

“I HAVE ANOTHER D/G POTTERING  
AROUND IN MY BRAIN”:

Identity construction on a Harry Potter fanfiction forum

Master’s thesis

Henna Sorvari

University of Jyväskylä  
Department of Languages  
English  
July 2014



# JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

Tiedekunta – Faculty Humanistinen tiedekunta	Laitos – Department Kielten laitos
Tekijä – Author Henna Sorvari	
Työn nimi – Title ”I have another D/G pottering around in my brain” – Identity construction on a Harry Potter fanfiction forum	
Oppiaine – Subject Englanti	Työn laji – Level Maisterintutkielma
Aika – Month and year Heinäkuu 2014	Sivumäärä – Number of pages 100
<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Jokainen on pohjimmiltaan jonkin asian fani. Omaa fani-identiteettiä voi viestiä monin eri tavoin. Tämä tutkielma käsittelee identiteetin rakennusta englanninkielisellä Harry Potter -fanifiktioforumilla. Tarkoituksena on tutkia millaisia aiheita keskusteluissa tulee ilmi ja mitä nämä aiheet paljastavat osallistujien identiteeteistä faneina, fanifiktio kirjoittajina ja lukijoina, sekä foorumin jäsenenä.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen aineistona käytetään eräällä suositulla fanifiktiosivustolla toimivan foorumin kahta keskustelupalstaa. Keskustelut ovat yleisluontoisia ja niistä on poimittu esimerkkejä, joissa käsitellään aiheita, jotka kertovat jotain jäsenten identiteeteistä. Esille tuoduissa esimerkeissä identiteetti rakentuu kielellisissä representaatioissa ja aiheet, joita keskusteluissa käsitellään, liittyvät faniuteen, fanifiktioon ja foorumin jäsenyyteen. Tutkimusmetodeina käytetään laadullista sisällönanalyysiä sekä virtuaali-etnografiaa.</p> <p>Tulokset osoittavat, että monissa tapauksissa Harry Potter -tietouden hallitseminen ja sisäpiiriin kuuluminen ovat tärkeässä osassa keskusteluita, sillä esimerkiksi sisäpiirivitsejä ja Harry Potter -terminologiaa esiintyy keskusteluissa usein. Lisäksi fanifiktio kirjoittaminen nousee usein esille väliaikatieotteiden ja avunpyyntöjen muodossa; monissa tapauksissa apua kirjoitusongelmiin haetaan foorumilta. Myös foorumin jäsenyys ja aktiviteetteihin osallistuminen näkyvät keskusteluissa. Yleisimmät esimerkit ovat uusien jäsenten esittäytymiset, mutta myös hallinta-jäsenten auktoriteetti näkyy joissain esimerkeissä.</p> <p>Tutkielmassa käy ilmi, että vaikka innostus fanifiktio kirjoittamiseen ja lukemiseen vaikuttaisi monilta osin laantuneen, yhteisen kiinnostuksen kohteen luoma yhteisö on muodostunut niin vahvaksi, että jäsenet vaikuttavat siellä edelleen. Fanifiktio sijaan useilla jäsenillä tärkein elementti foorumilla on nimenomaan yhteisö, joka on kasvanut alkuperäisen fandomin ympärille. Keskusteluista suurin osa käsittelee jäsenten yksityiselämiä ja Harry Potterin ulkopuolisia asioita.</p> <p>Identiteetin ilmaisu internetissä on ajankohtainen aihe, nettisivustojen ja -yhteisöjen kasvaessa muuttuessa yhä merkityksellisemmiksi. Useissa tapauksissa perinteiset, esim. maantieteelliset, rajat menettävät merkityksensä, kun nettiyhteisöt keräävät samanhenkisiä ihmisiä yhteen ja tärkeämpiä ovat näkemykset ja mielenkiinnonkohteet. On kuitenkin myös muistettava, että internetissä identiteetti voi olla täysin käyttäjänsä itsensä luoma, ei ns. todellisuutta vastaava. Lisää tutkimusta internetyhteisöiden mahdollistamista identiteeteistä tarvitaan.</p>	
Asiasanat – Keywords Identity, fandom, internet forum, community	
Säilytyspaikka – Depository JYX	
Muita tietoja – Additional information	

## Table of contents

1. Introduction.....	1
2. Background .....	3
2.1. Fans, fanfiction and fandom.....	3
2.2. Harry Potter fandom.....	7
2.3. Virtual identity .....	7
3. Set-up of the present study.....	11
3.1. Aims and Research questions.....	11
3.2. Data selection and collection .....	12
3.3. Methods of analysis .....	15
4. Analysis.....	20
4.1. Identity as a fan .....	20
4.1.1. Identification .....	21
4.1.1.1. Being a member of a house.....	21
4.1.1.2. Identifying self with a character.....	25
4.1.1.3. Real life vs the world of Harry Potter fanfiction .....	27
4.1.2. Real life getting in the way of fanfiction .....	29
4.1.3. Favorite characters and hot men .....	30
4.1.4. Sexual fantasies.....	33
4.1.5. HP humor and insider jokes .....	35
4.1.6. Fans as experts of Harry Potter .....	39
4.1.7. Critique of the original series and the films.....	41
4.2. Identity as a writer of fanfiction.....	45
4.2.1.. Successful writing .....	46
4.2.2. Problems and help in writing .....	49
4.2.3. Dilemmas and musings that writing fanfiction cause .....	59
4.3. Identity as a reader of fanfiction .....	65
4.3.1. Reading fanfiction.....	65
4.3.2. Reviewing fanfiction.....	70

4.3.3 Beta-reading .....	72
4.4. Identity as a member of the forum .....	75
4.4.1. Being a part of the community and taking part in forum activities .....	75
4.4.2. Role on the forum – newbies and older members.....	79
4.4.3. Prompts and challenges.....	84
5. Discussion .....	87
6. Conclusion .....	95
Bibliography.....	97



## **1. Introduction**

Forums and fan groups on the Internet are a very popular place for fans to come together and form groups that can be intercultural, as the participants can be from around the world, English functioning as their lingua franca. Internet communities can be socially valuable, and the ways of communicating in them offer an important research topic. Additionally, fan studies is an increasingly relevant field, as in practice there is nothing one cannot be a fan of. Being a fan is a part of everyday life, just the degree of devotion varies. In addition, identity on the Internet is a current topic, since many people engage in some kind of interaction in for example social network sites and discussion forums. Especially in forum discussions one can choose to be anonymous, but, despite this, one still portrays an image of oneself as a member of the group, and as in this case, a fan. Identity is a topic commonly addressed both in the areas of linguistics and ethnology.

The main focus of the present study is identity construction in forum discussions by international fans of Harry Potter. The purpose is to study how different types of identities are portrayed to the other members in the replies that the participants post on the threads examined. The forum under investigation is a Harry Potter centered fan-based discussion forum on an international fanfiction site, where the conversations are conducted in English. Within this site, the topics of conversation range from fan fiction and Harry Potter, to the private lives of the participants. More specifically, in my analysis I want to pay close attention to how the participants of the forum portray themselves as fans, as members of the forum and also as writers and readers of fan fiction. The study uses a virtual ethnographic approach and the main focus is in the communication between the participants. Because, like Bourdieu suggests, language is social and linguistic capital, which in turn makes it cultural capital, (Grenfell 2010a: 31, Grenfell 2010b: 39) it can be used to communicate one's identity, attitudes and differences with others.

The Internet has an important role in the present day lifestyle of many. Fan-cultures and Internet forums have both been studied before, as well as Harry Potter as a phenomenon. In the present study these topics are brought together by studying a forum that is dedicated to a romantic pairing from the Harry Potter world (that is non-canon in comparison to the original books), and entirely run by fans. Identity is not a fixed entity and a person can construct different identities in different situations. In a discussion forum identity construction is mainly based on the linguistic representation of self, in for example as a narrative introducing oneself, as well as in interaction with others, in discussions about various topics, including, for example, writing and reading of fanfiction. How language is used to portray oneself in relation to others or as an individual, especially as a fan, is going to be the main questions in the study. The present study serves to give a glimpse of the subject by using virtual ethnography in a virtual environment of fan activity.

A piece of fanfiction is a story, written by a fan, that utilizes different elements from the fandom it centers around, such as the characters, a storyline, surroundings or other key elements. Fanfiction is then commonly published on a specific fanfiction site, where other fans and fanfiction readers can read and comment it. In the present study, fanfiction extracts, i.e. individual chapters, complete and incomplete stories, are referred to as *fits*. This is a commonly seen term also on the forum and it is an all-inclusive term for a piece of fanfiction.



## **2. Background**

In the following three sections the topics of fans, fanfiction and fandom, as well as the specific Harry Potter fandom will be introduced. In addition, previous research on the topic of identity, especially virtual identity will be discussed.

### **2.1. Fans, fanfiction and fandom**

The Oxford English dictionary defines *fan* as “a person who has a strong interest in or admiration for a particular sport, art form, or famous person“, or “*gen.* an enthusiast for a particular person or thing.” According to MacDonald (1998: 136), fans are people who follow their object of interest more closely than others, and possibly also identify with the some part of the fandom or the community surrounding the fandom. Also Nikunen (2008: 190) points out that the basis of fan communities is their strong affection to a media text that is then circulated, interpreted and edited within the community. A good example of this action is the writing, reading and commenting of fanfiction. The same view is expressed by Hirsjärvi and Kovala (2007: 249), who point out that the relationship between fan and the object of enthusiasm is at the same time both personal and social, as the fan activity is initiated by the fan’s own want, but sense of community and identification with the group are closely related to the experience of being a fan. A similar idea is suggested by Jenkins (1992b: 76), who argues that how fans see and interpret their fandom is always influenced by the views and opinions of other fans and, to some extent, the wish to be a part of a community.

Harris (1998: 3-4) points out that one can be a fan of almost anything. Nikunen (2003: 131) suggests that being a fan can be seen as both social action, as well as a state of mind, since emotions and associations the media text evoke also have an important role in being a fan. Nikunen (2003: 131) also suggests that, for many fans, being a fan (*fanius*) seems to be a place one can enter and exit. This place comprises the idea of us versus others, as only fans enter it, and people who are not engaged in the fandom are excluded from the fan activity and the feelings that are involved.

Fandom and fans have been studied before, as well as the Internet forums or groups they participate in. Also fanfiction has been studied from the viewpoint of identity construction. For example, Black (2005, 2006, 2009) has studied fanfiction from the viewpoint of learning English and constructing global identities, as well as making social connections on Fanfiction.net. In her paper on identities and fanfiction, Black (2009: 413-414) discusses how the writers of fanfiction represent self in their submitted stories. Interestingly, a rather large amount of the study on fanfiction and identity is done on anime based fanfiction (Black, 2005, 2006, 2009; Chandler-Olcott and Mahar, 2003). Another popular point of view is queer identity in fandom (Lothian, Busse and Reid, 2007; Jenkins, Green and Jenkins 2006). Writing fanfiction has also been studied by Leppänen (2009), who has observed the tendencies to mix languages and thus project a certain fan identity in a fic. Fanfiction forums have been mentioned for example in Leppänen's (2008) other article, where she names them as places where writers of fanfiction can interact with others who have similar interests, and also share information about their private lives. In fact, Leppänen (2009) suggests, that writing of fanfiction includes the aspect of communication and interaction, as the writers interact with each other, making writing of fanfiction a part of the shared activity of fans. The places of interaction can be Internet forums, such as the one in the present study. In other words, fanfiction forums serve as communities where fans come together. Also Pullen (2000) describes both online and offline fan communities as places where fans are delighted to find other like-minded people, and support that the community provides for their fandom.

Also in the University of Jyväskylä, Harry Potter has been a subject of study before. For example in the department of English, a Master's Thesis about the theme of romance in Harry Potter fan fiction, (Piispanen, 2008), and another which aims at describing the phenomenon of fanfiction (Silén, 2012) were conducted. Additionally, in other department, theses focusing on Harry Potter, are conducted with the contexts of translation, literature and education. In other words, Harry Potter as a phenomenon is not a new topic of study. However, a study of a Harry Potter fanfiction forum does provide a new perspective on the phenomenon.

The reasons and ways of writing fanfiction are multiple. For example Jenkins (1992b: 162-177) lists ten ways of rewriting a television show, including recontextualization: filling the gaps in the existing fandom, expanding the series timeline: for example exploring the background of a character, and refocalization: using a minor character as the protagonist, instead of focusing on the main hero. Fanfiction offers a writer and reader a chance to experiment and actualize outside the universe and form of the familiar settings of the original media text. Leppänen (2009: 2) suggests that the social aspect of writing fanfiction is important as well. By taking part in the writing, one takes part in the whole fanfiction scene, which includes the notion of a community. Also Black (2009: 402, 419) suggests that fanfiction writing is more than entertained, as participating in the writing of fanfiction serves as a way to unite fans, practice writing, improve one's language skills, explore one's own identity and as well as to simply have fun.

However, often it is fanzines and letterzines that have been discussed in previous studies of fandom and fanfiction (for example Devereux (2009), Hirsjärvi (2009), Jenkins (1992a)). For instance, Jenkins (1992b: 161) illustrates how stories are written for Fanzines. He mentions how fans discuss the ideas before the stories, and how they are also “workshopped with other fans” and changes are made after receiving feedback. This is also true on Internet-based fanfiction sites. Ideas may be toyed around with on a forum, someone may request a gift fic (fanfiction that someone else writes for the requester as a gift) or someone may post plot bunnies (random ideas that are open for adoption, for someone else to write) and also general ideas and opinions are often discussed. Typical questions are 'how to continue with a scene?', 'does this seem natural?', and 'would the character say this?' It is a common way to develop one's own fiction by asking the others' opinions on forums. Also what Jenkins calls “workshopping” could be seen as beta-reading, which is quite common on fanfiction sites. It is fairly typical to give one's fic or a chapter of a fic for another person to proofread before publishing it on the site. A beta-reader can check the grammar and spelling, but also give ideas and suggestions as to what works and what does not, and the writer can then revise the text. Jenkins (1992b: 161) also mentions “Letters of Comment”, which in many fanzines offered a chance to give the writer feedback. The new versions of these letters are reviews that a reader can post for a published chapter or

story.

Oxford English Dictionary defines fandom as “The world of enthusiasts for some amusement or for some artist; also in extended use.” Surprisingly few academics actually define what they mean by fandom, and the definitions I did find, differed somewhat from each other. Some academics describe fandom as a concrete group, whereas others depict fandom as a more abstract idea of being a fan. For example, Hirsjärvi and Kovala (2007: 247) define fandom simply as the concrete community of fans that is formed around a certain media text. Booth (2010: 40) also presents a similar view by defining his use of the term “fandom” as “a loose knit, but allied, group of people who all produce or create original documents based on extant media objects.” He suggests that everyone is a fan of something and that our identity is formed partly through that particular fandom (2010: 20). However, Harris (1998: 3-4) briefly defines fandom as the social and cultural environment of fans. Devereux (2009: 112) depicts fandom as a “continuum”. He also stresses the point of fandom being participatory, especially as a large amount of fan activity takes place on the Internet and with other new technologies. According to Jenkins (2006: 40-41), fandom is a way of translating media texts in ways that suit fans' personal needs, and their way of turning their personal experience into social interaction is characteristic for fandom. Fans share their feelings of the media text with other fans, and together they form a community with shared interests. He also suggests (1992: 277-280) that fandom consists of five levels of activity: a particular mode of reception, a set of critical and interpretive practices, consumer activism, cultural production and social community. In other words, fans form a community that follows its subject of fandom closely, maybe buy products (such as books or fan merchandise), pay close attention to and criticize and interpret the subject, and rewrite the subject, for example by roleplaying or writing fanfiction.

In case of the present study, fandom and the community that has formed around it form the basis for the research. Communities formed by fans concentrate a great deal on the fandom, but also on other matters, such as simply getting to know the other participants and maintaining the relationships. However, the fandom is essential for a community to exist and to function, it is the initial and in some cases the main purpose of the community.

## **2.2. Harry Potter fandom**

Harry Potter is a hugely successful fantasy novel series, written by J. K. Rowling. The story revolves around a young wizard that goes to a school of witchcraft and wizardry and along with his friends face both the tiresome school work and funny adventures as well as a dark wizard who threatens the peace and safety of the whole wizarding community. The Harry Potter franchise has been very popular for years, and even after the series was completed in 2007 with the publication of the final novel, and after the final movie based on the series was released in 2011, the fans still continue the work, by filling the gaps, tying loose ends and correcting the so called wrongs from the series by writing fanfiction.

On the Internet, there are multiple websites based on the Harry Potter saga, such as Pottermore, which is an official site by Sony (<http://www.pottermore.com/>), and J.K.Rowling's personal website (<http://www.jkrowling.com/>). In addition, there are many fan-based sites, such as The Harry Potter Lexicon (<http://www.hp-lexicon.org/>), a fan-based encyclopedia of Harry Potter related information, such as spells and terminology, the Mugglenet ([mugglenet.com](http://mugglenet.com)), a similar site that also provides sections for discussion and submitting fanfiction. Furthermore, there are numerous sites mainly for fanfiction, the most known being HarryPotterFanfiction.com, Harry Potter FanFic Archive (<http://www.hpfanficarchive.com>), FictionAlley ([fictionalley.blogspot.com](http://fictionalley.blogspot.com)) and FanFiction.net.

## **2.3. Virtual identity**

Identity is closely related to language. The way in which people describe themselves, their lives, interests and hobbies, for example, is often done with the help of language. Benwell and Stokoe (2006: 138) suggest that by, for example, narrating, one "does" identity. In other words, choosing what to tell and how, one actively portrays a certain identity. They also suggest (2006:137), that identities are constructed in the stories that the narrators tell about themselves and others. So by telling a story of any length, or by

voicing an opinion, giving or asking for advice, or simply by describing oneself, for example, one is able to portray a picture of one's identity. Accordingly, Blommaert (2005: 203-204) sums identity as “semiotic through and through”, meaning that every spoken and written word, every gesture, is in fact a way of portraying identity, a way to provide others information about oneself. Also according to Wood and Smith (2001: 47), identity is a personal and social construct that comprises what we see ourselves as, how we hope others to see us as, and how they in fact see us. Anything one says - a small story or, like on an Internet forum, reply to another, can portray identity in different ways. However, the way the message is interpreted is not always similar to what the sender intended.

Benwell and Stokoe point out (2006: 245) that in Internet settings, with the possibility of anonymity and the absence of regional and spatial limits, it has become very easy to construct any kinds of identities, making them unstable and performed, and thus perhaps unreliable. In a well-known and often cited meme, originally drawn by Peter Steiner, a dog reveals his findings: “On the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog.” This meme sums up the reality of the Internet: nobody can really be sure of the true identity of the person they are interacting with, as the Internet creates an opportunity to project a new, perhaps totally false identity. In fact, Benwell and Stokoe define identity as “a discursive accomplishment” (2006: 277). It is possible to create a story around one's character, giving the impression that one is a teenage girl from Ohio, who is interested in Harry Potter fanfiction, when in fact one can be a 35-year-old stay-at-home mom from Florida, a salesman in his fifties from Nevada, or, with a little imagination, a dog with an astonishing set of skills. That said, the teenage girl from Ohio may well be a teenage girl from Ohio. In normal circumstances, it is possible that nobody will ever know for sure. Wood and Smith (2001: 47) point out that on the Internet it is easy to portray a false identity, as the environment gives an opportunity to the user to choose what to tell and what to leave out, regardless of the reality. Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin (2008: 1816-1817) also found that people's presentations of self could vary from one online environment to another. It seems that, depending on the audience with which the user communicates online, choosing a suitable way of portraying oneself can differ greatly. But just as Internet settings offer a chance to portray a chosen, perhaps false identity, it also gives an opportunity to come forward as oneself and find others with

shared interests and opinions. The anonymity the Internet offers also makes it easier to discuss matters that would perhaps be embarrassing or even taboo in other situations. Zhao et al. (2008: 1819) point to the curiousness of anonymity in the online world that enables the unveiling of one's "'true' selves", with the possible identities that cannot be shown in the offline world, for one reason or another.

