hermione, uncharacteristically, skips the emotionality and need for talk in favor of action, and even disregards Severus's offensive comment:

“You see what,” he sneered, “that you've accomplished your goal of humiliating me? That the bat of dungeons has feelings to be hurt? Don't flatter yourself by reading any deeper meaning into my departure; I simply realized how completely inadvisable it was to pursue intimacy with someone such as yourself.”

“Such as myself? Such as what, exactly?”

“A work colleague. A headstrong, immature, child. A foolish – what the hell are you doing?” For Hermione had risen from her seat, kicked off her shoes, and begun, almost casually, to remove her robe.

“Just getting comfortable. Don't let me stop you. You were calling me an immature child,” she responded coolly, beginning to unbutton the white silk blouse revealed by the discarded robe.

“Why are you doing this?” he said hoarsely, he cleared his throat. His eyes hadn't left her hands and the increasing swath of bared skin beneath.

“Do you honestly think that my mind will be changed by such a blatant display of... uh. Uhhhh.”

Hermione's response reveals her confidence, and also shows how she does not think Severus's reasoning very convincing. Severus's reasons for not wanting to pursue a relationship with her are the same as in the other stories, but what is different is that Hermione in this story sees through him. She sees that there is no need for conversation, because Severus is always resistive; the best action to take is to quieten his mind and its artificial reasons by other means. She does exactly what is unexpected of a heroine, but what, perhaps, every fan reader deep down wants her to do. The scene evolves into the necessary sex scene that was interrupted previously, and the sex scene functions as the culmination and end point of the story arch. The fact that the story does not include any definitive description of how their relationship evolved after sex echoes the sexual emphasis of the story on general. Except for the brief conversation Severus and Hermione have in the library of their deeper feelings, the issues of actual romance and serious relationship and commitment are never touched upon. In addition to this, the fact that Hermione desires Severus first and foremost on a physical level,

and that she gets his attention by seducing him, implies the one thing that is, perhaps, rarely admitted in romance fiction: eroticism plays an important role in romance.

Finally, the epilogue paints a picture of Severus and Hermione as having a sort of conversation rarely associated with main characters of romance:

Snape stood at the high counter at the front of the library, his dark, sleek head bent towards the lighter, bushier one of the librarian with whom he appeared to be arguing. Her finger repeatedly stabbed toward an open book on the counter, and he repeatedly shook his head. He turned a page, gestured towards it, and smirked as she threw her hands up in the air with evident disgust. Then, strangely, she looked at the clock on the wall, and turned back to Snape with a smile, seeming to ask him something. He nodded, rapped his knuckles thoughtfully on the countertop and glanced at the clock himself before waving a hand towards the roped-off portion of the library stacks. Hermione rolled her eyes and gave her head a little shake, though with a fondly tolerant expression, and began making preparations to close up the library for the evening.

It is evident in this paragraph that Severus and Hermione consider themselves to be equal in the relationship – indeed, equal enough to have an argumentative conversation that has nothing to do with their personal relationship to one another. This scene appears to be a rare glimpse into the routine of a romantic relationship so often lacking in traditional romance fiction. Moreover, their ability to have a conversation and enjoy each other's company without any indication to love is rather uncharacteristic; yet, it is clear from Severus and Hermione's compatible behavior that the writer has included a deeper connection between them. Furthermore, the epilogue binds the story together by referring to the beginning when Hermione asks for Severus to mean his 'yes' in order to gain entrance to the Restricted Section, and the meaning of the 'yes' is connected to Severus's fear of losing control. Metaphorically, Hermione becomes the Restricted Section, and Severus gains entrance to her (in many ways) by giving up control. The last scene pays homage to Severus and shows that he has not lost all of his control, and that Hermione, on the other hand, is not completely under his control either. She still manages the Restricted Section, and herself; Severus has proven himself worthy by admitting some of his control to her. In closing, the title of the epilogue chapter, *The Everlasting Yes*, is possibly a reference to the relationship's seriousness that is otherwise left undecided within the story.

5 BINDING RITUALS

In this chapter I draw together the conclusions of the analysis and aim at answering the research questions presented in chapter 3. First I concentrate on questions one and two and provide a summary of the conflicts and challenges of H/S romance and their resolutions within the stories. Following that, I discuss the problem presented in question three: the possible purpose of H/S fan fiction and its implications to the philosophy of fan fiction in general. Finally, I discuss the future prospects of fan fiction research and the possible issues facing it. The purpose of this chapter is not to provide absolute truths of fan fiction romance. Indeed, anything and everything I say is an interpretation of the select five fan fiction stories, of the fan interpretations behind those stories, and of the source text – the Potter novels.