Devereux (2009: 112) sees fandom as a way of forming identities, and argues that being a member of an imagined community helps fans to create and project the identities they prefer and choose. A similar view is offered by Grossberg (1992: 59) who suggests that fans let the subject of their fannish interest portray them and also guide their "emotional and narrative lives and identities". In other words, to rely on a fandom while narrating about oneself, for example, can serve as a way of portraying oneself as a fan, and perhaps also as an individual outside the fandom. One can, for example draw parallels between a character and oneself, by simply stating "I am hotheaded like Ginny", identifying with the character and at the same time presenting a familiar image the other fans can associate with the person in question. In many cases fandom offers a character or a situation to identify with. Leppänen (2008: 160) also suggests that writing fanfiction and participating on fanfiction forums can help the writers to examine issues they may deal with in their real lives, thus affecting their identity. So participating in fan activity, for example as a member of a community, as a follower of the subject of fandom as well as writing fanfiction, can serve to help to examine one's own identity and find ways of portraying it.

Being a member of an Internet community, or participating in one, for example on a discussion forum, the participants construct their identities as members, communicating their status at the same time. Already Rheingold (1993: 278) described the way participants act according to different roles that each have varying identity-relevant tasks and features. Benwell and Stokoe (2006: 278) also discuss the positioning oneself and the others as participants with certain statuses that each has particular features and responsibilities attached. On a forum, like the one in the present study, there are mods (moderators, who oversee for example the language use and possible misconduct and act as supervisors, who one can ask for help in forum-related problems), or admins

(administrators, who manage the technical aspects of running a forum), who are the founding members, or simply older, respected members of the forum, who have the rights to use the administrative tools, such as deleting and monitoring comments, as well as the symbolic rights to give approval to a new thread or welcoming the new members. Another level of membership could be said to encompass regular members, that is, participants who post fairly frequently and are familiar with the other members. Not everyone posts as often as the others, and it is difficult to define who is more active or known on the forum. A participant may read all the posts, but chooses to remain silent more often than others. Also, without the rights of an admin, one cannot see the statistics of individual participants, that is, how many posts has a participant submitted and when. This makes it difficult for a researcher, in this case me, to see who is more active in reality. However, one thing that is a visible pointer to membership status, is the symbol every member has that represents the time the participant has been a member of the forum, starting from the first comment posted there. The newest category of members are the new-comers, or newbies, who have to introduce themselves and get to know the older members by following the conversations and participating in them.

Finally, besides the attributes of admins, newbies etc. Koskimaa (2007: 73) suggests that an internet community offers a participant a place to act according to a different type of self one would usually act in RL, the real world. Hall (2002: 23) suggests that identity itself is never final, and a postmodern subject has many identities to which they can identify with according to the situation one is in. Being a fan can be viewed as an identity one would not necessarily act accordingly in normal circumstances. However, in an environment like an Internet forum dedicated to the fandom one can safely choose to identify with the fan identity.



### **3. Set-up of the present study**

#### **3.1. Aims and Research questions**

The nature and topics of the discussion on the discussion forum are a central part of the analysis; what is being said and how. In this study, I will not, however, study the actual fanfics published by the participants, but observe the conversations taking place in the forum's discussion threads. I am assuming that the threads are places where the members converse, taking a role as a part of the community, but perhaps also as a group of individuals who want to share details about their lives. My goal is to identify instances where the discussants portray themselves as fans, member or writers, as well as observe what they actually say and how the identity is portrayed by discursive means. Unlike Black (2005, 2006, 2009), who observed the identities the writers of fanfiction portrayed in the short author's notes in the pieces of fanfiction, the focus here is broader: looking at a discussion forum allows for a wider scope of topics for research, as well as much more data to analyze. Focusing on the discussion forum meant that the examples were harder to find from the large amount of data, but could in turn provide with broader range of findings. To study how identities are portrayed in Internet settings is an important and interesting topic of study, since Internet forums and communities are growing constantly and the questions of Internet behavior and its effects are often discussed. It is probable that in the Western countries most young adults and youths use the Internet on a regular basis and belong to one or many Internet communities. Since being a fan is also a normal phenomenon, something that perhaps everyone at some level can identify with, combining the two, fan experience and an Internet community, with a specific focus on fanfiction, presents a good topic for study.

The purpose of the present study is not to analyze how fans for example position themselves against the so-called others, non-fans, or to study how the fans specifically narrate themselves as fans. Instead the purpose was to study how the fans perhaps unintentionally portray their identity on a thread that is meant for general discussion, with possibly no initial intention of highlighting one's fan-status, which makes it

interesting to see how the topics that are discussed reveal aspects of the participants' identities. As the topics discussed on the threads are initiated by the participants themselves and not by a single admin, for example, it could be suggested that the ways the identities of a fan, a writer, a reader or a member of the forum are presented more naturally, in midst of normal communication, and not as an answer to a query. Considering the nature of the forum, one can expect for the topics to circulate around fanfiction and Harry Potter, which makes the aims of the present study plausible.

The research questions of the present study are:

1. What kind of topics the participants discuss?
2. How do these topics reveal how they construct their identities as fans, writers and readers of fanfiction and members of the forum?

### **3.2. Data selection and collection**

As the source for my data, I chose a Harry Potter centered forum, because Harry Potter is the most popular fandom on a popular fanfiction site, according the number of fanfiction published there (ca. 686 000 in July 2014). Also the forum I am going to observe has existed for several years, and it is still quite an active forum. I have also previously been a member of the said forum myself, which gives me a somewhat of an insider view on some of the topics discussed there. I am also familiar with who the most active members are, and what the overall tone of the forum is. When I posted on the forum, asking whether they would consent to my research, one of the admins was very supportive, offering to answer any questions or interviews I would offer. Two other members replied, one of them being supportive, the other of them curious in which language I was doing the writing the paper. However, the founder of the forum replied as follows (post shortened by myself):

While I don't like the idea of forum members being used as guinea pigs, I don't see how we can say no to your "request."

That said, we're exposed to the scrutiny of strangers in the form of lurkers on a daily basis. Secondly, how can we stop you or anyone else from using our material for obscure albeit scientific RL purposes? You could have just as easily gone forward without informing us, I doubt we'd ever know. In that sense, I appreciate your courtesy. And now that you've alerted us to this, what can we do to refuse? I don't have the time to show up at your university and protest, so whatever.

This reply posed a research ethical question: should I find another forum for my research based on this answer that did not deny me the possibility, but clearly was not supportive either? Yet, as the other members did not oppose to the research and as the forum is an open forum, as in anyone with an access to Internet can access it and read every post, I decided to go on with my research. However, to ensure as much privacy as possible, I have decided to omit the name of both the forum and the threads I use in my analysis. In addition, I have changed the names of the participants whose posts I use in the examples. Also, whenever a participant's real name is used, or a name of a story is mentioned, I have replaced them with an alias or a short description within brackets.

As my data, I have selected discussions dating from 2010 to 2012 from two closed threads which I assume are not being edited anymore and could thus possibly be called finished discussions. On the forum in question, there are multiple threads, the oldest dating from 2009 and the newest are still being posted on. The topics of the threads vary and there are also multiple general threads. Threads are collections of posts that are posted under a certain topic, like in this case the topic of general discussion. The posts can be replied to and the posts appear chronologically, newest post being the last. The participants can join a conversation on a thread, contributing by simply replying the previous post. Simply put, on a discussion forum, threads are the places where the conversation happens.

In the present study, I have looked at two threads of more general discussion. The closed threads were selected with no specific criteria, except for the facts that the other one is an older thread whose participants I did not know personally, and a newer one is from the time I began participating on the forum myself, and thus am more familiar with the

participants. I did not want to include threads which would possibly contain intimate discussions of the participants' private lives and that is why I chose to examine the more general threads. That been said, also on the general thread mentions of private and more personal issues are present, but I will not use them as examples. On the threads examined the topics vary and it is very common that several different participants and discussions are addressed in a single reply. A large part of the conversation is not fanfiction related, and thus the chosen excerpts may give a wrong impression of the amount of fannish talk on the forum. However, the objective of the present study is to examine only those posts that include the Harry Potter and fanfiction related topics, and not to give a statistical analysis of the number of posts that were of interest in relation to the research questions. Many of the examples provided in the present study are edited so that only the parts under examination are shown. The original posts and conversations are in many cases much longer, including quotations and many other topics, and the parts irrelevant to the research questions have been left out.

The maximum number of posts per thread on the site studied in the present study is normally 5000, which means that the initial data contained a large amount of text. The data used in the study was collected by simply copy-pasting the examples in two doc. files, containing 98 pages, and then using color coding to divide the data into rough categories before closer inspection. This method was suggested by Sarajärvi and Tuomi (2002: 110-111) and initially it worked well in the reducing and clustering processes, where the instances fitting the research questions were searched and then grouped. However, the amount of data was large and the topics often overlapped, making the grouping process rather difficult.

### 3.3. Methods of analysis

My method of analysis in the present study is virtual ethnography combined with qualitative content analysis. Qualitative content analysis enables the selecting and grouping of the data and describing the findings, while virtual ethnography allows for participatory research. By doing ethnography, the researcher is aware of the situation that the data selection and analyzing is in fact subjective, which means that the results are likely to be affected with the researcher's personal views and experiences, for example. This means also that it is acceptable for the researcher to rely on his or her own experiences on the matter while researching the subject. Wilson and Peterson (2002: 449) argue that all the text and media existing on the Internet are in fact cultural products, which makes anthropology a good method for studying them. Ethnography is a commonly used tool in anthropological research. In addition, identity construction is also a familiar topic in the field of anthropology, so in this case, applying virtual ethnography would be a good tool for analyzing the data here, as well. In fact, Hine (2000: 53) suggests that virtual ethnology with a textual focus emphasizes the ways in which identities are portrayed in the postings the authors post. Additionally, my own participation on the forum activity plays a great role in the decision to utilize virtual ethnography in the present study, as ethnography is traditionally used by researchers who are present in the culture they are studying. Like Peacock (2001: 64) describes, ethnographic fieldwork is in fact seeking "truth from the natives in their habitat, by looking and listening."

It is suggested by Georgakopoulou (2007: 21) that discursive narrative analysis and ethnography fit together well as a method in her study. She says that ethnography helps to view the analysis critically, to identify the potential gaps and the subjectivity of the researcher, and thus to recognize the partiality of interpretations. Every result is conditional on the context. Georgakopoulou refers to this as "ethnology enabled *context-reflexivity*" (2007: 21). Also Barker and Galasinski (2001: 18) point out that the purpose of ethnological research is not to find the objective reality. They agree with many previous researchers, such as Wittgenstein, Rorty and Derrida, as they argue that "the 'real' is always a representation". An important aspect of using virtual ethnography

in the present study is that the interpretations made are subjective, and if the same study were conducted by another researcher, the results could differ greatly.

Hine (2000: 10) describes virtual ethnography simply as “a particular approach to ethnography which is almost but not quite like the real thing”. Ethnography is traditionally seen as fieldwork that includes going outside one’s own culture and participating and observing the foreign with the help of interviews, photography, field diary etc. However, one could argue that by studying an Internet forum, the peculiar form of occurrence of the cultural phenomenon is situated specifically in the Internet, which means that with this field, virtual ethnography is in fact the “real thing”. Internet exists on the Internet, and thus virtual ethnology provides better tools for researching it than traditional ethnography. Hine points out that with virtual ethnography the time frame of the participation is not shared, which means that the researcher cannot share the experience of participation with the participant, only observe what has been said or done by looking at the existing data (2000: 23). In that sense, even if I consider myself as a member of the forum, I am an outsider from the conversations, as the most of the data is taken from a period of time when I did not participate and my own replies are not included in the selected data, and thus I can only observe what the participants have written. My approach differs from the method which is used for example by Androutsopoulous (2008) who stresses the observation over time, as the conversations are conducted on the forum. However, I have observed some of the present members’ conversations in different threads and thus I could claim being familiar with their status and persona they portray on the forum at the time of my own participation. That being said, my data also includes posts from participants that are ‘MIA’ (missing in action) and not active anymore. My take on virtual ethnology relies on Hine’s (Hine 2000: 23) view, according to which the ethnographer can study the data when the participants no longer take part in it. In sum, ethnography allows me to study the data in light of my own previous knowledge of the forum.

My study is conducted with the help of qualitative content analysis, which, according to Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2002: 105), is a textual analysis method that can be used to describe a phenomenon in a condensed form and searching for meanings in a text. The data of the present study is collected simply by copy-pasting replies from the forum to

two doc.files and then color-coding and grouping them according to the topics discussed on the posts, before the actual analysis. Sarajärvi and Tuomi rely on Miles and Huberman's (1994) earlier work, as they describe the process of qualitative analysis of data as a three part process. (2002: 110-111) The process includes reducing the data, by simply searching for utterances that correspond to the research question, and marking them with different colors, for example. The next step is clustering. This means grouping the concepts and naming the groups so that the names describe the content of the examples. The third step is conceptualization. Here theoretical concepts are formed based on the information based on the chosen examples. Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2002: 115) sum up the process by saying that the content analysis bases itself on interpretation and deduction, as the researcher starts from the textual data and proceeds towards a conceptual perception of the phenomenon. A similar notion is presented by Weber (1990: 12), who suggests that content categorization is an important notion in content analysis. He says that examples from a certain category can be then assumed to have similar meanings.

Krippendorff (1980: 21-22) describes content analysis as a method which can be used to make valid deductions based on the data used. He says that it is easy to think content analysis as a method for studying *symbolic meanings* of messages, but points out that messages do not necessarily have a single nor a shared meaning. Weber (1990: 9) describes content analysis as a method which makes valid deductions from a text. According to him, the deductions can be made about the sender or the audience of the message, or the message itself. My approach to content analysis is qualitative rather than quantitative, which means that instead of giving statistical report of my findings, I describe the instances in which I have found some type of identity construction. These instances are then presented in groups which consist of examples with similar meanings or agendas.

According to Hall (2002: 98), discourse is a way of representing information. Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009: 13-14) argue that the main point of discourse study is to investigate the use of language as always social. They also explain that the goal of discourse study is to observe how language and user affect one another and also how the language functions in different contexts. Barker and Galasinski (2001: 63) point out that

discourse analysis deals with language that occurs naturally, and that, in discourse analysis, it is studied in the context it appears in. They point out that the situation in which the language is used is important for understanding its meanings. Although the analysis of language use is important in discourse analysis, according to Gee (1999: 17-23), conveying “*who* we are and *what* we are doing” is done by much more than just language. He uses the term Discourse, with the capital D, to refer to discourse that includes “language *plus* “other stuff””. The “other stuff” can be, for example, the situation the language is used in, and the object the language points at, as well as the user’s personal beliefs and values. He also points out that understanding is always relative and personal. Thus also analyzing discussion can be deducted to be relative and subjective. While discourse analysis is not utilized in the present study, the data does consist partly of online discourse and it is important to acknowledge for example the social functions of discourse.

When I think about the position I would have as a member of the forum and as a fan, as well as a student who is doing a thesis on the forum, I can draw on Jenkins’s (1992:4-7) ideas, who also defines himself as a fan writing about fans. A similar view is presented by Busse and Hellekson (2006:24), who also suggest that Jenkins has given the scholars permission for being fans who study fans. They also point out that being a part of the community one studies can prove to be useful, keeping in mind that one has to remain critical. Also Hirsjärvi (2009: 46-47) mentions Jenkins' ethnographic approach as the guiding principle in her study. However, Hills (2002:15) has offered some criticism of the subject of fans studying fans. He suggests that for example Jenkins (1992) has drawn parallel between fandom and “‘good’ academic”, which would in Hills's opinion be a hint of “the ways in which an academic imagined subjectivity triumphs over a fan imagined subjectivity”. Hills points out that many academic accounts fail to acknowledge is the possibility of an academic and fan identity being brought together as a “fan-scholar”, in other words notice these fan-scholars, or *elite fans* (Hills 2002:17) also outside the academic sphere, and perhaps too much attention is given to discussing if being a fan bends academic norms or gives new kind of academic authority.



Nevertheless, I view my position as a member of the forum as an important part of my study. Here ethnography serves as a good method for me to be able to present my findings as a researcher who is familiar with the forum and its conventions, and who thus is perhaps able to present a somewhat emic account of the findings. Being a fan, as well as an occasional writer and reader of fanfiction, allows me to inspect the posts in a different way from a researcher who is not familiar with the fandom. I am familiar with the topics, and sometimes share the participants' views. In my opinion, this is very helpful in my process of finding instances of "being a fan", for example, but, on the other hand, it also is likely that I disregard points that would be new and interesting for others as self-explanatory or common knowledge. The approach that I plan to apply in the present study is close to Jenkins' approach. Even if I would very much like to consider myself as a fan-scholar, rather than an academic fan, I cannot deny the fact that I am doing the study as a student, not as a devoted fan. That being said, as a fan and as a participant of the forum I study, ethnology seems to be an excellent tool for approaching the data.

## **4. Analysis**

The presentation and discussion of my findings are organized in the following way. In 4.1. Identity as a fan I have chosen snippets from the replies, where the participants discuss the object of their fandom, how they relate to the characters in the series, for example. In 4.2. Identity as a writer of fanfiction, and in 4.3. Identity as a reader of fanfiction, the attention is on the topics related to the participation in fanfiction activity, for example sharing experiences in the writing processes. Finally, in 4.4. Identity as a member of the forum, the focus is on the roles and activities related to the said forum, such as introducing oneself as a newcomer, a newbie.

### **4.1. Identity as a fan**

In the following section the examples show how the participants portray themselves or others as fans of the Harry Potter series and also fans of fanfiction. Before researching the data I assumed that the posts would shed light on how the participants communicate as fans, who are consumers, critics, experts or people who strongly identify with the characters. I anticipated discussion about the books and the movies, perhaps about the Harry Potter merchandise. In addition, I expected more critique concerning for example the plot in the books or the execution of the movies. The expertise could have been shown for example in the knowledge of facts and the storyline. Some findings were as expected, such as the critique and identifying with the Hogwarts' houses. However, some unexpected ways of using fannish elements in the conversations were found as well, for example insider jokes. The identities in the examples are often portrayed in the midst of normal conversation, and the instances of identifying narratives and conversations are not explicit. Instead one has to make deductions and interpretations from the topics discussed.

#### 4.1.1. Identification

##### 4.1.1.1. Being a member of a house

In the following conversation, the participants' identities as members of a certain House are discussed. In the Harry Potter books, the wizarding school the characters attend is divided into four houses. These houses are called Gryffindor, Slytherin, Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff. Each house has its own characteristics and the students are sorted to their respective houses based on their personality, beliefs and skills. Also on the forum, one of the admins sorts the active participants into houses that based on her observations suit their personality the best. The different houses and their characteristics is a typical theme for conversation on the forum, and personal views of oneself's suitability to a certain house and others' personality traits are sometimes discussed with great detail.

First ShineLikeDiamonds denies SweetTangeries accusation of behaving like a newbie, when she posts a rather typical "Anyone in?" question on the thread. Instead she claims to be direct when asking if anyone is online and willing to talk with her.

(1)

Anyone in?

I'm bored.

:)

-ShineLikeDiamonds-

Tsk, tsk, starlit, acting like a newbie?

Of course there are people in. \*rolls eyes\*

How're you?

-SweetTangerine-

*Tsk, tsk, starlit, acting like a newbie?*

No, I call it being direct. u\_u

*Of course there are people in. \*rolls eyes\**

See? It worked!

*How're you?*

I'm good! ;D Enjoying the beginning of my four-day weekend, haha. And slowly drifting toward the link of [fic name] on my 'to read' list. :D How about you? How's the hot Italian who messaged you?

-ShineLikeDiamonds-

The structure typical for a forum conversation can also be seen from the previous conversation. In her reply ShineLikeDiamonds quotes SweetTangerine's previous reply and addresses the topics individually. Perhaps it is the smiley and the neutral tone of inquiry of ShineLikeDiamond's first post that SweetTangerine interprets as newbie-like talk. However, in her response, the smiley ShineLikeDiamonds uses "u\_u" depicts a proud face, and she denies the accusation. From the short exchange one can assume that being a newbie is not a desirable status on the forum and it is preferable for the participants to establish their status as a familiar member, rather than a shy newbie. Understanding and participating in the friendly banter and sometimes rather rough insider jokes would probably be considered an essential part of being a non-newbie. The status of a newbie is touched upon more in the section 4.4.2.

The conversation continues in the excerpt (2). From ShineLikeDiamonds's reply, SweetTangerine directs the conversation to the house traits, pointing out how ShineLikeDiamonds fits the description of a Gryffindor house member in this particular case, and at the same time distances herself from ShineLikeDiamonds and from the house by saying she forgets belonging to it. She also continues the topic by confessing that she does not see herself as a Gryffindor and asks if it is weird in ShineLikeDiamonds's and possibly also the others' opinion.

(2)

Which is why Gryff is your dominant house and the house that I always forget I'm in.

Is it weird that I never consider myself to be a Gryff?

-SweetTangerine-

Is Gryff your dominant house? Anyway, that makes sense, because I never think of myself as a Puffle. ^\_^

-ShineLikeDiamonds-

And what's this about you not embracing your Puffle side? I am shocked, most shocked. Especially since I grace the head of the lovely house of badgers.

-Raspbee-

Nah, Ravenclaw is. But really, since it was so damn hard for [CloudNine] to sort me, I figure I have rights to all of them.

'specially the Hufflepuffer room. Mm, yeah.

-SweetTangerine-

I do embrace my Puffle side. Lol, I most definitely am Puffle when I start crying over angsty fanfics and rescuing stray puppies from the street. I just don't refer to myself as a Puffle.

^\_^

-ShineLikeDiamonds-

ShineLikeDiamonds replies that it is alright to not always remember to which house one is sorted. She also confesses not feeling like she belongs to Hufflepuff. (ShineLikeDiamonds is sorted as Gryff-Puffle, meaning that she possesses traits that are typical for both houses, and is not a clear case of neither Gryffindor nor Hufflepuff, in the sorter's opinion). However, she is assigned her dominant house, Gryffindor, and now she is asking SweetTangerine if that is her dominant house as well. Raspbee, who belongs to Hufflepuff, joins the conversation. She is not pleased by the fact that ShineLikeDiamonds has admitted not thinking of herself as a Hufflepuff. SweetTangerine then continues by joking that, since the member who does the sorting, CloudNine, had difficulties in choosing the right house for her, she is entitled to every house. She also jokes about having rights to the Hufflepuffs' common room, which actually receives no response. ShineLikeDiamonds replies Raspbee's shocked post by saying that she does consider herself a Hufflepuff, but does not refer to herself as one. Here she also humorously touches on qualities that in her opinion make her a Hufflepuff, such as crying and rescuing puppies, acts of an emotional and caring person. The conversation about the house traits one possesses or identifies with offers an easy way of making comparisons and judging the characters of the others. Every house has both good and bad qualities, and whether one chooses to identify with the recklessness

of a Gryffindor or the emotionality of a Hufflepuff can tell the others a great deal about the participant.

On the following conversation a participant reveals being sorted.

(3)

So... you all should check the [thread name]. Major announcement there.

-Avalanche-

\*Points at [Avalanche]\* Puffle! \*laughs\*

-glimmer-

Puffle fits me well so I wear it with pride.

-Avalanche-

\*pets\* Good puffle. n\_n

Congrats on being sorted, by the way.

-glimmer-

Yay, I'm part Puffle ^\_^ \*basks in Puffliness\*

-JungleKat-

There is what could be interpreted as condescension in glimmer's reply, which Avalanche simply ignores by stating that Hufflepuff is a fitting house. Glimmer does congratulate Avalanche on being sorted, with slight roleplay, petting on the head and praise. JungleKat offers a more enthusiastic recognition to Avalanche's new sorting and with a little roleplay also indicates that Hufflepuff is a good house to be sorted in.

On the forum there are many sorted as well as unsorted participants. The houses the participants can be sorted in create togetherness within the groups to some extent, like in the previous excerpt, where the Hufflepuff house receives a new member and the older members express their Hufflepuff pride and welcome the new member. However, even as some jeering is visible in the conversation, one should perhaps not suggest that the procedure would divide people. Even as the houses play a part in the conversations every now and then, as people compare their own and others' characteristics to those of a house, the division does not play a great part in the forum activity as such. As can be seen from the previous conversation, some participants do not necessarily regard

themselves as a member of a certain house, perhaps they disagree with the sorting, or perhaps they just do not think much of the subject. However, to some being sorted is a matter that they value, and they also promote the house to which they belong. In most cases this is done with a humorous tone.

#### **4.1.1.2. Identifying self with a character**

In the following post Maples portrays herself in relation to a character from the fandom, Ginny Weasley. Ginny is the only girl and the youngest of the Weasleys, a rather poor family with seven children, that is known for warm attitude towards muggles (non-magical people), which in turn has made the family unpopular with many. Maples expresses a strong identification with Ginny, comparing the similarities of the situation she is in to Ginny's.

(4)

I am in all things like Ginny except I'm not red haired. And I don't have brothers. In fact, I'm only like Ginny in that I am poor and not good enough for his family. Oh, the irony of it all! To make matters worse there is a Harry-like character in the mix....

-Maples-

After that, she instantly overrules the similarities and notes that in actuality, there are only two parallels in Ginny's and her life. Her exclamation "Oh, the irony of all!" draws attention to her realization of the fact that her life is in fact rather similar to the character's from her fandom. In the original series, Ginny is portrayed as the main character Harry's girlfriend and eventual wife. However, the participants of the forum rarely favor a Harry/Ginny pairing in their writing. A glimpse of this attitude is visible in the last sentence, as there is a person in Maples's life, who in her opinion plays the role of Harry Potter in her relationship and this likely is not a desirable situation for Maples. To directly compare oneself to a character from the series is much rarer than, for example, identifying with a house, as was discussed in the previous section. It is very likely that the participants identify with the characters to some extent, but in the conversation on these particular threads mentions of that are sparse.

The next example is from a conversation that concerns the rules of the fanfiction site. Some participants have expressed their disapproval of some actions that have been taken to ensure the rules are followed.

(5)

Maybe it's the inner-Hermione in me, but all I thought after I read this conversation was 'rules are rules'.

-Raspbee-

In the original Harry Potter series, Hermione is one of the main characters, who is known for her affection to rules, learning and diligence. Especially in fanfiction she is often referred to as know-it-all or goody-two-shoes, but nevertheless many seem to identify with her character. In this case Raspbee identifies with Hermione's idea of rule-following. With this short reply, Raspbee makes her point of view clear with utilizing common knowledge cleverly and effectively.



#### 4.1.1.3. Real life vs the world of Harry Potter fanfiction

One way of presenting an identity of a fan is to present one's own situation in life in relation to Harry Potter world. For example, one can make direct comparisons between one's own life and the life of a character: personality, family, friends and love life being a few of the possibilities to mirror one's situation. As the other participants are familiar with the characters' life and personality, it is rather easy to narrate one's own circumstances by indicating the similarities.

In the following example, Maples compares a man to a character from the fandom, Draco Malfoy. She says that the man in question is "a gorgeous Draco-like guy".

(6)

Alas, I am thoroughly uninterested now that I have a gorgeous Draco-like guy to obssees over. \*sighs\*

-Maples-

In the books Draco Malfoy is portrayed as a blond boy with a pale, pointed face, but in fanfiction, it is quite common to depict him as a *Slytherin sexgod* (a rather popular term), an extremely handsome blond man. Here, especially since the forum concentrates a great deal on the character, I assume that Maples is referring more to the fanon-Draco (Fanon - the canon of fanfiction). The man in Maples's life possesses Draco-like qualities, which make him delectable. Referring to Draco on the forum indicates automatically that the man is indeed a very attractive and interesting person. One could even go so far as to argue that on the forum Draco can be understood as the superlative for a desirable man and thus very easy to make comparisons against.

In the following post Maples also indicates that there is very little difference between the man in her life and the character, the difference being his hair color.

(7)

He is in all things like Draco, except he's dark-haired. \*melts\*

-Maples-

Perhaps he shares a similar background with the character, or perhaps Maples is referring only to his appearance. She does not go more into detail, but implies that the

man in question is very much like Draco, which is a definite good quality. This view is supported by the short action-indicating expression, “\*melts\*”. In the examples (6) and (7) Maples identifies a person from her life with a character from the fandom, making it easy for the other participants to create an image of the situation she faces. To compare the man to Draco Malfoy instantly creates an image of a desirable, yet perhaps slightly arrogant or unpleasant, man who has Maples’ attention for a reason. These two examples indicate that the participants do not only portray their own identities in relation to the fandom, but also the identities of others, as in this case, a man from Maples’s life.

Here, in the following example, Maples refers to a character called Lucius Malfoy. He is a known Death Eater in the story, a rich man from a noble background, who has sworn alliance to the Dark Lord. Maples talks about not wanting to get into a quarrel about a boy, yet she points out that it would be enjoyable from the character’s point of view.

(8)

As if I would stoop to lowly catfights for something that is already quite mine. That said, I'm sure Lucius would love to see me shed the girl's blood for his sake. This is the sort of practice he enjoys now and then. \*smiles fondly\*

-Maples-

The reference to Lucius seems perhaps slightly purposeless in relation to her real life, but it does direct the attention back to the fandom. The suggested want to appeal to a fictional character could be seen as a way of expressing identity. Maples also suggests that she is in fact familiar with Lucius Malfoy’s likes, as she points out that he enjoys blood shedding and would like her to do so for his entertainment. The roleplay, in which Maples is apparently in some type of sexual relationship with the character is featured in a few other posts as well. Whether the roleplay serves as an entertaining way of bringing the topic of sex (or in this case, violence) to the table, or promotes Maples’ interest in the character fanfiction-wise, seeing that she has written multiple pieces of fanfiction about the character, is unclear. However, it can be suggested that Maples wants to portray her identity in relation to the character in some way, making it clear that she knows what Lucius wants and likes, and perhaps is also inclined to act accordingly. However, mentioning Lucius Malfoy could possibly also be a way of

directing the topic back to fandom, instead of focusing entirely on the participant's private life.

#### **4.1.2. Fanfiction getting in the way of real life**

Here, in the following post, yumyum addresses the problem she has considering her time management. While she in actuality should perhaps be using her time to do her school work, instead she has chosen to stay up late writing or reading fanfiction.

(9)

I can't believe I'm staying up not because of school work, but because of fanfiction. Not that I don't have school work to do, I do, I'm just being lazy.

-yumyum-

Don't feel so incredulous. I do it every single night. Screw schoolwork!

-SweetTangerine-

One could suggest that fanfiction for these participants is more than a hobby, it is a passion or even a lifestyle. Nevertheless, yumyum hints that she feels slightly guilty about dedicating so much time to fanfiction, instead of focusing more on real life issues, such as school work. In her reply SweetTangerine consoles yumyum by saying that she is not the only one doing so. She jokes about the situation, implying that she does not care about schoolwork, or perhaps real life in general. This type of problem is not uncommon on the forum. In many cases fanfiction is seen as a duty, or is compared to the duties one has in real life. In this case it is the fanfiction that is in the way of real life, whereas in some cases it is the other way around. Problems of the second kind can be seen more in the section 4.2.2. Problems and help in Writing.

The same theme is visible in BareNecessities' post, as she expresses her frustration with everyday life. Perhaps dinner interrupts her time spent with reading or writing fanfiction, which makes her displeased.

(10)

Stupid, stupid dinner. I don't want to eat it tonight, I would rather have my fill of fanfiction.

-BareNecessities-

Later on she continues:

[SweetTangerine], I finally posted my review. I had to take a break and eat dinner because my mother insisted I need nutrients running around my body, not words (I beg to differ).

-BareNecessities-

Her expression “fill of fanfiction” bears a rather curious resemblance to the expression known from the Bible “Bread of life” (John 6:50-51). In BareNecessities’s case, her fill of fanfiction is more crucial than a meal, perhaps something she cannot imagine living without. Her later message is of a tone that implies that she is sorry for the delay in reviewing. Then she explains that the delay was caused by her mother who ordered her to eat dinner. She also points back to her idea that she would rather live off of fanfiction, instead of food, which has not gone unnoticed by her mother.

#### **4.1.3. Favorite characters and hot men**

Discussing favorite characters, seeing as the forum is centered around a romantic pairing formed by a Gryffindor girl and Slytherin boy, it is perhaps unsurprising that the trend is to favor the Slytherins. In the original series the Slytherins are depicted as cunning and power-hungry, even evil, while the Gryffindors are depicted as courageous, brave and chivalrous. The division is clear and the idea of the so-called good guys versus bad guys can also be seen on the forum. The Gryffindor men, who in other forums, and based on the statistics on the written fanfiction on the site, are very popular, do not get much attention on this particular forum.

(11)

I've always loved writing Draco, of course. That's what really got me into D/G -- I just love Draco.

-Raspbee-

Haha, so do I. He has so much potential. I love when he's not

just wonderful-looking and snarky and just perfect – he has a very funny, almost idiotic side, if one wanted to bring it out, that makes a very amusing read.

Which is why I love making Draco blush. It's just...cute. :D

-ShineLikeDiamonds-

I've also been known to go for the Snapes. But Lucius is still my Most Delicious Daddy. \*sighs\* Ah, Papa Malfoy, I've been a naughty, naughty girl....

-Maples-

In this particular conversation the participants discuss the male characters, and in this case only two names are introduced. In the series Draco Malfoy and Lucius Malfoy are both introduced quite early in the story, and while they have clear characteristics, they both give a writer of fanfiction a considerable amount of room for exploration. While Draco Malfoy is featured more often in the scenes in canon, there is still much a reader does not know about him, which leaves much room for interpretation. To state a Slytherin man, especially Draco, as a favorite character could be seen as an identifying statement: as one prefers Slytherins, a forum that concentrates on Draco Malfoy would be a natural forum for one to take part in.

As a new member has introduced herself to the forum, some of the other participants make queries about her personality and her taste, one of the questions receiving a rather noticeable amount of enthusiasm.

(12)

Nice [chickie]! And now, who's your ultimate hottie?

-crememarmalade-

Mmmm, I love me some Johnny Depp. But I prefer a bit of Jonathan Rhys Myers or Gerard Butler.

-chickie-

Gerard Butler, yes please! :P

-crememarmalade-

Wow, favourite eye candy, ahhhh, probably Draco Malfoy or Lucius Malfoy. Well they are the ones coming to mind at the moment.

EDIT- I love Christian Bale too.

-Smokeye-

While crememarmalade and chickie list real persons as their favorites, Smokeye replies with two characters from the Harry Potter fandom. As an afterthought she has later edited her post, adding a quick mention of Christian Bale. The whole post is curious, as one cannot be certain whether it is meant as humorous or not. Perhaps Smokeye really thought of the fictional characters first, it is a fanfiction forum after all, and then, realizing the others discussed actual people, felt the need to make sure that she is also aware of the real life men. Whether she was feeling slightly embarrassed or the edit was a result of a neutral afterthought, one cannot say. What one could say, is that the fictional characters from the Harry Potter books are indeed present in many topics covered on the forum, and sometimes they are even referred to as if they were real people. Perhaps it is the characteristics associated with the characters that are found appealing, but it could also be the case that the features the characters are imagined to have are what make them “ultimate hotties”. One could suggest that as the conversation takes place in the said forum, it can direct the topics and thoughts more in the lines of the fandom, and one would be more likely to answer the question along the lines of the fanfiction preferences here, rather than real life preferences. In the conversation chickie, the newbie, mentions actors, to which crememarmalade posts an agreeing reply. After this Smokeye, an older participant brings the attention to the fandom, perhaps following a familiar set of ways.

#### 4.1.4. Sexual fantasies

In the next excerpt a product called Galaxy cake bar is referred to as the Draco Malfoy of all cake bars. Here the reference to the character is meant to present the product as something very good. The name Draco Malfoy in this case is used as a superlative for good and delectable.

(13)

Ooo, have you tried the galaxy cake bars? The Draco Malfoy of all cake bars \*drools\*

-crememarmalade-

Ooooooooooh so yummy. I love the Galaxy muffins too. Actually, I just love Galaxy.

You know what I would love? I really want to bathe in chocolate. How amazing would that be?

-ladybug-

And have Draco and Blaise lick it off and somewhere a long the line involve strawberries and and marshmallows? Damn straight!

-crememarmalade-

As the forum revolves around a romantic pairing, it is not unusual to refer to the characters (especially male characters) in a suggestive tone. In this case the previous inquiry about the Galaxy cake bars escalates quickly and receives a sexual tone. First ladybug participates in the conversation by agreeing that the cake bars are yummy, and then continues by introducing the idea of bathing in chocolate. Crememarmalade contributes by introducing two characters to the topic, depicting them in a sexual scene. It is not uncommon to see explicit description of this type of activity in the fanfictions, but on the forum it is less common. However, jokes of a sexual tone are not unheard of, although in most cases they are not centered on fictional characters from the series. The forum is created around a pairing which consists of Ginny and Draco, so one could suggest that including Draco in the imaginary scene is not a surprise. For example, in many stories discussed on the forum and on the threads in general, a rather often used term *Slytherin sexgod* is in many cases associated with Draco Malfoy. Blaise, on the

other hand, a fellow Slytherin, is depicted as “a tall dark boy with high cheekbones and long, slanting eyes” (Rowling, 2005: 137), and is often portrayed as a very handsome boy also in fanfiction.

In the following posts ShineLikeDiamonds and Maples discuss Lucius Malfoy, a character from the series. Lucius Malfoy is Draco Malfoy’s father, a notorious and rich man, who is often associated with Death Eater activity. Lucius too, it seems, has been granted a status sex symbol by some of the participants. ShineLikeDiamonds points to a previous conversation, where apparently Maples has tricked her with an imposter, who then turned out to be Dobby, a House elf.