5.1 Creating conflicts: Songs of Innocence and Experience

Based on the interpretation of the data consisting of five H/S romance stories, I have formed a collective synthesis of themes of conflict that traditionally appear within the genre in question. I present the themes here in order to approach the research questions concerning the typical conflicts and their solutions in H/S romance (detailed questions can be found in chapter 3). My triad of themes of conflict goes as follows:

1. Innocence vs. Experience
2. Conflict of Morality
3. Emotion and Vulnerability

Fundamentally, all three thematic categories imply the juxtaposition of Severus and Hermione. Severus is the more experienced of them, both in age and the life he has lived. Hermione contrasts with this in her innocence, youth, and inexperience. The problem lays mostly on Severus and his insistence that Hermione in her twenties or thirties is no different from the teenager she once was, and on his reluctance to accept her change. Hermione's innocence brings further issues: Severus thinks himself too jaded for Hermione, and he doubts the integrity of her feelings for him. First, he believes her romantic propositions are a joke on his expense, which is directly linked to Hermione's history as Harry Potter's best friend and Severus's antagonism towards

Harry and everyone associated with him. Second, his opinion of Hermione as a naïve girl colors his interpretation and makes him believe Hermione does not understand the nature of love and relationships.

Morality coincides with the issues of innocence and experience in the sense that Severus's past (and therefore, his life experiences) makes him morally ambiguous; the history he shares with Voldemort and the Death Eaters has left its mark on him – literally in the tattoo he carries on his arm and metaphorically on his soul – and he fears to ruin everyone and anyone close to him because of it. Hermione has lived a pure life, as far as the fan interpretation goes; the war against Voldemort (that is inevitably mentioned in H/S –fan fiction) has not erased her idealism and faith in good. Moreover, her faith extends to Severus, but her unquestionable trust in him is met with resistance from his side, and he uses that trust as one example of her naivety. The base argument Severus relies on is that no one as innocent as Hermione should be attracted to a destructive character like himself, because they would not understand each other.

The third theme of emotion and vulnerability goes hand in hand with conflicts of the characters' moral conflicts. Hermione's idealistic faith in good enables her to display a greater range of emotion than Severus, who suffocates his feelings in fear of becoming vulnerable. His fear connects to his past as a Death Eater as well as his childhood; according to the fanon interpretation of Severus, he learned early on from his parents that any emotion can be exploited, and that love in particular leads to destruction and violence. His association with the Death Eaters verified his disposition, and his role as a double agent required that he keep his feelings hidden. The five stories all showcase a timeline in which the war has ended and Severus is a free man; yet, his attitude is hard to change, and the onset of romantic feelings Hermione awakens in him frighten him further. To him, Hermione appears as an enemy intent on destroying the safety net he has built himself of emotional distance and isolation.

Simply put, the conflicts add to the emotional intensity of the stories when they remain unresolved and suspend the romance to its breaking point. At the very last moment, when the characters go through a final emotional separation, the issues are resolved and the romance culminates in a breakdown of barriers that leads to a union of the hero and heroine. This is a repetition of a typical pattern in romance, and as Jackson (1999:116) observes, the romance never enters the routine stage. The promise of

obstacles partly influences the life cycle of the romance; once the obstacles are removed and the romance flourishes, the story ends, and as is evident in my data, sometimes even without closure.

As the thematic categorization of conflicts inherently returns to the issue of Hermione's innocence, the fundamental solution to all conflicts can be found within her character typology. It is evident in the data that Hermione's character is rewritten as an adult character, and thus equal to Severus. Age is not a sufficient guarantee of equality; Severus holds onto his idea of Hermione as a teenage girl with a silly crush, and is convinced otherwise only after Hermione proves her professionalism and cunning intelligence to be a match for his own. This is achieved by placing Hermione at Hogwarts, permanently or temporarily, so that Severus's interest in her awakens. Because of their shared history through Harry and the war, Severus instinctively dwells on thoughts of her long enough to become attracted to her. However, since Severus is emotionally withdrawn, his feelings and thoughts of her, once roused, fluctuate between desire and anger. At this point, Hermione needs to give him some distance, either physically or emotionally. This is the breaking point where Severus despairs and decides to throw all caution to the wind despite his fear of becoming vulnerable. Essentially, the central issue is of stability: Hermione has emotional stability, but her position is unstable in Severus's eyes, and Severus is emotionally unstable because of his fear, but his position is stable and superior to Hermione. Once the ground is leveled and equality ensured, Hermione is able to draw Severus's emotional side out.