(14)

Yeah, but aren't you going to viciously prove your claim on him to be iron-strong, like you did with me, and offer Lucius-clone, who is Dobby?

\*looks nostalgic at memory\*

-ShineLikeDiamonds-

Although the original conversation is unknown, it is clear that some type of roleplay has taken place. Maples later comments on Lucius’ ability to put on a show, and indicates that he is an experience everyone should have. She also makes a reference to a magical potion that allows the drinker to take shape of another person.

(15)

Oh believe me, Lucius puts on quite a show. All women deserve to experience something like that at least once in their lifetimes. You're more than welcome to make use of the silvery blond threads of hair I've made available for Polyjuice purposes.

-Maples-

The conversation as a whole is quite lengthy, including much banter and suggestive themes, covering other subjects as well. The tone, however, remains sexual and perhaps slightly intimidating, and only when the conversation is over and the topic is changed other participants join in the conversation. This could simply be because at the time only ShineLikeDiamonds and Maples were present, or because the others did not want to intrude the conversation heavy with sexual content, insider jokes and references to past conversations. In the conversation the characters are referred to as if they were real



people and the roleplay seems to be something the participants engage in every now and then. Apparently here Maples has some type of ownership of the fantasy and has in the past refused to let ShineLikeDiamonds roleplay with Lucius, instead having offered her a replacement with the means of a magic potion. This type of conversation is slightly unusual on the forum, as the characters are normally portrayed as characters in fanfiction or the original series, or as something that is easy to compare characteristics to, for example. To refer to a character as a real person is a type of roleplay one would probably engage in in a safe environment, with like-minded people.

#### **4.1.5. HP humor and insider jokes**

When kissmegoodnight posts about how she loves being alone in her house, but has a weird feeling about it at the moment, BareNecessities replies as follows:

(16)

It might just be a wrackspurt, [kissmegoodnight].

-BareNecessities-

She refers to a magical creature that a character named Luna Lovegood introduces in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*: “A Wrackspurt ... they’re invisible, they float in through your ears and make your brains go fuzzy” (J.K.Rowling, 2005: 134). Hpfan seconds BareNecessities suggestion in her reply:

(17)

Wrackspurts are definitely not out of the question.

-hpfan-

It is rather uncommon to see conversation which would suggest that the fans on the forum act as characters in the Harry Potter books, or go so far in supporting the fandom that they would in fact believe in magic, magical creatures or the universe introduced in the books. However, to share an insider joke, like in this instance blaming a fictional creature for an unpleasant sensation, suggests that the fans share the enthusiasm for the fandom and are familiar enough with it to participate in the joke, creating unity among

the participants. It serves also as an amusing way to direct the conversation more towards the fandom, rather than just concentrating solely on the private lives of the participants, as well as a reminder of the fact that they are in fact conversing on a fan forum. I do not suggest that the participant do this kind of refocusing deliberately, but perhaps it is a way to secure one's identity as a fan by introducing a fannish element, such as referring to a magical creature. It is very likely that the joke is meant as a purely a joke, which can probably be understood by only other fans, instead of claiming one's expertise in the fandom. Referring to the fandom is a clever way of pointing out that one is familiar with the fandom and an easy way to create a common jargon. However, one could suggest that on a forum that in fact consists of fans, making recurrent references would probably be seen as pointless and, in the long run, also annoying.

In the following reply Clouds shares the joke she posted on Facebook.

(18)

I make the lamest jokes all the time. For example, today on Facebook:

R: Someone has pissed off Mother Nature, cause she is Huffing and Puffing at someone! What's with this Bloody wind?!

Me: Mother Nature must be a Hufflepuff.

-Clouds-

A post about the unpleasant weather conditions presents Clouds an opportunity for wordplay. Huffing and puffing is quickly turned into Hufflepuff, a joke that can be understood only by those who are familiar with the Harry Potter lexicon. The post does not reveal whether the other person, whose update Clouds is commenting on, is a Harry Potter fan or not. However it could be assumed that the person is somewhat familiar with the fandom, and has perhaps read one or more of the books, as Clouds feels that her Hufflepuff joke would be understood. If the other person is not familiar with the houses of Hogwarts, the reference would probably make no sense. Clouds also suggests that her joke is lame. Whether it has to do with it relating to Harry Potter, or the word play, one cannot be sure, but it is a possibility that using Harry Potter as a source or means for humor, could be perceived as odd behaviour. Being a fan of a fantasy series would be possible to be considered geeky, or as slightly eccentric, even by the fans

themselves. In that case referring to Hufflepuffs would be a type of acknowledgement of being a fan or a possibly geeky pop culture phenomenon. However, in this case one cannot be sure to what the lameness of the joke refers, but the shared knowledge of Harry Potter is required here to understand the joke, thus making it an insider joke.

The next excerpt is a curious case of sarcasm mixed with an insider joke.

(19)

Sup bitches.

-JungleKat-

Hello, [JungleKat].

My friend said that me to today. Well, not the exact same thing, but when I gave her my homework for her to copy, she went 'safe, bitch, seeya'.

-Marble-

Hey [JungleKat].

-Jumblebee-

I'm flattered that you think I'm an Animagus, [JungleKat]. :) )

Good (early) morning.

-Delish-

JungleKat opens the conversation with a rather coarse greeting. Whereas Marble and Jumblebee answer the greeting normally, with the addition of Marble's brief comment on being called a bitch twice that day, it seems that Delish does not wish to be called a bitch. Perhaps Delish does not like JungleKat's choice of wording and instead of voicing that, she turns the greeting around, making it into an insider joke, implying that JungleKat referred to her as witch whose Animagus form is a female dog. In the world of Harry Potter *Animagi* are talented witches or wizards who can magically turn into an animal. Becoming an Animagus is a difficult achievement, which usually takes months of practicing. The animal forms of the Animagi are always the same, and that animal usually corresponds to the personal traits of the witch or the wizard. In this case, Delish acts as if JungleKat thinks that Delish's Animagus form is a dog. After that, her reply continues with a greeting, and the conversation

In the following post, Cookie references the magical method of transportation, Apparition, indicating her actions of coming and going.

(20)

\*apparates\*

[...]

Then play The Urbz: Sims in the City! It's SO EPIC, though not in a Final Fantasy epic way. You move to a city and move up in the world, solving mysteries, making friends, and playing mini games in order to earn money and move into bigger and better houses, getting bigger and better jobs.

It's my favorite way to play The Sims! I'm with Kira in that I like to design the houses, but I get bored after that.

\*disapparates\*

-Cookie-

Apparating in the world of Harry Potter is a magical way of changing location quickly, not unlike the method familiar from science fiction: teleportation. In the post “\*apparates\*” indicates that she abruptly makes her entrance, and after saying what she has to say, she “\*disapparates\*”, disappears abruptly. The magical action-indicating opening and ending serve a rather clear purpose: the participant makes a quick stop on the thread, appearing seemingly out of nowhere, and after saying what she needs to say she does not plan to linger. In the original series, when one disapparates, they leave the scene completely and the others have normally no way of knowing where they went. The magic transportation is a clever way of announcing one’s coming and going on the forum, as it is something everyone would be familiar with without further explanations. While the actual contents of the post are not Harry Potter related, and Cookie does not refer to herself as a fan, it can be suggested here that using the vocabulary familiar from the series does indicate that she recognizes the forum she quickly visits at the occasion and identifies with the fandom.

#### 4.1.6. Fans as experts of Harry Potter

Surprisingly, only one example was found in the material where a question relating to Potter knowledge was specifically asked. Before studying the data more closely, my assumption was that there would be more inquiries about Harry Potter related trivia, for example, inquiries about a character's eye color. It may be the case that these type of inquiries are found on another thread, or perhaps the writers use other methods of getting the needed information, such as simply googling it. This being said, I believe that being able to judge the knowledge the participants have about the Harry Potter saga, one would have to study the actual written fanfiction. Being familiar with the plot, the characters and the facts is important in writing good fanfiction, and in my experience reviews are often where corrections and hints are given, in addition to the possible separate threads for help in writing. However, expertise in the overall writing processes is more commonly sought after and it is discussed more in section 4.2.2. Problems and help in writing.

In the following example, CloudNine asks the other forum members for help with correct spelling.

(21)

Okay, is splinched capitalized like Apparated is?

-CloudNine-

I think so.

-ShineLikeDiamonds-

Is splinched a word outside of Harry Potter? I don't think so. If it's not, then it probably should be capitalized.

-Past tense-

HP Lexicon doesn't cap it. I'll go with that.

-CloudNine-

She is not sure whether the word “splinch” (a word made up by J.K.Rowling) should be capitalized like the word, “Apparate” that is frequently used in the context of Harry

Potter world (also invented by Rowling). Two answers are offered for CloudNine's question. The first answer by ShineLikeDiamonds simply states an opinion without going more into detail, but Past Tense offers a solution with a brief reasoning. In her final response CloudNine points to HP Lexicon ([www.hp-lexicon.org/](http://www.hp-lexicon.org/)), a fan-based Internet site, that includes an encyclopedia of Harry Potter world. She had been unable to find an entry for the word "splinch" in there, and therefore had asked the forum members for guidance in the matter. She seems content with the answers she got and relies on the expertise of the other members. Not only is the forum a community of Harry Potter fans, it is a community of Harry Potter fanfiction writers, who regard their hobby with a certain seriousness. For a fic to be seen as well written and believable, it is important to also get details, such as the correct spelling of the magical vocabulary, right. Therefore it is useful to ask help from the forum, as it is certain that someone is familiar with the subject or has some type of knowledge about the problem in question. Perhaps there are also participants who have been writing for a longer period of time, are known for their knowledge and are identified as the experts in many topics.

#### 4.1.7. Critique of the original series and the films

The topic of conversation in the following excerpts are the Harry Potter movies. The actors and actresses in the roles as well as their credibility are evaluated. The movies, being based on the original work, the book series, are often not seen as canon. Their importance in relation to the fandom is also significantly lower than that of the books, and critique of the movies is not uncommon.

Here kangareena voices her opinion about the main actors, Daniel Radcliffe, Emma Watson and Rupert Grint.

(22)

I'm not fond of any of the actors playing the Trio. Esp. Dan, not a great actor.

-kangareena-

And I'm not fond of them either. I think Rupert Grint is probably the best actor out of the group.

-BareNecessities-

My favorite is Rupert Grint too. He's decently amusing.

-PennyChoo-

BareNecessities agrees with kangareena and points out that that Rupert Grint, who plays the part of Ron Weasley, performs the best. PennyChoo joins the conversation and agrees with BareNecessities, by stating that in her opinion Rupert Grint's acting is the best of the three. Kangareena also agrees about Grint and continues by assessing the overall performance of the actors throughout the series. While she says that the actors were good as child actors in the first movies, in her opinion the level of acting decreased as the saga continued. She further illustrates her opinion by suggesting that by having top actors in the adult roles, the film makers should have put more effort into selecting or perhaps advising the young actors.

(23)

I think he's the most natural of the three. I just expected that as the series and characters grew over time their acting skills would as well.

I think the first two movies were best because they were child actors and they did it well. They just never got to the level of teenage+ acting. I actually think Tom is one of the few that can pull off some more subtle acting skills, he did really well in HBP. And I'm not just saying that because he's Draco.

I mean they fill the adult roles with the top actors in Europe and the kids they half-assed it.

-kangareena-

Kangareena also mentions Tom Felton, who plays the role of Draco Malfoy. After a positive comment on his performance, she apparently feels the need to clarify that her opinion does not rely on the fact that he is Draco, but rather on his skills.

BareNecessities voices a similar opinion. She suggests that Tom Felton would have been a better choice for Harry's role, but also admits that she sees him as Draco.

(24)

And [kangareena], you're right about that. Tom Felton is a much better actor than Dan or Emma. Throughout the series I think he has been the best. I was thinking would it have been better if he played Harry, which is the role he auditioned for in the first place, but I can't picture him as anyone but Draco.

-BareNecessities-

Really, it's rather unfortunate for most of the young actors in this series, they will be typecast for the rest of their lives in some way from this.

Tom does have a very boyish and cute face when he smiles so I could see him as Harry with black hair.

-kangareena-

BareNecessities also admits to having thought what the saga would be like if she herself would have done the casting and directing of the films. She suggests that it was a mistake for the filmmakers to leave out some characters that appear in the books.



(25)

I've always dreamed of what the movies would be like if I had directed them and cast the actors. Of course I would have cast myself as one of the roles, but that's beyond the point. I wouldn't have skipped out complete characters. u\_u

-BareNecessities-

In many cases the movies are seen in a completely different light than the original books. It is fairly common that the actors are criticized and the differences in the plot are seen as unsuccessful. In the previous conversation, the participants' role as consumers of the Harry Potter merchandise, in this case the movies, is visible. As they criticize the movies, they portray themselves as consumers and the audience of the saga, as well as fans with opinions.

The following post is an example of a rather rare case of criticizing J.K.Rowling. It poses the Harry Potter saga in comparison with another series with a similar story. Kissmegoodnight suggests Avatar is more successful with the concepts of good and evil.

(26)

The creators of Avatar were more kind to their villains than JKR was to the Slytherins. They understood the balance between good and evil, right and wrong, and how everything is based on perception and choice of actions. I mean, the Avatar before Aang was Fire Nation. So what? That didn't make him inherently bad because of it. JKR never liked Draco or the Slytherins, and never gave them an opportunity to grow past the "Daddy's boy" attitude from the first book, even though he's given a big mission in the sixth. The attitude about it was all the same.

-kissmegoodnight-

Kissmegoodnight points out that in her opinion J.K.Rowling's choice to portray Slytherins as the villains on the basis of the house they are or were in, instead of taking the opportunity to create a story where a character is allowed to develop to be good despite the given background.

As the fans criticize the films, it is common to see opinions regarding the choice of actors, for example. It is likely that the fans have formed strong image of a specific character and as the actor chosen for the role does not match the image, the fan is likely to be disappointed with the actor, his work or the way he is portrayed in the film. For a fan on the forum to have a strong affection for the object of the fandom, in this case the original book series, is very likely, seeing that he or she is participating in writing or reading Harry Potter fanfiction. In many cases the fans are very familiar with the characters, perhaps identifying with them, and when the movie fails to portray an expected image of a characters, a fan is let down. Sharing opinions about the films and the books, and critiquing them, the participants can portray themselves as fans, consumers, even as experts. They identify with the other fans with similar opinions and argue with others who express opposing thoughts, and the forum offers an ideal medium for this. This type of discussion among fans is also discussed by Jenkins (2006: 122), as he studies the fans' way of discussing, analyzing and critiquing a television series.

On the forum is more common to see criticism directed at the movies that at the original books. To see a post about the lacking depth in the notions of good evil, such as in the previous excerpt is rare. However, in many cases opinions as to which couple works better in fanon and the original pairing by J.K.Rowling perhaps lacks something is more common. Opinions like this, and the opportunity to explore the fanon pairing are perhaps one of the reasons why fanfiction forums like the one in the present study are created and function.

## **4.2. Identity as a writer of fanfiction**

To participate in a forum that builds on Harry Potter fanfiction means that it is very likely that one is interested in fanfiction, and, quite possibly, an active reader or writer of fanfiction.

The forum offers a place for the readers, writers, reviewers, reviewees and beta-readers to gather, to change opinions, gather knowledge and to share experiences. It is not uncommon to present a problem, and to receive replies that indicate that others share the feeling or to receive help for the process. By participating in the conversation, participants can express identity, by identifying with or distancing themselves from the topic discussed.

Writing is discussed from many different points of view. The writing of fanfiction has naturally a significant role in the posts, but also original work is sometimes mentioned. The participants often inquire how the others' writing processes are progressing and they also share news about their own stories. The posts include sharing of achievements and troubles, as well as asking for and giving advice and encouragement. As experiences and opinions are shared and discussed, the participants often have a certain role in the conversations. When the participants post on the forum, they may present themselves and other as certain type of writers, such as successful or unsuccessful writers, advice-seekers or givers and, also importantly, supporters. From the posts presented in the examples, the participants' identities as writers can be construed as for example successful or struggling writers. Also the identities of a helping friend or a former enthusiast can be seen in the excerpts.

### 4.2.1. Successful writing

In the following piece of conversation SweetTangerine brings up a private message, which is here called an *owl*, in which BareNecessities has given some feedback on her writing.

(27)

[BareNecessities]!

I need to reply to that owl you sent me. It was quite lovely and instrumental.

Good news: the chapter is sitting in [Raspbee]'s inbox right now in its nearly-6k entirety. I feel so accomplished.

-SweetTangerine-

[SweetTangerine]!

Yes. Yes, you do. :P I don't know if it was... instrumental but I'll take that. \*laughs\*

I am excited to read it. I'm looking for something to read at the moment and nothing at all is taking my fancy. Don't disappoint me, Miss (which I doubt you will).

-BareNecessities-

Well, maybe not instrumental, but you gave me your opinion which is great. (...and basically it was like an early review which is like crack to any writer.)

Is it weird that I rarely read DG fanfiction? I haven't ventured into the archives in...shit, it must have been months ago. This is only slightly worrying.

Actually, scratch that. Intensely worrying. What if someone already had this idea and did it better?? \*panics\*

-SweetTangerine-

SweetTangerine expresses her gratitude for the feedback, stating that it was “like crack”. Receiving the feedback, which most likely was of a positive tone, SweetTangerine has been motivated to continue the story. In this case, BareNecessities is not her beta-reader, but has nevertheless offered some help with the chapter she has been working on. It seems that it is not unusual to ask for and receive help and tips from other participants of the forum. The support given to the others' writing processes is a very visible element on the forum, and it will be discussed more in the next section, 4.2.2. 'Problems and

help in writing'. In the first post SweetTangerine also updates her progress. She says that her chapter is now finished, perhaps thanks to BareNecessities help, and she is now waiting to be read by her beta-reader, Raspbee. SweetTangerine also reveals the word count of her story, nearly 6000 words. In other words, she indicates that she has written a long chapter, is pleased with her progress, and now wishes to share the news with the other participants who have perhaps been waiting for an update to her story.

In a slightly similar post FurySwipes also makes an announcement. She states that she is tired and at the same time, almost as a side note, reveals having posted a new chapter for her story.

(28)

-stretches in her seat-

Ugh, I'm exhausted for no apparent reason. Though successfully posted Chapter Two of my new Draco&&Ginny fic.

-FurySwipes-

Perhaps FurySwipes wants to announce that she is present and ready for conversation. However, it is likely that the post is also meant as an invitation for the participants to go read her new chapter. Updates such as this are very common on the forum.

In the following piece of conversation there is an inquiry about the writing process.

(29)

Any progress made with the writing?

-Tulips-

Almost up to 22,000 words. Need another 200 or so. Which I will get done by tonight!

-Chinadoll-

Well done! That's awesome work!

-Tulips-

Apparently Tulips and Chinadoll have been discussing the piece Chinadoll has been working on earlier. Chinadoll reveals having written almost 22000 words, which is a lengthy chapter or a story, and that she only needs to finish this work now. Tulips seems

impressed and offers her compliments for the work. Short conversations like the previous one are very common on the forum. Inquiries about the others' writing process are quite often made, and one or more participants may answer with news of their story. One could see this type of questions as an easy way of conversing and showing interest in others' work. Often the responses are then replied with the help of a compliment or words of encouragement, depending on the answer.

In the following, slightly unusual, piece of conversation Raspbee confesses that she is not exceedingly happy about the alerts she is getting, even though that suggests that her writing has been successful.

(30)

I am being bombarded with Favourite Author alerts. It's like these people are part of some kind of Boogum cult and are all pressing the 'Favourite Author' button at the same time. Either that or [site name] is a little delayed and I am now being swamped with all the alerts in one go. It's kind of annoying, actually.

-Raspbee-

As for the favourite authors thing, good on you! That is awesome but I could see how it would get annoying.

-Tulips-

I've been getting that too. Or story alerts for my older stuff and oneshots.

-StarryNights-

I don't meant to sound ungrateful. But in the past 5 minutes, I've received like 10 favourite author alerts. I'm waiting for an email, so I'll be like "Ooo, email!" But no. Just another alert.

-Raspbee-

Favourite Author alerts are something a reader can click on when they find a writer whose stories they like. When one favourites an author, one gets a notification every time the author submits a new story or chapter. Like Tulips implies in her comment, getting author alerts is good for the author, as it shows the popularity of one's fics, as well as gives more visibility to the author. However, in this case Raspbee gets an email alert every time somebody favourites her, which has become annoying. The conversation itself is curious, because it is rare to see anyone complaining if a fic they

have submitted is popular. However, one of the more common topics is the number of readers of a fic, compared to the number of reviews the readers have left. One could argue that reviews are the best liked type of feedback received from the fics, and perhaps in this case as well Raspbee would rather receive reviews instead of the impersonal author alerts. Nevertheless, in the last post Raspbee feels the need to imply that she does think that the alerts are a positive matter, and she does not mean to sound ungrateful. It seems that here her role as a writer conflicts with her role in her real life and while she is trying to concentrate on the situation she currently is in, the emails are making it impossible, making her dislike them. Even as Raspbee is identified a successful writer, and clearly a liked one, by the readers, it seems to cause her some distress.

A successful writer is something that very likely all the participants who write fanfiction would like to identify themselves as. In the examples success in writing does not necessarily mean that they have written a good story in terms of popularity, it usually means a certain amount of finished text that the writer is pleased with. Announcing the success usually is received with support and compliments, but it also has an important role of making sure that the target audience is alerted about the new chapter or story.

#### **4.2.2. Problems and help in writing**

One of the most typical topics regarding the writing of fanfiction, is sharing the problems one is having with it. In the data there are many mentions of writer's blocks, difficult prompts, lack of inspiration, etc. In the following post ShineLikeDiamonds addresses another writer first, expressing her wish that she updates her story soon, then she continues the post by sharing troubles in her own writing process.

(31)

You'd better be updating that fic about the gorgeous Italian blond we all love! :D I'm missing him.

It's tragic, I'm afraid. I can't guarantee that I'll be able to write a fic, because firstly, I hardly EVER have time to write these days or get the inspiration, and when I do, I write this novel I've been

working on lately, which I sort of have hopes for. I know that if I get into the fanfiction groove, it'll be harder to get back into the original fiction groove, so anyway. I guess I'll just have to watch the fun this time.

\*sighs\*

-ShineLikeDiamonds-

Oh, I see! By all means continue to work on your novel, my dear. The sad part about fanfiction is that no matter how beautiful your work, in the end it is borrowed and you can't really claim it as yours or do anything in RL with it. I want to start working on some original stuff myself, something I haven't done in TEN YEARS. Wow.

-Maples-

ShineLikeDiamonds describes her lack of inspiration which prevents her from writing. She also says that if she is in the mood for writing, she writes her original work instead of fanfiction, which also disheartens her because she has a pending fic waiting. Then again, she confesses that getting inspiration for her fanfiction would mean that her original work would suffer, so she is torn about the subject. Here the juxtaposition of the participant's two writer identities causes her problems and she shares her feelings on the forum. Maples replies by supporting her original work writing and shares her own experience. She compares writing fanfiction and original work and notes that even though fanfiction can be beautifully written, it is not the same as writing original work and she encourages ShineLikeDiamonds to concentrate on her original work for now. Maples also reveals her wish to also write original work, which in turn causes her to realize she has not done that in a long time.

In the following conversation a similar problem is introduced. However, here fics that are not her first priorities are proving to be more interesting than the ones the participants feel they should be working on at the time.

(32)

Gaaaah! This always happens to me! Every time I'm supposed to be writing something, I'll suddenly get an urge to work on something else.

I have a weird desire to write [*Fic name*]- a fic I haven't written anything for in over three years, despite the fact it was actually uploaded to my profile not so long ago.



Edit: make that almost a year ago. Wow. Has it really been that long?

-Raspbee-

Lol [Raspbee]. I haven't had the impulse to write ANYTHING for a while. And I am entered into the fic exchange. u\_u

-SnowSafari-

I've had the same problem. Sadly, my attempt to push myself into writing has only inspired me to want to write the wrong fic. I'm never going to complete my exchange fic at this rate.

-Raspbee-

Raspbee has entered a writing exchange, a challenge posed on the forum, and is now having trouble with her inspiration. Instead of focusing on the exchange fic, she finds herself writing another fic, one that she has not updated for three years. SnowSafari participates by telling that she, too, has entered the exchange, despite the fact that she has no interest in writing anything at the moment. Raspbee's reply reveals that initially she had the same problem and by trying to overcome it she became interested in the wrong fic. Cookie also participates in the discussion and says that the amount of school work she has pending and the stress caused by it affects her writing inspiration.

(33)

I'm similar with my block in that I don't feel free to write so nothing wants to come out anyway. School is kind of a big pain in the butt this semester. :P

-Cookie-

Very true, and at the end of the day it is better to have good grades than write a good fanfic.

I've given up on trying to do both. I genuinely feel sorry for the person who has me as their prompt writer, because I certainly know what I'll be putting first in terms of time and energy.

-Raspbee-

True, true. Fanfiction doesn't get you into college. And, I want to get into Stanford. Must focus...

-SnowSafari-

Raspbee and SnowSafari both identify with the problem. Raspbee admits that she cannot do both well and has to concentrate on only one, even if it means disappointing

the person who has given her the prompt in the fic exchange. Finally, they conclude that getting good grades is more important than writing.

Another problem in a writing process is expressed by PastTense:

(34)

And I was working on a one-shot that won't cooperate with me.

-PastTense-

Hey [PastTense]... Let it flow. Perhaps some music helps?

-Kendra-

It's not that the words won't come to me. It's that I can't seem to get a certain amount of emotion in it that I want to be in it. It's very much one of those stories that I have to be in the mood to write.

-PastTense-

Ah, I'm having that problem right now. I'm writing a compilation of fluffy DG one-shots and it seems I can't get the emotion out.

Just listen to music that suits the type of story you are writing. If it is more feel good, listen to something poppy, if it is angst-y listen to something emotional. You catch my drift.

I'm just trying not to think about it and hopefully it will just come out when it feels the need.

-BareNecessities-

PastTense admits that the writing process is proving for some reason to be difficult for her. This post is only a short statement and does not seek for advice in a form of a direct question, but nevertheless, Kendra replies by suggesting that music could help. PastTense then specifies the problem and says that it is the emotion she cannot grasp and muses that she would need to be in a certain mood to be able to write the story. Her reply is followed by many more replies from various participants, expressing similar problems in their writing or giving advice on how to get past the writer's block. For example, BareNecessities agrees with Kendra and says that a certain type of music fitting the mood of the fic could help with the writing. Posts such as these are rather common on the forum, which serves also as a support system for the writers of fanfiction. Although not everyone necessarily reads the fics of the others, tips and advice in the writing process are often offered.

Besides support in the mental process of writing, such as conquering a writer's block, help in grammar is also sought and given on the forum:

(35)

"Ron Weasley, you are a jealous prat!" She spat at her brother.

Crap, little 's' or not?

-Jumblebee-

Little S, [Jumblebee].

-SweetTangerine-

SweetTangerine's reply offers only the answer for Jumblebee's question, nothing more. On the forum there are participants who are known for having a good command of spelling and grammar and they are often requested for help. Normally this help would come in the form of beta-reading, but sometimes the forum serves also as a place to search answers for an abrupt problem in writing.

In the following conversation BareNecessities admits that while she would love to write, she has no ideas what she could write about or is unsuccessful in her attempts to put her thought into words. It seems that she is very dispirited about this. She is referring to plot bunnies, a common name for random ideas for fics, waiting to be written. It is not unusual to offer plot bunnies to other forum participants, if one has a good idea but is unable to write it oneself.

(36)

I wish the plot bunnies would hop back into my life! Sadly, I have nothing. Or I cannot get anything down on paper.

\*frowns\* Stupid, stupid, stupid!

-BareNecessities-

You can have my plot bunnies, [BareNecessities]. I have more than enough for the both of us.

-Raspbee-

I don't understand how you can have no plot bunnies, though. I

ALWAYS have plot bunnies, but whether I actually write them is another matter entirely...

-Raspbee-

Well, I should have really changed what I said before I posted it. I *do* have plot bunnies, its just no words are coming out. It makes me want to cry at times.

-BareNecessities-

Oh, I hate that. I have those moments, and they're horrible.

-Raspbee-

Another forum member, Raspbee, comes to help by offering her own plot bunnies. She then continues by wondering how it is possible that BareNecessities does not have any, since she always has them herself. Here BareNecessities admits phrasing her problem wrong, the real problem is that she is facing a writer's block, which is depressing her. At this point Raspbee understands her problem and her answer is quite sympathetic, indicating that the situation is not unfamiliar to her either.

In the following conversation SweetTangerine talks about her hate for summaries. Summaries are the short texts that appear under the title of a published fic, written by the writer. Their objective is to attract possible readers by revealing something about the fic. This can be done by summarizing the plot, writing an interesting section from the story or by introducing out the characters and starting point of the story, for example. A well written, catchy summary attracts more readers and a badly written one maybe the reason a reader decides not to read the fic. This is what bothers SweetTangerine.

(37)

I hate summaries so incredibly much. I'm positive I scare more people off than I attract with awful summaries.

-SweetTangerine-

As long as there are no typos or grammatical mistakes in your summaries, you're ahead of the game.

-Norberta-

Solid point.

And I don't beg for forgiveness because it's my first fic, or say "I suck at summaries--better one inside," or R&R! Yuck.

- SweetTangerine-

Norberta points out the importance of grammar in the summary, but does not offer further words of advice. However, this seems to be enough encouragement, since SweetTangerine already is able to admit that her summaries do not stoop so low as to apologizing and explaining oneself in the summary. What she also does not do, is to write the frequently used request “R&R” – read and review, which in her opinion seems to be an annoying choice to write in a summary. Even though reviewing is highly appreciated and much awaited, at least in SweetTangerine’s opinion it for some reason should not be specifically asked for.

In the next pick SweetTangerine directs a question at Raspbee, asking whether she should name her chapters or not.

(38)

[Raspbee]!!

Quick question: should I do chapter titles? I'm sure I could rally one up. I'm not sure if I'd be up to snuff with them or not.

EDIT: Aw, crap, that's what I get for glancing at avatars and not reading your posts. You're not even here (really)!

Anyone else want to answer the question, then?

-SweetTangerine-

I vote yes, though I have no idea what fic you're working on. :P

-CloudNine-

[SweetTangerine], I was going to ask you if you were having chapter titles, but if you're not feeling up to it, then don't worry. Chapter One is just as good as any other title. :P

-Raspbee-

I've decided to do titles, but I've also decided to make them little quotes (which might be harder). And it's for *Preggers!Ginny*, [CloudNine].

-SweetTangerine-

Apparently SweetTangerine relies on Raspbee’s expertise as she asks help in the decision concerning her own fic. It could be the case that Raspbee is her beta-reader for the fic, or has been for a former fic that SweetTangerine has written, but nevertheless

she now seeks Raspbee's expert opinion on the matter. Then, as seen from the edited part, SweetTangerine realizes that Raspbee is not present, as she has not read her previous posts, which state that she is not going to go away from the computer for a while and asks if another participant is willing to answer her question. CloudNine then gives a short reply, saying that while she does not know what kind of fic SweetTangerine is currently writing, she should name the chapters. After that Raspbee apparently returns to the forum and replies to SweetTangerine's question. Apparently they have discussed the fic earlier, as she admits having been aiming to ask SweetTangerine about the same topic. Then she continues to give a rather vague opinion on the matter, saying that SweetTangerine should do what she feels is the best. Even though the expert opinion SweetTangerine sought after did not give her a conclusive solution to the dilemma at hand, she seems to be content with the answer she receives and makes a quick decision, possibly based on the notion that both options are good.

The following is a lengthy conversation about the forum's current writing challenge:

(39)

I'm excited and yet not about my prompt. I have to sit down and write the damn thing! Sigh.

-rememberme-

\*Nods head\*

[SweetTangerine], [rememberme].

Have I missed something crucial (wouldn't be surprising) Uhm, prompts?

Oh and [rememberme], I have started my new fic now, would you be up for Beta-ing it and putting [story name] on the back burner for a bit until I can sort the story out in my head.

-Smokeye-

I'm very excited about my prompt, but I'm afraid it's not quite oneshot material.

Which means that my to-do list currently looks something like this:

- 1) Chapter two of Preggers!Ginny
- 2) Chapter two of [fic name] (Bleach)
- 3) Chapter three of [fic name] (Bleach)

4) Chapter three of Preggers!Ginny

5) Exchange fic until done!

Meh. I hate planning. It makes it look like so...much. I mean, that's over 20k without the stupid exchange fic. Gah.

-SweetTangerine-

Normally, I'd love to, [Smokeye], but I am swamped with RL work. :( Crazy crazy, hate it. Sigh.

-rememberme-

Mine "could" be a one-shot, but I don't see myself writing it as a one-shot.

-rememberme-

I was not 'thrilled' by any of the prompts - including my own - but I think that's because of RL getting in the way. But now that I have a prompt, and little plot bunnies to go along with it, I'm starting to feel pretty excited. ^\_^

[SweetTangerine] - last time we didn't require a beta reader. This time, though, you better get one (and it has to be someone who isn't in the exchange). I already have mine... ;p

-CloudNine-

Oh ok, thank you [SweetTangerine]. I thought it would be best if I didn't do the exchange, because I'm really very bad at meeting deadlines and I didn't think it would be fair on the other authors!

No, that's fine [rememberme], I will place a tag on the beta search thread. I hope your time clears up for you soon. Being hectic is very bad for your health.

-Smokeye-

I liked mine, and would have kept them for myself, but I didn't have any way to write them. I'm horrible at chapter fics.

-kissmegoodnight-

Speaking of chaptered fics, I couldn't sleep last night so I came up with this DG AU idea but I don't have the time or anyway really to write them, I have loads of bits for the first chapter, but lengthening it out now...Er...Yeah, so I'll probably put it on the plot bunny thread later.

-crememarmalade-

In this piece of conversation many topics are addressed at once, by many participants, making the thread slightly difficult to follow. Here two at first unrelated issues are brought up: the writing challenge and beta-reading. In the first reply rememberme

expresses her mixed feelings about the prompt she has received, which seems to alert Smokeye, who muses whether she has missed her prompts. SweetTangerine then joins the conversation, saying that while she likes her prompt, it promises her a large amount of work, seeing that it does not seem like a oneshot, a single chaptered story, could be written of it. Additionally she lists all the projects she has pending, revealing the amount of work she has to be done. CloudNine weighs in by saying that she is beginning to feel excited about her prompt. Smokeye's previous inquiry about beta-reading seems to have gotten CloudNine's attention, as she reminds SweetTangerine that she should have a beta for the exchange. Perhaps this is because of the list SweetTangerine posted, since the exchange fic is at the last place and beta-reading can be time-consuming. Kissmegoodnight also joins the conversation, by musing that while she liked the prompts, she felt that she would not have been able to write them, as she doubts her ability to write a multi-chaptered fic. This in turn piques crememarmalades interest, as she reveals having problems with putting her idea into words. She suggests that she may be putting the idea up for adoption on the plot bunny thread, and someone else may then try writing the story. The topics evolve as the participants post their replies, revealing different writer and reader identities and it does not take many posts for the topic to change from the prompts to chaptered fics, and the difficulties of writing them. As each participant participates in the conversation, they portray themselves and their situations as fans, writers and participants. It is fairly easy to identify with another participant's situation or to compare it with one's own, as everyone has the possibility to take part in the same writing challenge, but also as they are all more or less familiar with different types of writing processes and what they require from the writer.



### 4.2.3. Dilemmas and musings that writing fanfiction cause

In the following conversation the participants discuss the role of OCs – original characters – in fanfiction, after rememberme has gotten a review criticizing her choice to use an OC in her story.

(40)

I think some people just really hate OCs, no matter what. I don't understand why she read for this long if she hates OCs because [fic name] is riddled with them. :P

-rememberme-

I never understand that. I mean, yeah, I don't really like OCs all the time either, but that's only because the OC is often poorly written. And we know that isn't a problem for you. ^\_~

-Raspbee-

I think OCs are tricky - people have a tendency to either love them or hate them, so they can be a risk in a story. Often the only way to keep everyone happy is to have a flawless integration - though I'm sure yours was and you just had a narky bitch. :P

-copperhead-

I just think it's funny people don't like OCs when often that is the writer actually showing what s/he can do by using their own imagination. Personally, I've found the best stories usually feature quite a bit of OCs simply because the plot itself is quite original.

-Raspbee-

Some stories just call for OCs, especially when you're writing a post-series/war fic and you're putting your characters in a hostile environment. Plus, AtLA has a huge world to work with. It's not like HP where you have 100s of characters to work with. But even then OCs are needed, depending on the plot. Or else you get friend-cest, which is typical of most sitcoms and dramas. :P

-rememberme-

Agreed.

-Raspbee-

An OC is a character that does not exist in the canon but is instead created by the writer of the fanfiction. The participants here discuss the use of OCs in fanfiction, whether or

not it is a good idea. Raspbee points out that it is not uncommon that OCs in fanfiction are poorly written. A reason for this could be their lack a backstory and familiar personality traits a characters from a canon have. She also comforts rememberme by saying that this should not be the case, as rememberme is known for her writing abilities. Also copperhead says that she believes rememberme's story to have "flawless integration", making the OC work in the story, and the fault is with the reviewer. Raspbee also touches on the contradiction the matter of using OCs raises. While creating a good and believable OC proves that the writer is a good writer with talent and imagination, the choice of using the OC in the story may be the factor that makes the readers disregard or dislike the story. Rememberme also suggests that in some cases OCs are necessary in order to avoid circling the same characters and creating, as she puts it, "friend-cest", forcing friends to get involved romantically. She also points to another fandom, Avatar: the Last Airbender, which despite having more canon characters than Harry Potter, can in her opinion still benefit from an OC in fanon.

A rather lengthy conversation took place on the newer thread. This conversation was of a serious and more atypical nature. Here four participants discuss stopping their writing of fanfiction.

(41)

For the first time, I actually don't have any inclination to work on new fics. I'm completely over fanfiction at the moment. Haven't touched anything since my [name] one-shot. I think it really might be time to start slowing down and, well, gradually easing out of the fanfiction world. Of course, actually finishing my current WIPs will probably take years, so you'll still have me around for a while. :P

-Raspbee-

I can't see stopping with ficcing, like. . . ever.

Especially with the way I keep gaining fandoms. I read in 27, and have ideas to write in 18.