In closing, the juxtaposition of Severus and Hermione functions as a conflicting element, but it also draws them together. A unified interpretation of character typology in the data is that Severus is portrayed as a lone, tragic hero who lacks other people's respect for the sacrifices he has to make during the wizarding world's war against Voldemort. Hermione shows him more respect than anyone in wanting to know him better and this draws him to her. Hermione, then, is a misunderstood heroine: she is far too serious and adult-like for her young contemporaries. She has difficulties connecting romantically with anyone, not because a lack of passion, but because she is, as a woman, more than any man *her age* can handle. Severus, being older and more experienced, can handle her and replace her innocence and inexperience. In Hermione

Severus finds a rough diamond that ends up being his salvation and reward for the lonely years he had to spend as a double spy. Severus gains a learning experience in self-worth and appreciation with Hermione's help: she shows Severus the good in him which he thought to have lost years ago. Consequently, what initially in H/S fan fiction romance seem like insurmountable obstacles in the main characters' personas, become the traits that bring them together in a complementary manner.

5.2 Fan Fiction and the Philosophy's Tone

The third research question presents the problem of linking the previous conclusions of the conflicts of H/S romance and their solutions to the philosophy of fan fiction. In this part of the conclusions I aim at offering an answer, or more accurately put, an interpretation of how the practices of recontextualization and character restructuring in H/S fan fiction showcase the possibility of fan fiction as original textual work. In other words, I make the claim that the theory, or "philosophy" of fan fiction writing as I see it is visible in each individual story analyzed, and also in all of them collectively as a genre of H/S romance.

Creating conflicts between Severus and Hermione is fundamentally a way of pointing out the challenges the original text poses for the possibility of them becoming romantically involved. The process of creating conflicts requires recontextualization and character restructuring: Hermione's romantic interest for Severus needs at least some groundwork that already separates the character from the original text, and Severus's past needs more fleshing out than what is done in the original text to create an idea of his moral disposition. Their characters require more depth than they originally have as minor characters, and many of their personality traits are not mentioned in the original text.

The stories' character typology shows that fan fiction is dependent on the source text, but only up to a point. Severus and Hermione's characters are in all five stories inspired by the original characters; however, at the hand of the fan writers, the characters become different. Here, again, are visible the possibilities of fan fiction: even though the characters may at first glance appear the same as they are in the source text and every other fan story, there is inevitably something different in the characters after each restructuring. Kaplan (2006:136) emphasizes the necessity for the fan writer

to know the characters by heart, i.e., how they act and react, what their personalities are like, what they look like, and so on. However, this would imply that every original text should include this information – a rather simplistic assumption, since literary works of fiction, for example, may depend entirely on the reader's interpretation in describing characters.

This is the case in *Harry Potter*: although Rowling does describe the characters' appearance to an extent, every reader's interpretation may differ. Moreover, Rowling's description of Hermione, for example, excludes most subjective remarks on how she looks – the fact that many fan stories portray her as pretty is entirely the fans' creation and part of the fanon knowledge. The same applies to personalities: Severus's character remains somewhat distant and mysterious in the source text, and fans create his personality based sometimes only marginally on the material they find in the original novels. Nevertheless, Kaplan (2006:136) is right in suggesting that fan writers have to know a great deal of the source text before they begin the process of creating new material. In addition to the source text, fanon constructions shape and influence new fan fiction, and in this sense fan fiction implements its preordained nature as archontic literature: ever new interpretations emerge from existing ones.

Since H/S romance requires extensive character restructuring and recontextualization up to the point of creating new/original material, the idea of fan fiction as textual poaching does not suffice to cover all aspects of fan fiction writing. Textual poaching suggests that everything the fan fiction story includes is derived from, and can be traced back to, the original text; with H/S romance, and undoubtedly numerous other subgenres, there is very little by way of subtext in the original from which to derive the storylines.

Ultimately, the data and its analysis supports Derecho's (2006) suggestion that the richness of fan fiction lies in its ability to create the same story again and again, repeat ad infinitum, but with slight modification in narration style, timeline of the story, point of view, and so on. In other words, despite obvious similarities, no two stories are completely alike. Fan fiction's ability to expand from itself like this shows that the phenomenon is more dependent on itself than is assumed; at some point the importance of the source text diminishes.