-StarryNights-

Would it be overly dramatic that the thought of this makes me want to collapse to the ground and throw some sort of fit/cry? Lol. I really dislike that idea, but it is fair enough. Though I will hold you to finishing your WIP's. And also forbid you from leaving

the forum.

-Tulips-

Yeah, that's my plan too - to ease out of fanfiction. I only have ... 4 WIP to finish. But 3 of those 4 only have 3-5 chapters left a piece. So, uh, that's good. -rubs back of neck-

-rememberme-

Lol, [StarryNights]. I don't know how you keep up with that. I can barely keep up with three fandoms.

Naturally, I will not leave the forum. And I expect I might write the occasional one-shot from time to time, but not chaptered fics.

You're lucky. I have 8 unfinished fics, most of which are barely halfway. One of them I think will probably end up being deleted, though. Maybe two ....

-Raspbee-

The participants who have already spent several years writing or reading fanfiction admit having contemplated stopping the writing. However, what is slowing their process are the WIPs – Works in Progress – in this case meaning the multi-chaptered fics the participants have yet to finish. It is not uncommon to have many uncompleted fics under construction at the same time, which in this case is the factor that is problematic for the writers. In fact, Raspbee admits that she is likely to delete some of the WIPs instead of finishing them. Later in the discussion she sums up her feelings for WIPs:

(42)

WIP's are the bane of every writer's existence. I hate them with a passion. Especially when they build up and up and up, and then you have to delete them to feel better again.

-Raspbee-

Even when the idea for a fic is excellent, it does not always mean that the fic is easy to write, and sometimes the task proves to be impossible, and the fics gets deleted.

In the same conversation the participants also touch on the subject of draining the hobby of the meaning it used to have.

(43)

Seriously, though. There really does come a point where you realise you've done all you wanted. I've written well over 100 fanfics (most of them have just been deleted over the years). It's no surprise I'm at that point where I think all my fics are

beginning to feel like the same thing just being regurgitated over and over and over.

-Raspbee-

Yes. Getting lost in the fandom is fun, but there's a time when you have to start creating your own worlds. Let's face it - we often get frustrated with the canon provided in our fandoms, do we not?

-rememberme-

I do. And that frustration grows with every fic.

Hence, the novel.

(I still can't help but do an inner squee when I think of it, hahah.)

-Raspbee-

Raspbee points out that after writing a considerable number of fics, one is bound to run out of fresh ideas and inspiration. Rememberme agrees and says that while fanfiction provides a great background to create stories against, it only gives so much room for creativity and eventually one would have to create an original world for one's stories. This notion is supported by Raspbee, whose reply suggests that perhaps being one of the reasons she is writing an original story.

One of the both easy as well as difficult features of fanfiction writing is the world the stories take place in, as well as the characters involved in it. One can state that the fic is AU – alternate universe, which means that perhaps the plot, the characters or the surroundings differ from the original series and the writer has taken the material used and changed some of the defining elements – but it still has to be believable, the reader has to recognize the characters that are familiar to them from the canon. There is only so much room for exploring the new settings and characters without the story being unrecognizable in relation to the canon. On the other hand, ready-made characters and settings do offer easy options for one to practice writing, be creative and have fun, since with familiar characters one is ready to create stories without having to invent everything from scratch.

This interesting piece of conversation also takes place on one of the two threads examined. A participant raises the topic of pop culture and the Harry Potter fandom.

(44)

I think it's interesting to read about pop culture today - things you may or may not be interested in but which are prevalent right now. And it will be even more interesting to read about Pokemon (or Harry Potter, even) twenty years from now, when it's died down and disappeared.

...If it ever disappears.

-Cookie-

Well, look at us. We're on a Harry Potter forum and write fanfiction. We're essentially part of that strand of popular culture, but I doubt many of us stop and think "Oh, wow, I'm part of a Harry Potter fad".

-Raspbee-

Cookie contemplates whether Pokemon or Harry Potter are phenomena that will be forgotten in twenty years of time. She does, however, express her doubts about it. Nevertheless, she expresses a view not often seen on a fan forum, referring to the fans as a cultural product or a fandom-related phenomenon, something that could be a subject of study and not simply as a community with similar interests, for example. Also Raspbee comments on Cookie's thoughts by pointing out that even though they clearly are a part of a fandom, a pop culture phenomenon, not many view the activity as such. It is simply a hobby, a way of life, something they do for pleasure. Here especially Cookie seems to perceive pop culture and perhaps also being a fan as interesting phenomena, but rather than identifying with the phenomenon of Harry Potter fandom, she discusses it rather vaguely. However, from Raspbee's reply, it can be read that she identifies herself and the other participants of the forum as fans and more specifically a part of popular culture.

The general discussion threads seem to offer a place for various types of conversation concerning the writing of fanfiction. It seems that writing brings along issues that can cause trouble to the participants, who then come together to discuss them. These problems include the issue of taking creative rights with the work, and the problem of one's identity as a fanfiction writer versus the identity of a writer of one's original work.

An important topic that was also brought up was when it is time to stop the writing of fanfiction and how to do it. It seems that sooner or later the interest in Harry Potter fanfiction declines. However, even as it seems that the question of quitting the hobby of writing fanfiction may be topical for some, quitting the forum is not. The forum offers a community to which many seem to have developed a strong bond and also a place where the participants can discuss topics other than fanfiction, which, could be suggested, is for many the reason to continue participating.

### **4.3. Identity as a reader of fanfiction**

The participants of the forum are not only likely to be writers of fanfiction, but also, if not even more likely, readers of fanfiction. Some participants read large amounts of fanfiction, while others rarely indulge in it. One could suggest that the participants are not only fans of Harry Potter, but fans of fanfiction. On the forum discussed in the present study there are specific threads that invite the participants to discuss fics they have read, recommend them and also promote one's own fics. However, in addition to these threads, reading of fanfiction is also discussed on the threads for general discussion.

When reading fanfiction, an active reader can also choose to leave a review, a message to the writer of the fic, which often includes the reader's opinion of the fic or some aspects of it. One can also participate in the process of writing and publishing fics, by working as a beta-reader for other writers. These three topics, reading, reviewing and beta-reading, are touched upon in the following sections.

#### **4.3.1. Reading fanfiction**

Reading fanfiction is an essential part of a fanfiction community. The participants portray different kind of reader identities in their posts. Some people position themselves more as writers than readers, whereas some participants do not write their own fanfiction at all and concentrate on reading others' work and discussing it.

The following is an excerpt from a conversation seen earlier in section 4.2.1. Successful writing. SweetTangerine expresses her worry of not being a loyal reader of DG fanfiction.

(45)

Is it weird that I rarely read DG fanfiction? I haven't ventured into the archives in...shit, it must have been months ago. This is only slightly worrying.

Actually, scratch that. Intensely worrying. What if someone

already had this idea and did it better?? \*panics\*

-SweetTangerine-

From the context of the conversation one could suggest that reading fanfiction is an essential part of writing fanfiction. One not only gets inspiration from other writers' stories, but receives information on what has previously been written and how. By knowing what has already been written, a writer can more easily find one's own point of view for the story. Here SweetTangerine is worried that someone else has already had the same idea as her and essentially her story has already been written.

The following example is the beginning of a rather lengthy conversation about an infamous piece of fanfiction found on the site.

(46)

Have any of you ever read or heard of the fic '[Fic name]'?

It's HORRIBLE. It makes my brain ooze out my ears, and apparently it's got 1,000 reviews.

-Lucidity-

[Fic name]?

Oh.

My.

God.

NEVER, EVER mention that... THING... In my presence unless you want to experience an obscenely long rant.

I don't even know where to start... The worst thing about it was probably the Snap and Loopin (I can't even say their real names... No...) Having sex against a wall with Dobby watching... EWWW...

-whatsmynickagain-

Send us a link [Lucidity], and what's so horrible about it?

-crememarmalade-

The conversation continues as links to the fic are posted and various opinions and musings are written. However, in this case no one from the participants know who the writer is and, what seems to be the most jarring matter, no one can tell whether the writer is serious or not.



(47)

The sad thing is: \*Starts to play ominous music\* No one knows if it's a crack!fic, troll!fic, or completely serious.

-whatsmynickagain-

Some of the participants seem to think that it has to be a crack!fic or a troll!fic, something that is written as a joke, possibly to annoy readers, as it apparently is a very explicit fic with a large amount of spelling mistakes, while some suggest that it could be a seriously written piece of fanfiction. The conversation brings the fic to many participants' attention and after following the link many of them post a more or less unflattering opinion about it. It is much more common to see the participants discuss their personal reading habits, introduce a good fic or request recommendations, than to see a conversation where a fic is criticized. In this case, it seems, the fic in question is so appalling that the participants feel the need to discuss it. However, after a while, the conversation takes a turn towards other topics and the curious piece of fanfiction seems to be forgotten.

In the following piece of conversation StarryNight asks for suggestions for reading.

(48)

I need something to read.

-StarryNights-

Fanfiction or real Fiction?

-copperhead-

Fanfiction.

-StarryNights-

[StarryNights], I can't help you with Fanfiction. I barely have time (or motivation) to read anything these days.

-copperhead-

Copperhead replies by asking whether StarryNight means fanfiction or “real Fiction”, which in this case could perhaps be loosely defined as published books. However, when StarryNight replies that she is looking for fanfiction, copperhead cannot offer her help, stating that she has not had time to read fanfiction recently. As seen in the last example, as well as in the section 4.2.2. Problems and help in writing, some participants revealed not having time or motivation to write fanfiction, but here it is apparent that the same

goes with reading. Perhaps the participants' schedule is indeed tight, not allowing them enough free time to indulge in fanfiction, or perhaps they feel that finding new interesting stories too difficult. It may be that the stories written do not offer plots new or interesting enough and for the time being the participants have become disinterested in browsing for reading. However, this is only a hypothesis and without further investigation, for example with interviews, one cannot claim this to be the truth. That being said, it can be seen in many conversations that the motivation towards the actual writing and reading of fanfiction is in many cases lacking, but the participants can nevertheless be rather active on the forum. It seems that for participating on the forum, one does not need to portray an identity of an avid fanfiction reader.

A different situation is presented by BareNecessities, who has refound the world of DG fanfiction:

(49)

I have actually been reading a lot of DG lately. Well, not a lot but a fair amount. Mostly venturing into the shameless plug thread. I read [Raspbee]'s birthday present to [CloudNine], '[fic name]' and loved it. It kind of inspired me to read more fics from you forum members, I almost forgot this place was rife with DG fics, which is kind of stupid of me.

-BareNecessities-

BareNecessities admits that she too used to read less, until she realized that the forum she participates in is full of writers of fanfiction of her liking. One could suggest that this points towards the conclusion that the forum functions much more as a community of likeminded people, instead of place for strictly fanfiction-related discussion and tips. Perhaps she also feels that in order to be taken as a serious member of the forum, she should be more involved with the preferred pairing, by the means of reading fanfiction of the said pairing, and possibly also writing it.

In the following reply PennyChoo answers a post, where another participant (Maples) question whether PennyChoo has ever read her fics.

(50)

\*laughs\* I've read a couple. And I've been meaning to start reading [fic name], once you update it for the first time in ages. ;P

-PennyChoo-

PennyChoo states she has indeed read Maples's fics, and playfully jibes back at her, by suggesting that she should update her work so PennyChoo could in fact read more.

The following post is perhaps more of an advertisement, than a piece of conversation.

(51)

READ (and review?) THE FIC EXCHANGE FICS.

They are all fabulous, because we wrote them. And not enough people are paying attention to them, so I'm making it my new purpose. =P

-SummerBreeze

SummerBreeze is drawing the participants' attention to the fics submitted for the exchange the forum has had. She indicates that since the participants of the forum have written them, they should also be read by the other participants. Perhaps this is to make the community to more familiar with each others' work, to raise awareness of the activity provided by the forum or to just make sure that the work put into the fics does not go unnoticed. Perhaps she has also written one herself and advertises it as well. Nevertheless, the aim of the post is to make people read and to remind the others that the forum members are writers who deserve to get attention. Essentially it is a reminder of the circumstance that the participants of the challenge all share the same identity as writers, writers whose desire is to be noticed and to have their story read.

### 4.3.2. Reviewing fanfiction

Reviews, the comments that a reader can give the author of a story, are often discussed on the forum. In fact, the forum has a thread dedicated specifically for them. However, reviewing is also discussed on this thread, mostly from the viewpoint of writing reviews, not so much receiving them.

Here a participant expresses her view on reviewing.

(52)

Actually my reviews are normally shit. It's the reason I haven't hardly read anything by the Mods

-Jumblebee-

Jumblebee suggests that her skills in leaving good reviews are bad, which in turn hinders her will to read stories from the writers she knows and are active members of the forum. Her comment portrays her opinion that leaving reviews is an essential and polite part of the fanfiction culture, and possibly also being a member of the forum. In another post, she sums up her view on leaving a good review:

(53)

'Tis an art, reviewing.

-Jumblebee-

Another participant reveals a review she has once given:

(54)

I was just reading some of the reviews I've left and this one stuck out at me: 'Bollocks, I love this story.'

That was the entire review. I meant every word too, that story is great. Normally though my reviews are longer and a bit more...

-BlackLace-

She comments on her review by expressing that it was a very honest review. However, she also implies that the review was not very good in her opinion, as she should have perhaps said more about the story, instead of just expressing her delight. Here it can be deduced that in BlackLace's opinion it is important to say why she loved the story,

instead of just stating it. In fact, good review seems to be constructing criticism, telling the author what works and why, as well as what does not and why.

Replying the reviews one gets for a story seems to be considered as a common courtesy. However, sometimes both writing a review as well as replying one can prove to be challenging. Here Jumblebee admits her replies being better than her reviews and then asks how BlackLace deals with replies.

(55)

I can do good review replies usually, [GingerD] can vouch for that, but actual reviews...bah.

What are your review replies like? I try not just to do 'thanks for the review, [name]' but sometimes people don't really give you a lot to work with when they just type 'great!'.

-Jumblebee-

It really depends on the review. If someone has left only a few words, I just respond saying "Thanks for taking the time to leave a review". But if someone left me something a little more lengthy, I respond in kind.

I absolutly hate leaving a nice, long review for someone and then not getting a reply though. It is definitely a pet hate.

-BlackLace-

In many cases, if the reader submits a review with one's own username, the writer of the story answers the review. Sometimes the replies are just as Jumblebee says "thanks for the review, [name]", but often writers are expected to write a more detailed reply, depending on the contents and depth of the review they received. BlackLace brings out the issue of the importance of replying, stating that not getting a reply is her pet hate. Whereas a good review would be polite, supporting, and possibly include some constructive criticism, with a mention of what was especially good about the story, a good reply should address the criticism, perhaps answer the questions the reader may have had, and thank the reader for choosing and reading the story. Of course, there are also bad reviews, as well as bad replies, but they are not mentioned in these threads. Perhaps the specific review thread is a place for discussing them, leaving the more general discussion here.

In many cases, if one identifies oneself as a good reader, it includes the notion of being a good reviewer. It is considered polite and useful, something a reader should do. Here a biblical principle applies: one should treat others as one would like others to treat oneself – essentially, to receive reviews, one should write reviews for others. Additionally, when one receives reviews, one should reply to them accordingly. Naturally not everyone reviews, but to admit that on the forum where it is considered so important, would probably be frowned upon, impairing the participant's whole perceived reader identity.

### 4.3.3 Beta-reading

Beta-reading could be defined as proof-reading. It is normal and often encouraged for writers to send their work for a beta to read through before publishing them on a fanfiction site. A beta-reader can correct grammar and the facts, as well as give suggestions on how to improve, and possibly continue the story.

In the following snippet BareNecessities searches beta for her work:

(56)

Does anyone know of, or can anyone, beta an upcoming fic I am going to start writing?

I'm not sure what I'm going to call it yet but it is going to be a compilation of fluffy one-shots based around DG (obviously). I've never even had a beta before, so I don't know what to look for in them. I'm so... inexperienced. Lol.

-BareNecessities-

In the post BareNecessities describes the topic for the fic briefly, and expresses her inexperience in the art of beta-reading. She belittles her skills and knowledge also by writing “Lol” (=laugh out loud) at the end of her post. This could be seen as a method of presenting herself as a newbie in this sense, thus making it easier for the others to take on the task of beta-reading her fic, as well as inviting positive feedback for her decision of searching for a beta. She also emphasizes the fact that her fic ships the pairing that the forum concentrates on, making sure that others know it is a fic that could be of

interest.

Here SweetTangerine is asking another member to replace her current beta-reader.

(57)

Would you be willing to take over the betaship of Preggers!Ginny?

[Raspbee] is bowing out at the potential smut.

-SweetTangerine-

SweetTangerine explains that her intention to write smut, sexually explicit scenes, has caused her current beta, Raspbee, to express her wishes to not beta the story. Here she uses an expression “Preggers!Ginny”, which implies that the character is going to get pregnant in the story. The special vocabulary used in the context is, not only a clever way of shortening the description, but also a way to exclude people who are not familiar with the terms. Clearly, a good-beta reader is familiar with not only the fanfiction terms, but also the writing of fanfiction and the fandom in general.

The following conversation is a part of a general discussion with a mention about beta-reading. Tulips apology for the slow replies is responded by Raspbee’s reassurance, in which she reveals revising a chapter from a story of hers.

(58)

Sorry for the slow response by the way, the forum is giving delays again.

-Tulips-

No worries. I'm going over a chapter anyway.

-Raspbee-

Did you finish one?

-Tulips-

Nope, but I have been revising [fic name] with [name]'s help and am currently going over the latest chapter to be re-uploaded.

-Raspbee-

Oh that is awesome. :)

-Tulips-

Yes, it is. The fic really needed to have a good beta go over it. I wrote that back when I didn't really understand SpAG, and as much as you can fix things up yourself, I always find a second pair of eyes does wonders.

-Raspbee-

I totally agree. I find I try my best with SPaG but I will always miss something. A fresh set of eyes really works well.

-Tulips-

The participants discuss the importance of having a beta-reader. Raspbee is revising an old story that presumably has multiple SpAG (spelling and grammar) issues. She indicates that it always helps to have help from a beta-reader. Tulips agrees by saying that having someone else read one's work ensures that the mistakes are found. A beta-reader can point out also other types of mistakes in a story, as well as give advice and suggestions regarding, for example, the plot or the characters, but checking the spelling and grammar is in most cases a very important task for beta-readers. It is very common to see promotion of the use of beta-readers on the forum.

To be a beta-reader one must on this particular site first be a writer. The site implies that to be able to help others with their stories, one must first be able to write one's own stories. A somewhat similar mindset can be seen on a forum, as usually the most sought after beta-readers are those with popular fics of their own. To be a good beta-reader, one must be not only be able to correct possible grammar and spelling errors, but to give suggestions regarding plot and characterizations and be knowledgeable enough to point out mistakes regarding the facts about wizarding world, spells, places, etc. Additionally, it is recommended in many instances, such as in entering a challenge, for a writer to use beta-reader. Also, by using a beta-reader, one minimizes the chance of mistakes that would perhaps make the reader decide to abandon the fic. With beta-readers and writers requesting for them, the identities of advice-seekers and givers are quite clear. In addition, beta-readers are often identified as skillful readers, writers and possibly also generally helpful and friendly good-doers. However, one should remember that also beta-readers are likely to use other beta-readers for their own story. In sum, it is a joint effort to improve the quality of writing.



## **4.4. Identity as a member of the forum**

In the following section, the identities the participants portray as members of the forum are discussed. From taking part in the forum related roleplay, negotiating one's role on a forum, participating in the challenges provided by the admins or other forum members, or creating one, to introducing oneself to the forum, or using one's authority to effect someone else's behavior on the forum. All of these actions require for the participant to choose a role in which they post the chosen message. Whether the role is that of a new, unsure and polite or well-known, respected and authoritative, plays a significant part in producing and receiving the message.

### **4.4.1. Being a part of the community and taking part in forum activities**

In the first post PennyChoo created an image of the Common room, depicting the surroundings, for example "Directly in front of the chairs is a large staircase that leads to a second floor, decorated with lounging chairs for relaxation." It is customary for the forum to have a new general discussion thread begun by presenting an imagined space. Here BareNecessities expresses that she likes the new Common room, in this case the new thread for free conversation.

(59)

Oooh, love the new CR. Ve-ry nice. :)

Anyone home?

- BareNecessities

In the previous excerpt BareNecessities enters the new Common room, that is, posts her first post on the thread. In this type of post a certain amount of roleplaying is not uncommon. By posting the first replay of the thread, or the first reply for the day, the participants may portray themselves as physically entering a space, which in this case is the Common room. The Common room is a feature of the Harry Potter series, where each of the four houses have a designated room for the members of the said house to

gather and to spend time. Gryffindor common room, which Harry and friends occupy quite often, is portrayed as cozy and warm, a perfect place to spend time chatting with friends or doing homework in.

Also GingerD participates in the roleplay when posting in the new thread. She goes on by introducing an addition of her own, the entrance to her throne, a new space that adds to the initial description.

(60)

AH-HA! I have found the new Common Room!

Not far off is the entrance to [Ginger]'s throne, adorned with questionable bones and tool box filled with even more questionable tools.

Very nice. \*plops\*

- GingerD-

GingerD ends her post by complimenting the Common room, and by engaging in the roleplay by depicting herself plopping down on her throne, or possibly another seat. She illustrates the action by simply writing the verb inside asterisks, which indicates that something is being done.

In the first post Peeves calls out for lurkers:

(61)

Come out, come out turkey lurkeys!

-Peeves-

Turkey lurkers? o.o I'mma turkey! \*coughs\* I mean..who you calling a turkey lurker? O:

-SeventhHeaven-

You of course. As well as all of the other lurkeys.

-Peeves-

Pssh, I 'ain't no lurker. O:

-SeventhHeaven-

I'm lurking.

-JungleKat-

Tssk tssk. You lurkers. o:

-SeventhHeaven-

Lurkers are participants, who read the posts, but rarely or never post anything themselves. Peeves is looking for people who are seeing the posts, but not participating in the conversation. The post gets a humorous response from another participant, SeventhHeaven, who denies the accusation of being a lurker. By replying somehow, has probably been what Peeves was aiming at, finding someone to converse with. The conversation repeats itself, after which JungleKat replies by simply admitting that she has been lurking. This is followed by a reprimanding post from SeventhHeaven, who apparently does not condone lurking. The whole conversation has a humorous tone to it, and in fact it seems a bit pointless. Nevertheless, it causes participation, which was probably Peeves' primary goal.

In the next piece of conversation being on the forum and the importance of it is touched on.

(62)

Hey [yumyum]! Nice to meet ya! I stopped in cause I've been gone far too long. School and Soccer really kills my time.

-Froyo-

I understand about the time issue. School and dance are my main priorities, but I do try to make time for my stress-relievers (like the Forum!) every now and again.

-yumyum-

Both Froyo and yumyum suggest that while real life is more important and time consuming than the forum, it is important for them to spend time there. Froyo says that she has been away too long for her liking and that is the reason she makes an appearance on the thread and chats with yumyum, who she apparently has not met before. Yumyum agrees and names the Forum a stress-reliever, something she likes to

do to unwind. For her the Forum and the activities and relationships that come with it seems to be an important way to escape the reality and relax.

After a few days of silence single message is posted by Peeves:

(68)

The poor forum is dying, resurrection! Resurrection!!!

-Peeves-

Here Peeves expresses their worry. It has been a noticeably quiet season on the forum, the thread in question left without replies for days. Whether the post is the reason the participants continued posting, one cannot be sure, it may as well be the case that the real lives of participants were busy at the time, seeing as the time is around a bigger holiday season, which in turn would likely effect the time spent on Internet. Nevertheless, it can be seen from the post that the slowing down has caused distress at least with one participant, who in turn has expressed the feeling, demanding that the others reactivate as well. It may be that the post acts as a trigger or a reminder, as after that other participants gradually begin posting again. If no posts are submitted to the forum, in the long term it means that there will be no community to take part in. A participant's identity as a member of the forum would become obsolete and one would no longer present oneself as a member or take part in the communal activities, or even converse with the others. To make certain that the forum stays functional, Peeves call out, making it known that posts should be submitted and the continuity of the conversation should be maintained in order to prevent the forum from dying, as Peeves says.

#### 4.4.2. Role on the forum – newbies and older members

It is common for the new members to introduce themselves on multiple threads. Some of the threads require a fixed way of posting, but the general discussion thread allows the participants to post in the style of their own choice. That said, the style is quite often a rather hesitant even, consisting of a greeting, introduction, addressing the older members, and not uncommonly also mitigation of self, such as portraying oneself as incompetent, unfamiliar with writing, shy, young or even stupid.

In the following excerpt, two newbies post an introductory posts on the thread.

(69)

\*Walks in.\*

Hi, everyone.

How is everyone (Yup, I'm just that lame as I'm not even that great at starting a conversation.)?

-whatsmynickagain-

Hello all, I just thought I would come one by and introduce myself, I am [name] or [name], whichever you prefer.

-Emmagrin-

I smell a new batch of newbies...

-Raisins-

A strange mix of fear and cautiousness?

Hello [whatsmynickagain], pleased to meet you [Emmagrin].

-Jumblebee-

Here whatsmynickagain begins the post with an action “\*Walks in.\*” and continues by a greeting. She then continues with a brief and polite question, again addressing everyone. Then, after what would be a rather standard introduction IRL (in real life), she curiously continues by putting herself down, stating that she is not good at starting a conversation. In an Internet setting, however, this type of mitigation is not uncommon behavior. It seems that to ensure being not taken as rude or as a threat in any way, newbies often choose to present themselves as small and insignificant, instead of

describing their good qualities, for example. Often this type of introduction is greeted with a “Don’t worry, we’re all nice here” –type of welcome.

The other newbie, Emmagrin, chooses a different approach and simply greets everyone and introduces herself briefly. This is followed by a post from an older participant, Raisins, who simply acknowledges the newcomers, not addressing them directly, nor greeting them. However, Jumblebee, after commenting on the careful approach of the newcomers “A strange mix of fear and cautiousness”, briefly greets them. In this particular case the older members did not offer excessive sympathy or warmth, instead the newbies were offered a nonchalant comment of their existence and a friendly but short welcome. Afterwards older members join the conversation by welcoming the newbies, complimenting on the choice of the usernames, introducing themselves to them and asking what they would like to be called on the forum. In this case the immediate welcome was not very warm, but after a few posts more participants joined the conversation and the newbies were welcomed to the forum.

In the following series of posts, a newbie writes a potentially offensive post. Whatsmynickagain’s post is a commentary of the conversation she has observed on the forum. It is often difficult for new participants to feel included and participate in a group that has become a tightly knit group who may be familiar with the other members outside of the forum as well, with its own style of communicating including insider jokes. Here whatsmynickagain has decided to comment on the behavior of the older participants. While she does imply that she does not mean to be rude, the message could be interpreted as offensive.

(70)

Hello people.

Erm, the more I look around this forum, the stranger you all seem. No offense, of course.

-whatsmynickagain-

Ah newbie, hello. Everyone has there quirks, but look past them and you will see we are all pretty normal, well mainly. :P Anyway, how are you?

-Smokeye-

Ha [whatsmynickagain], I got called weirder than Lady Gaga so being called strange ain't nothin' new.

-crememarmalade-

Oh, I'm sure that's it. I have my quirks as well. Let's just say you've yet to see me on here while I'm drinking coffee.

-whatsmynickagain-

Ah, [whatsmynickagain], a lady very dear to me has the same name. So [whatsmynickagain] tell me about yourself, see if we can find a similar topic of interest to chat about.

-Smokeye-

This time, however, the replies whatsmynickagain receives are understanding, and the participants do not take her post as negative. First Smokeye addresses her as a newbie, acknowledging her unfamiliarity with the settings. She offers a piece of advice for whatsmynickagain and jokingly defends the normality of the participants' characters. In addition she asks how whatsmynickagain is doing, a mark that she would like to continue conversing with her. Also crememarmalade replies the post. Her reply is humorous and while she does not seem offended, she does not offer any clues whether she wishes to continue the conversation. Whatsmynickagain replies by suggesting that she can be weird as well, ending the topic with a humorous tone. After that Smokeye directs the conversation elsewhere, indicating that she would like to get to know whatsmynickagain. In this particular case, the potentially offensive post served as a bridge to familiarize the newbie to the older participants.

In the following post ShineLikeDiamond addresses Bleep, a new member, who has perhaps not understood the rules of a thread and posted a tag of her own, which deviates from the norm.

(71)

Um, [Bleep]? In the Review Tag game, you've got to review a fic of the person that last reviewed. \*ahem-me-cough\* Just sayin'.

-ShineLikeDiamonds-

ShineLikeDiamonds uses many textual cues that indicate her cautiousness in directing a newbie, such as the initial "Um", indicating hesitation. She also mitigates her message by inserting the coughing within the asterisks, and further communicates her

nonchalance and caution with the concluding “Just sayin’”. This all implies that Bleep’s post is no problem for her, as such, but nevertheless infringes the rules of the said thread, and it would perhaps be good for Bleep to know the correct way of participation on the said thread.

Another set of advice is offered in the following posts, where two admins address a situation where several participants have been conversing in foreign languages on the thread. First Cloud Nine posts a friendly and rather subtle suggestion as to switch to English. She points out that the forum already has a thread for other languages, and the conversation should be taken there.

(72)

All right, girls. We have a language thread for a reason; let's keep long conversations in English so people don't feel left out.

-CloudNine-

However, kangareena chooses another way of addressing the participants. Her style is strict and she does not apologize for possibly interrupting any conversation.

(73)

WTF?

Out! All of you. Language Thread is where you all need to be.

[link]

Thank you.

-kangareena-

She simply expresses her outrage with a simple, capitalized acronym and continues by giving directions and a link to the thread where the conversation would be acceptable. She concludes her post with a final “Thank you.”, which perhaps serves as a mark of finality as well as courtesy. The difference between the first post, where a participant advises a newbie, and the other two, where two admins advise other forum participants is visible. While ShineLikeDiamonds is cautious and slightly hesitant in correcting the behavior, CloudNine and kangareena do not need to project caution, as they direct the wrong-doers elsewhere. The difference in status is rather clear here. The admins are



allowed to be strict and give direct advice and orders, while a member without status-symbols to their name indicating authority chooses to be careful with the wording, protecting the feelings of the other.

The participants of the forum communicate according to certain roles they have either given themselves or roles that they have acquired by being a member for a long time or simply by being known as a founding member of the forum. A role of a newbie is a role almost every participant has to take on initially. The cautious and friendly approach makes the older member aware of the newbie's presence, and gradually the newbie becomes familiar with the other participants and is likely to portray their character more freely. The older members, especially the founding members and admins also have their specific roles, which can include monitoring the activity on the forum and in some situations correcting others' behavior. In addition, the older members are usually those who create challenges and new threads for example, or give permission for others to do so. If a newbie were to behave like an older member, like creating new threads without permission, or act against the forum's rules and conventions, the admins would most likely intervene.

### 4.4.3. Prompts and challenges

Prompts and challenges are something that can be posted on the forum by the participants themselves. Challenges serve as sources of inspiration for others to write fics. The completed fics are then posted as an answer to the challenges. Prompt is understood as a setting for a story. It can consist of a time or place where the story is to take place, the genre, possible pairing, and usually also a rating. (Rating is the indicator of what the story can consist of in terms of language and themes, pointing the target audience or a suitable age limit.) As a bonus, a prompt can also include a quote to be used, or a special item, character or scene, for example. A challenge can typically present a series of prompts one can choose one to participate with.

In the following excerpt Jumblebee muses on making a new Tag.

(63)

Hm.

I really want to do a Challenge Tag.

-Jumblebee-

By Challenge Tag Jumblebee probably means a new thread that would inspire the participants to write new pieces of fanfiction. Bleep replies to Jumblebee's post by confirming if she understood her correctly.

(64)

Like make up one?

-Bleep-

Jumblebee replies with a quick "Yep." and then, after not getting any opinions from the other participants, writes another post:

(65)

What the hell. I'm bored and I've only started two threads, this can be my third.

Third time is the charm after all.

-Jumblebee-

In excerpt (65) Jumblebee justifies her decision to make the new thread. She has previously started two threads, which means that she in fact knows how to start one, and perhaps also that she is entitled to, as she has experience, which suggests that she is an official member of the forum.

In the following post crememarmalade announces that she has posted her first challenge on the forum. While she is happy with herself, she also brings out that she is probably entirely sure if it is a good one.

(66)

I posted a challenge for the first time...! Go meee. Hope it don't suck ass.

-crememarmalade-

With the post crememarmalade invites other participants to go and see her challenge, perhaps also take part in it. Seeing that this is her first challenge, the post announcing it is rather typical: not too bold, suitably enthusiastic, while at the same time revealing that she is not entirely certain whether the challenge is good or not. The “Hope it don’t suck ass.” comment is a rather common set of making oneself seem inexperienced and yet eager to learn and a worthy participant. One could suggest that this type of behavior is very likely to see this type of behavior on many Internet communities, as the self-mitigation seems to be an unwritten part of the (in many cases) unwritten netiquette.

In the following post yumyum expresses her distress at possibly missing the deadline for getting a prompt for a writing challenge.

(67)

I'm about to hyperventilate: did I miss the prompt picking deadline?!

-yumyum-

Send it NOW, [yumyum]. The prompts won't be handed out until Monday.

Edit: And make sure you send it to the Forum's email account.

-Raspbee-

In the reply Raspbee addresses her and suggests that she sends it directly to the forum's admins immediately. This short conversation consists of a question from a forum member and answer with clear instructions from an admin. Raspbee has also later edited her reply, adding instructions where yumyum should send the message.

Starting a thread and posting a challenge are actions that normally require an approval from an admin. To be able to do these actions without an approval, usually means that the participant is either breaking the conventions of the forum, or has a status of a recognized member and is able to act accordingly. To achieve the status requires participating. To be a known member simply means that the other participants are familiar with the participant and the reputation of the participant is good. In other words, there is a rather clear difference with the identity of a participant and the identity of a member.

## 5. Discussion

The aim of the present study was to learn what kinds of topics were discussed on the forum, and how the topics reveal how the participants construct their identities as fans, writers and readers of fanfiction, as well as members of the forum. The methods used in researching the data were virtual ethnography combined with qualitative content analysis. In an ethnographic research the researcher's own experiences and views on the topic and the data effect the outcome of the study greatly. If another researcher conducted the same study on the same data, the findings could differ from those of the present study. What I have seen as significant and interesting, may from another researcher's opinion be unimportant in relation to the research questions, and vice versa. There is also a possibility that I have missed something important, a piece of conversation that would have opened a whole new topic for discussion, but that, too, considering that piece irrelevant, was at the time I studied the data a subjective opinion. However, I would argue that my own experience of the fan experience and the writing and reading of the fanfiction helped in the selection of the data and understanding of the topics discussed, as the vocabulary and the topics in general were already familiar to me. In analyzing my findings I used the qualitative content analysis, which helped me to group and describe my findings. Here too, the subjective view of the study was visible, as I make many deductions based on my own experience as a fan and a reader and writer of fanfiction, as well as based on the context of the conversation. For a fan studying fans ethnology and content analysis give good tools for finding out what has been said and grouping the findings, but for studying the topics further one would have to also have for example interviewing as a method.

If I were to do a similar study in the future, I would have to create a more efficient way of acquiring and organizing my data. The color coding and copy-pasting the examples in two doc. files proved to be a rather difficult choice, as the amount of examples was large, the color coding I chose in the beginning proved to be uninformative in some cases, and finally, I simply forgot many points and useful examples, and had to go over the files multiple times. In addition to that, as I mentioned earlier, I am quite sure I have missed some posts that could have presented useful examples for the present study. To

prevent this type of unsuccessful gathering and researching the data, one would perhaps have to create a better way to acquire and store the data, and also simply have a significant amount of time to study it.

The research questions of the present study focused on the topics that were found on the posts that the participants made on the forum. The participants are all interested and involved in fanfiction writing and/or reading in some way. The conversations that are had on the threads often include the topics of writing or reading, posing the joys and problems relating to them, identifying oneself and also others with aspects from the fandom as well as a participant's identity as a member of the forum. When an issue is discussed, the poster writes her/his reply from a certain point of view that reveals an identity by making comparisons, presenting his/herself as a writer or reader, or by referring to insider knowledge, for example. The poster can have a reader and writer identity, but also beyond that, identities of newbies, advice-givers and advice-seekers, for example, can be detected from the posts. Most of all, the participants share the identity of being a fan and being a participant of the forum. They share the community in which they converse. The community consists of people with similar interests, in this case namely fanfiction pairing the couple the forum favors. Other types of fanfiction and literature are also discussed frequently, as well as topics that have nothing to do with fanfiction, or even Harry Potter, but nevertheless, fanfiction with this particular pairing is probably the unifying reason the participants have come there. However, maintaining the relationships with other members is perhaps the biggest reason that keeps them there.

The two threads examined in the present study differed somewhat in the topics discussed on them, although they were part of the same group of threads, containing general discussion. Whereas the one that dated to years 2010-2011 had more discussion on the characters in the series, for example, the second thread consisted more of talk not related to the topic of Harry Potter or fanfiction. Although there seems to be a decline in interest in writing and reading fanfiction, in many cases the participants continue to take part in the forum activity. The majority of the conversation concerns the private lives of the participants and general discussion of topics outside of the Harry Potter fandom. However, instances of fan-related talk are still visible on the threads examined.

Considering the second, later, thread one could suggest that perhaps the participants were at that point more familiar with each other, and personal relations surpassed the fanfiction activity on the discussions. It is also possible that by that point of time, the more fanfiction related talk was taking place at a different thread, outside the scope of the present study. However, the issue of writing fanfiction was present on both threads. In the present study, it became rather clear that, much like Leppänen (2008, 2009) and Pullen (2000) suggested, the forum functions as a community where people with similar interests come together. The community is likely to be also the main reason why most of the participants continue participating, the fanfiction being a less important factor, despite it probably being the initial reason for joining the community.