However, despite the flaws in Jenkins' (1992) theorization of fan fiction as textual poaching, I agree with his suggestion that fan fiction is a practice of damage control. Damage control is, essentially, an instance of 'textual poaching': fans derive from the original text the instances they interpret problematic or damaging to the characters and repair the damage in their stories. Case in point: Severus and Hermione both receive retribution in the five fan stories included in this study, and in a similar manner. Severus is the tragic hero of the original text to whom the rest of the wizarding world is indebted, and his retribution and reward come through Hermione's love. Hermione is the original text's serious, brainy girl with no interest in boys; Severus becomes the dashing lover who proves her worth as a woman. The aspect of damage control is also evident in the way romance functions as a backset for other themes such as self-realization and personal growth, which have more to do with individual characters than the relationship between them. The romantic relationship may govern the individual character's growth, but the motive behind it from the fan's point of view is repairing the damage.

5.3 Five down, an ocean to go

As is obvious in this study, there are several limitations in the research design, selection of data and the analysis itself that result in a new array of questions rather than answers concerning the world of fan fiction.

First and foremost, there is the question of how well the conclusions can be generalized to concern other fan fiction, or even other *Harry Potter* fan fiction. The data consists of stories whose timeline is set several years after the original text, and it is easy to point out the role of fan writers as creators of new material. However, when the focus shifts to stories that situate themselves within the original text's timeline, it is difficult to determine how much new fan writers need, or are even able, to create. The same problem arises with other characters: if the stories focused on the canon romance of Hermione and Ron, or Harry and Ginny, the need to create new might be drastically reduced because the basis for romance is already there. Ultimately, this is a problem of data selection. Five stories of the same pairing is a tiny drop in an ever-expanding ocean of fiction, and quite possibly the conclusions I arrive at do not tell anything of other types of fan fiction. However, H/S romance is one of the more popular subgenres

of Harry Potter fan fiction, and I do believe this study addresses at least some of the general issues of this particular genre.

Secondly, the method I use in this study is by no means rigorous and does not aim in truths. Rather, it is interpretive and focuses on pinpointing general patterns in a singular subgenre of fan fiction. The method's effectiveness can well be questioned, both from fan fiction research's point of view and from the point of view of this particular study. How well does my method, which is best described as close reading, suit the subject of this study? Fan fiction has been researched from differing points of view, but mostly the emphasis has been on the socio-cultural side of the phenomenon, and particularly on its meaning to the fan writer. Fan fiction as art is a new trend, and very little research has been done with focus on the artistic merits of fan fiction. Fundamentally, there is no set method with which to analyze fan fiction as literature, because analysis of that type asks for additional interpretation of the source text, and of the fans' interpretation. Inevitably, the researcher's interpretation of interpretations plays a critical role in the analysis. What this means, perhaps, is that methodologically the most important element is the researcher with her own interest not just in the fan fiction phenomenon, but in the source text as well. In other words, the researcher's best aid and method is familiarity with the phenomenon of fan fiction and the source text(s) that has given birth to it.

Since I lift the theme of romance so emphatically to the forefront, methodologically it might have made more sense to compare fan fiction romance to published romance in a more structured manner. However, the time and space this study could afford would not suffice for a study so vast in design, and is perhaps best left to future research projects. Implications of character typology and development open up new possibilities for research in that particular branch, and it is one that I believe shows best the creativeness of fan fiction, but also its limitations. Research that focuses solely on character reconstruction will inevitably come face to face with the problem of interpretation: fan fiction characters are re-interpretations of their originals, but at the same time they are originals. Where does interpretation end and creation begin, or vice versa?

However, the importance of researching fan fiction as literature is yet to be seen. Undoubtedly, its implications to published literature span from the creating process to

problems of ownership, but this is all in a sense separate from the actual textual material. Naturally, the aforementioned implications are intertwined with the text, but researching fan fiction purely as text without mentions to its origin (the source text) and issues concerning it has not been done – if, indeed, it can ever be done. Applying techniques of literary analysis and criticism to fan fiction cements its place in the field of literature. However, it is also complicated, because the stories are so linked to the source text. Time will show how redundant (or not) the attempts at analyzing fan fiction as literature are. Nevertheless, it appears that fan fiction is not leaving us anytime soon, and since it has been such an important practice for centuries, the need for non-traditional interpretation becomes ever greater.

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