As writing fanfiction was discussed, the most common topic was the problems the participants faced during their creative processes. When the participants presented the problems on the forum, a typical reaction from others was to offer help or condolences or simply to agree and present similar problems of their own. Lack of motivation and inspiration were commonly discussed, and it was more common to present one's problems as a topic of discussion, complaining about an issue one was facing with at the moment, rather than directly asking for help in the said problem. A possible conclusion could be that for many participants the forum functions as an important support system, a place to share. Whether the matter one shares is a problem, a story of success, an opinion, a tip or a word of advice, the forum is a place suitable for doing so. It is a safe place for sharing, as the other participants are likely to understand the problem, identify with the issue and maybe also help with it, as everyone is involved in the same hobby. Additionally, because of the same affinity, sharing the successes is also easy and natural on the forum: successful writing is worth sharing, as the other participants are likely to be a target group as well as supporters and fellow writers, who understand the process. One could even compare the forum to an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. Being on the forum is initially anonymous and the participants act under their chosen nicknames, as they come together to share their problems and successes as writers, and receive support and are presented with others' similar experiences. In sum, the participants share the identity as a writer, which brings them together, creating a community of fanfiction writers.

Another type of identity that the participants most likely commonly share, is the identity as a reader of fanfiction. Reading fanfiction was a surprisingly rare topic on the threads examined. When the topic was discussed, it often related to either reading fics by other forum members or not reading fanfiction, and in some cases also the repercussions of it. Admittedly there are other threads where one can recommend a good story, advertise one's own story and a game of tag type thread where people read and review other participants' stories. In addition to that, short "Can't wait to read it!" type of comments were usual, especially when supporting another participant's writing process. However, one discussion that differed from these topics was also found on the thread, a discussion where a presumably bad piece of fanfiction was brought up. While it was unusual to see posts that would present any piece of fanfiction in a critical light, this particular conversation revealed many negative opinions about the fic in question. It seems that critical reading of fanfiction is in some cases important. However, in the end, not reading enough fanfiction as well as reading other participants' fics were the typical topics when discussing reading of fanfiction. Based on the posts, it seems that there is an idea of an ideal fanfiction reader, one that reads and reviews well and often, one that the participants would perhaps like to identify themselves as, but for different reasons do not. These reasons can include time management, life situation, or simply the will to read, or the lack of it. What comes across from the posts, is the shared identity of D/G readers. Whether the participants portray an identity of a so-called good or bad reader, they are nevertheless all readers of the same type of fanfiction.

The fan identity was present in many topics seen in the discussions. One of the most visible type of presenting one's identity as a fan, was the engaging in Harry Potter related humor and insider jokes. These jokes presented as an effective way of creating an in-group of fans. Being able to tell and understand the jokes one has to be familiar with the Harry Potter universe and terminology, the whole joke may rely on a single word. If one does not know what an Animagus is, the joke is not understood. Another clear instance of expressing fan identity is the debate on which house one is most likely to belong to. The houses in the original series are defined by certain, often mentioned characteristics which makes it rather easy to identify with a house. However, the characteristics and house traits are often discussed with great depth and detail, often at the same time revealing one's own traits at the same time. What further gives the topic



importance, is the sorting that is done by one of the forum members – after familiarizing herself with the others, this member sorts others into those houses she sees fit. Even if the houses do not play a role in the actual activity or the status of individual participants on the forum, they are a certain type of symbols that seem to be considered relevant and important. The other ways fan identity was presented were identifying with a character, presenting one's real life in relation to fanfiction, for example how other activities were too time consuming and not enough time was left for writing or reading fanfiction, favorite characters and sexual fantasies relating to characters were discussed, one case of fan expertise was found and fans as critics was also a topic found on the threads. In addition to that, identifying as a Draco-lover was a rather common phenomenon on the forum. Since the forum favors the character of Draco, it seems that implying one's affections towards the character was a way of sharing the love and the identity as a fan of Draco. Discussions as to why the participants like Draco appeared a few times, creating an opportunity to compare ideas the participants have about the character.

Identity as a member of a forum, such as presenting oneself as a member with certain duties or rights, or discussing forum related issues, like writing challenges and new threads was a slightly less visibly communicated than what I initially expected. Apart from the numerous newbie introductions, cases of portraying a member identity were rather scarce. Some cases of clear authority from the admins were visible when instructing wrong-doers. Also one case was found where another member discreetly instructs a newbie. In some cases, roleplay was used in the conversations. Whether the purpose of the roleplay was to project oneself in a certain light, to give the post a different tone, or to simply engage more, was not always clear, as it probably served many purposes, portraying both member and fan identity, but it seems that roleplaying is a common way to give the post more of an impact. It was also likely that posts that included roleplay, were replied with a similar type of utilization of roles, emoticons and action-implying words. Moreover, what was seen on the forum quite often, were references to prompts and challenges the members could create and take part in. Although the challenges were often discussed from the point of view of writing a fic, some practicalities were brought up as well, such as the deadline for picking a prompt for oneself. In addition to discussing the challenges and prompts, there were other types of instances where being a member was signaled, such as roleplaying when entering a

new thread. Also the participants' roles as posters was addressed in one conversation, where lurkers were discussed. Furthermore, the forum's role on the lives of participants was touched on briefly, when a participant mentions it as an important stress-reliever.

One of the most serious topics in the examples presented the topic of quitting fanfiction. The questions of when it is time to stop writing fanfiction, when it is ok to stop writing, and how to do it, were raised. In one of the posts, Raspbee says: "Getting lost in the fandom is fun, but there's a time when you have to start creating your own worlds." There is a moment for many fanfiction writers, when the identities of a fanfiction writer collides with the identity of a writer of original stories. For many it eventually becomes a matter of choice, which one is more important, or which one provides with more challenge and satisfaction. Nevertheless, even as the question of stopping writing and reading of fanfiction is raised, it seems that the participants are still determined to continue their participation on the forum. It is the community, the bonds the people have created, that keep the members active. The identities of fanfiction writer and readers have made room for identities as friends.

Although the media and time has changed from the viewpoint of Jenkins (1992b: 161), as he illustrates the story writing processes for Fanzines, the processes can be quite similar in the present day. The conversations on the threads revealed that it is not uncommon to ask for advice and directions for one's fic. On the forum as well, the ideas are "workshopped" (Jenkins 1992b: 161). The writers and readers who take part in the workshopping process are fans and members of the forum, who have created a certain fandom-related identity for themselves. Some members are known for their good grasp of grammar or way of giving feedback, and thus they are approached often on the forum with advice-seeking in mind. However, beyond the writer, reader and advice-giver's identities that are recognizable, the identities the fandom helps to project are found. Devereux (2009: 112) suggests that fandom is a way of forming identities and Grossberg (1992: 59) points to the possibility for fans to cite the fandom when portraying oneself. On the basis of the present study one could agree with this. When a participant, for example, creates a parallel between herself and a well-known character from the fandom, it is somewhat easier for the others to make deductions as to what the life of that participant is like. The fandom in many cases works as the lingua franca of

the conversations. It is shared information by all the participants, something that is easy to refer to in absence of other mutual experiences.

Being a fan is a universal phenomenon. Pullen (2000: 53) suggests that fans are not, as one might call, nerds or geeks, but “savvy consumers” who use the fandom of their choice to their own needs. These consumers often come together to share their opinions, experiences and enthusiasm towards the object of their affection. One can be a part of a Harry Potter centered fanfiction forum, but one can just as well participate on a motorsport appreciation forum. It is, however, probable that regardless of what the object of enthusiasm is, one builds one’s identity somehow around the phenomenon. This could be a mention of the kind of motorcycle one owns, or the type of fanfiction one most rather engages in. Being a fan is an important topic because it affects our identity, it has an impact on what we do or say. Just as simple a question as “Cats or dogs?” can be a significant marker of identity and the answer can tell others a great deal about the person. Since Internet is a place where identities can be manifested rather freely, it could prove to be important to study places such as Internet forums and popular Internet communities, such as Reddit or Imgur. To study these sites would not only benefit the study of identities, but also update the knowledge of Internet behavior, what can be said, where and how, and for example, what is considered funny and why.

Participating in an Internet forum makes it possible for people from different regions to come together, people who would probably otherwise never get acquainted or meet. Perhaps in this case they still do not ever meet, but through the forum become Internet friends. Perhaps they know what the other person looks like, perhaps they are friends on Facebook, perhaps they communicate by phone or with Skype, or perhaps they are content with communicating just through the forum. An interesting topic for further study would be to see how the forum activity shows in the participants’ lives outside Internet. Questions such as have they met the other participants, do they in fact communicate outside the forum, and how does being a fan affect their friendship, would present an interesting view on the social aspect of Internet fandom. Another very different topic of further study would be to interview the participants and get a more in depth view of the role that being a fan and fanfiction have in their lives. Looking at a thread on a discussion forum without participating oneself does leave the researcher

without a large part of the information that goes hand in hand with the conversation taking place.

## 6. Conclusion

In the present study it is clear that as Hirsjärvi and Kovala (2007: 249) suggest, being a fan is both personal and social. Being a part of the community seems to be an essential part of these participants' fannish activity. To write and read Harry Potter fanfiction one has to have a personal interest in the fandom, but to keep participating on a forum is probably because of the social aspect: similar-minded people, interesting conversation, sharing thoughts and opinions, the sense of belonging, even friendship. Perhaps what is more important than the original shared interest, the fandom, is the community that comes with it.

Being a fan, as well as being a writer or reader of fanfiction, is a multifaceted phenomenon. Being a fan does not necessarily entail collecting fandom-related objects, going to meetings with other fans, hanging posters on walls or publicly admitting liking the object one is a fan of. However, often fans do discuss and search more information about their fandom with other likeminded people, and the Internet provides an easy medium for this. I would argue that being a member of a fanfiction forum does not necessarily mean that the participant is an extremely enthusiastic fan of the media text. In this case, being a member of a Harry Potter based fanfiction forum does not necessarily mean that the participant is a fanatic or even a very dedicated fan of Harry Potter. Participating in a fanfiction forum entails membership, relationship with the other participants, participation in the production or appreciation of fanfiction, and usually also appreciation of the source text, in this case Harry Potter. To be able to write believable HP-fanfiction, one probably has to have a grasp of the original plot and characters, and reading a HP-fanfiction is usually produced by initial interest that the original books or movies has brought about. However, one does not have to be an expert of Harry Potter to be able to write HP-fanfiction, just as one does not have to be one in order to enjoy reading it.

In the examples researched in the present study, identities that the participants constructed in their posts, often had relevance to literacy: writing or reading fanfiction. When inspecting the reader and writer identities in the posts, it seems that when

discussing the production and consumption of fanfiction itself, the participants could be considered more as fans of fanfiction and writers of fanfiction, than fans of Harry Potter. That being said, fanfiction can always be viewed as a way of strengthening both the writer's and reader's identity as a fan. Even one of the questions newbies have to answer when introducing themselves to the forum, is "Canon or fanon?": which do you prefer, the original Harry Potter texts or the fanfiction universe. Both answers are just as right, it is merely a question of preference, and the fans themselves are highly aware of the dichotomy of fandom in the world of fanfiction.

Portraying identities is often done unconsciously, as the language itself is used to convey a message. The posts do not always portray a certain identity and in most cases the participants simply join the conversation with no intention to portray themselves in any specific way; they simply wish to weigh in and converse with the others. However, in some cases, the participants' identities are portrayed in the messages, as they present themselves in relation to the topic under discussion. By saying something, the language user positions him/herself in a certain way. The topic discussed provides an opportunity to come forward while portraying oneself or others in a certain light.

Studying identities is challenging, as portraying of identity is often unintentional and the possibilities of interpretation are multiple. However, in the present study, the topics discussed and the identities portrayed go hand in hand, which makes combining the two a reasonable approach to the subject. Additionally, my own identity as a fanfiction writer and reader made the research project difficult at times, as I frequently found myself browsing the fanfiction archives. The discussions on the forum often encouraged my inner fanfiction fan and considering the virtual ethnography as a research method, my partial insider knowledge was a hindrance as well as a strength. While the present study has shed some light to the issue of identity on the Internet, in this case from the viewpoint of a fan community, more research could be conducted on both fan identities as well as Internet communities.

## Bibliography

- Androutsopoulos, J. (2008). Potentials and Limitations of Discourse-Centered Online Ethnography. *Language@Internet* [online] 5 n. pag.  
(<http://www.languageatinternet.org/articles/2008/1610>) (17.10.2012)
- Barker, C. and Galasinski, D. (2001). *Cultural Studies and Discourse Analysis*. London: SAGE.
- Benwell, B. and Stokoe, E. (2006). *Discourse and Identity*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd.
- Black, R. W. (2005). Access and affiliation: The literacy and composition practices of English-language learners in an online fanfiction community. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* 49, 118-128.
- Black, R. W. (2006). Language, Culture, and Identity in Online fanfiction. *E-learning* [online] 3 (2), 170-184.  
doi: 10.2304/elea.2006.3.2.170
- Black, R. W., (2009). Online Fan Fiction, Global Identities, and Imagination. *Research in the Teaching of English* 43 (4), 397-425.
- Blommaert, J. (2005). *Discourse: A critical introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Booth, P. (2010). *Digital Fandom: New Media Studies*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Busse K. and Hellekson, K. (2006). Introduction. In Hellekson, K. and K. Busse. (eds.), *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet: New Essays*. Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 5-32.
- Chandler-Olcott, K. and Mahar, D. (2003) Adolescents' anime-inspired "fanfictions": An exploration of Multiliteracies. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* 46 (7), 556-566.
- Devereux, E. (2009). I'm not the Man You Think I am: Authenticity, Ambiguity and the Cult of Morrissey. In V. Rautavuoma, U. Kovala and E. Haverinen (eds.), *Cult, Community, Identity*. Vaajakoski: Gummerus, 103-118.
- Gee, J. (2001) *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis : Theory and Method*. London: Routledge.
- Georgakopoulou, A. (2007) *Small Stories, Interaction and Identities*. Amsterdam: John

Benjamins.

- Grenfell, M. (2010a). Bourdieu, A Theory of Practice. In T.J. Mawson (ed.), *Bourdieu, Language and Linguistics*. London: Continuum International Publishing, 7-34.
- Grenfell, M. (2010b). Bourdieu, Language and Linguistics. In T.J. Mawson, (ed.), *Bourdieu, Language and Linguistics*. London: Continuum International Publishing, 35-63.
- Grossberg, L. (1992). Is there a Fan in the House?: The Affective Sensibility of Fandom. In L.A. Lewis (ed.), *The Adoring audience : fan culture and popular media*. London: Routledge, 50-65.
- Hall, S. (2002). *Identiteetti*. Tampere: Tammer-paino.
- Harris, C. (1998). Introduction. In C. Harris and A. Alexander (eds.), *Theorizing Fandom: Fans, Subculture and Identity*. Cresskill: Hampton Press, 3-8.
- Hills, M. (2002). *Fan Cultures*. London: Routledge.
- Hine, C. (2000). *Virtual Ethnography*. London: Sage.
- Hirsjärvi, I. (2009). *Faniuden siirtymiä : suomalaisen science fiction -fandomin verkostot*. Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän yliopisto. [online]  
<http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-951-39-4238-0> (7. November 2012)
- Hirsjärvi, I. and Kovala U. (2007). Fanius kulttuurintutkimuksen kohteena. In E. Vainikkala and H. Mikkola (eds.), *Nyky aika kulttuurintutkimuksessa*, 245-269.
- Jenkins, H. (2006). *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture*. New York: New York University Press.
- Jenkins, H., Green, S. and Jenkins, C. (2006) "Normal Female Interest in Men Bonking": Selection from the Terra Nostra Underground and Strange Bedfellows. In Jenkins, H. *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture*. New York: New York University Press.
- Jenkins, H. (1992a). 'Strangers No More, We Sing': Filking and the Social Construction of the Science Fiction Fan Community. In L.A. Lewis (ed.), *The Adoring audience: fan culture and popular media*. London: Routledge, 208-236.
- Jenkins, H. (1992b). *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Koskimaa, R. (2007). Digitaalisen kulttuurin ulottuvuudet. In E. Vainikkala and H. Mikkola (eds.), *Nyky aika kulttuurintutkimuksessa*, 66-81.
- Krippendorff, K. (1980). *Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology*. Beverly



Hills: Sage.

- Leppänen, S. (2008). Cybergirls in Trouble? Fan fiction as a Discursive Space for Interrogating Gender and Sexuality [online].  
[http://www.academia.edu/977383/Cybergirls\\_in\\_trouble\\_Fan\\_fiction\\_as\\_a\\_discursive\\_space\\_for\\_interrogating\\_gender\\_and\\_sexuality](http://www.academia.edu/977383/Cybergirls_in_trouble_Fan_fiction_as_a_discursive_space_for_interrogating_gender_and_sexuality). (7. November 2012)
- Leppänen, S. (2009). Playing with and Policing Language Use and Textuality in Fan Fiction [online].  
[https://www.academia.edu/613408/Playing\\_with\\_and\\_Policing\\_Language\\_Use\\_and\\_Textuality\\_in\\_Fan\\_Fiction](https://www.academia.edu/613408/Playing_with_and_Policing_Language_Use_and_Textuality_in_Fan_Fiction). (18. December 2013)
- Lothian, A., Busse, K. and Reid, R. A. (2007). “Yearning Void and Infinite Potential”: Online Slash Fandom as Queer Female Space. *English Language Notes* 45 (2), 103-111.
- MacDonald, A. (1998). Uncertain Utopia: Science Fiction Media Fandom & Computer Mediated Communication. In C. Harris and A. Alexander (eds.), *Theorizing Fandom: Fans, Subculture and Identity*. Cresskill: Hampton Press, 131-152.
- Miles, M. B. and Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis*. California: Sage.
- Nikunen, K. (2008). Televisio ja fanius – verkon varassa? In K. Nikunen (ed.), *Fanikirja – Tutkimuksia nykykulttuurin fani-ilmioistä*. Jyväskylä: Gummerus, 184-199.
- Nikunen, K. (2003). Soturiprinsessan matkassa: Televisiosarja Xena ja faniuden merkitykset. In U. Kovala and T. Saresma (eds.), *Kulttikirja: Tutkimuksia nykyajan kultti-ilmioistä*. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 112-140.
- Oxford Dictionaries*. <http://oxforddictionaries.com/> (20. November 2012)
- Oxford English Dictionary*. <http://www.oed.com/> (1. November 2012)
- Peacock, J. L. (2001). *Anthropological Lens*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pietikäinen, S. and Mäntynen, A. (2009). *Kurssi kohti diskurssia*. Tampere: Vastapaino.
- Piispanen, T. (2008). Beloved magical creatures: conflicts of romance in Harry Potter fan fiction [online]. <http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi:jyu-200803171268>. (14.12.2012).
- Pullen, K. (2000). I-love-Xena.com: Creating On-Line Fan Communities. In D. Gauntlett, (ed.), *Web.Studies: Rewiring media studies for the digital age*. London: Arnold, 52-61.
- Rheingold, H. (1993). *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*. Reading: Addison-Wesley.
- Rowling, J.K. (2005). *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*. London: Bloomsbury

- Tuomi, J. and Sarajärvi A. (2002). *Laadullinen tutkimus ja sisällönanalyysi*. Helsinki: Tammi.
- Weber, R. (1990). *Basic Content Analysis*. Newbury Park: Sage [online] doi: 10.4135/9781412983488 (17.4.2013)
- Wilson, S.M. and Peterson, L.C. (2002). The Anthropology of Online Communities. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 31, 449-467.
- Wood, A.F. and Smith, M.J. (2001). *Online Communication: Linking Technology, Identity, and Culture*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Zhao, S., Grasmuck, S., Martin, J. (2008). Identity construction on Facebook: Digital empowerment in anchored relationships. *Computers in Human Behavior* 24 (5), 1816-1836.