

**METAMORPHOSIS OF READERS TO WRITERS: A
PSYCHOANALYTIC STUDY OF HARRY POTTER FAN
FICTIONS**

**Thesis submitted to the
University of Calicut
for the award of the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH**

**by
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**CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
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DECLARATION

I, **Sapphire Mahmood Ahmed**, hereby declare that the thesis entitled, **Metamorphosis of Readers to Writers: A Psychoanalytic Study of Harry Potter Fan fictions**, submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English, is an original record of observations and bona fide research carried out by me, under the guidance of **Dr K. Rizwana Sultana**, Associate Professor and Head, Department of English, Farook College (Autonomous), Calicut, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree or diploma or similar titles. The contents of the thesis have undergone plagiarism check using iThenticate software at C. H. M. K. Library, University of Calicut, and the similarity index found within the permissible limit. I also declare that the thesis is free from AI generated contents.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled, **Metamorphosis of Readers to Writers: A Psychoanalytic Study of Harry Potter Fan fictions**, submitted by **Ms. Sapphire Mahmood Ahmed** to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English, is an original record of observations and bona fide research, carried out by her, under my supervision, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree or diploma or similar titles.

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ABSTRACT

Fan fiction can provide a platform for exploring the various aspects of creative writing, including the motive behind the reading and writing processes. Despite various researches from a pedagogical perspective, there have not been studies that concern the mechanisms of creative writing by discerning the unconscious psychological processes. This research attempts the curious question of how and why a fan reader would transform into a fan fiction writer. It attempts to bring out the phases through which a fan reader would develop to produce a fan fiction, with the prominent theories in psychoanalysis, reader-response and fan studies. For the same, the research focuses on J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* books and its fan fiction, *Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality* by Eliezer Yudkowsky and the *James Potter* series by G. Norman Lippert.

Employing psychoanalytic reader response theories and fan theories, each chapter of the thesis aims to understand the phase through which the fan reader passes. "The Pre-Venture Phase" looks into the psychological responses of the fan reader to the source text and the unconscious fantasies that drive the responses. It is discerned that the creative urge is a need of the psyche. Emphasizing the importance of gaps in the source text, "The Venture Phase" looks at what prompts the reader to venture and explore the gaps. Further delving into the psyche of the reader reveals that the reader goes through various stages of psychosexual development before producing a fan fiction. Further progression in psychosexual development is evident in "The Post-Venture Phase", in which the fan writer has attained the unconscious fantasies through proper defense mechanisms. The thesis concludes on the note that the metamorphosis of the fan reader into fan fiction writer is a three-phase process which is accompanied by psychosexual progression. The research is significant in bringing out the deeper psychoanalytic aspects in the mechanisms of creative writing.

പ്രബന്ധസംഗ്രഹം

വായനയുടെയും എഴുത്തു പ്രക്രിയയുടെയും പിന്നിലെ പ്രചോദനം ഉൾപ്പെടെ, സർഗ്ഗാത്മക രചനയുടെ വിവിധ വശങ്ങൾ പര്യവേക്ഷണം ചെയ്യുന്നതിനുള്ള ഒരു വേദി ഫാൻ ഫിക്ഷനുകൾക്ക് നൽകാൻ കഴിയും. ബോധന ശാസ്ത്ര വശങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള വിവിധ ഗവേഷണങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ടായിരുന്നിട്ടും, അബോധാവസ്ഥയിലുള്ള മനുഷ്യാനുഭവപരമായ പ്രക്രിയകളെ ഗ്രഹിച്ചുകൊണ്ട് സർഗ്ഗാത്മക രചനയുടെ മെക്കാനിസങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള പഠനങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ടായിട്ടില്ല. ഒരു ഫാൻ റീഡർ എങ്ങനെ, എന്തുകൊണ്ട് ഒരു ഫാൻ ഫിക്ഷൻ എഴുത്തുകാരനായി മാറുന്നു എന്ന കൗതുകകരമായ ചോദ്യത്തിന് ഉത്തരം നൽകാൻ ഈ ഗവേഷണം ശ്രമിക്കുന്നു. മനോവിശ്ലേഷണം, വായനക്കാരന്റെ പ്രതികരണം, ആരാധക പഠനം എന്നിവയിലെ പ്രമുഖ സിദ്ധാന്തങ്ങൾക്കൊപ്പം ഒരു ഫാൻ ഫിക്ഷൻ നിർമ്മിക്കാൻ ഒരു ഫാൻ റീഡർ കടന്നു പോകുന്ന ഘട്ടങ്ങൾ പുറത്തുകൊണ്ടുവരാൻ ഇത് ശ്രമിക്കുന്നു. അതിനായി, ജെ.കെ. റൗളിംഗിന്റെ *ഹാരി പോട്ടർ* പുസ്തകങ്ങളും, അതിന്റെ ഫാൻ ഫിക്ഷനുകളുമായ, എലീസർ യുഡ്കോവ്സ്കിയുടെ *ഹാരി പോട്ടർ ആൻഡ് ദ മെമഡ്സ് ഓഫ് റേഷണാലിറ്റി*, ജി. നോർമൻ ലിപ്പർട്ടിന്റെ *ജെയിംസ് പോട്ടർ പരമ്പര* എന്നിവയിൽ ഗവേഷണം കേന്ദ്രീകരിക്കുന്നു.

സൈക്കോ അനലിറ്റിക് റീഡർ റെസ്പോൺസ് തിയറികളും ഫാൻ തിയറികളും ഉപയോഗിച്ച്, തീസിസിന്റെ ഓരോ അധ്യായവും ഫാൻ റീഡർ കടന്നുപോകുന്ന ഘട്ടം മനസ്സിലാക്കാൻ ലക്ഷ്യമിടുന്നു. ആദ്യ പാഠം ആയ "പ്രീ-വെഞ്ചർ ഫേസ്" ഉറവിട പുസ്തകത്തോടുള്ള ആരാധകന്റെ മനുഷ്യാനുഭവപരമായ പ്രതികരണങ്ങളിലേക്കും പ്രതികരണങ്ങളെ നയിക്കുന്ന അബോധാവസ്ഥയിലുള്ള ഫാൻ റീഡറുകളിലേക്കും നോക്കുന്നു. സർഗ്ഗാത്മകമായ ആഗ്രഹം മനസ്സിന്റെ ആവശ്യമാണെന്ന് തിരിച്ചറിയുന്നു. സോഴ്സ് ടെക്സ്റ്റിലെ വിടവുകളുടെ പ്രാധാന്യം ഉറപ്പിപ്പിക്കുകയോ, "ദി വെഞ്ചർ ഫേസ്" എന്ന പാഠം വായനക്കാരനെ അത്തരം വിടവുകളെ പര്യവേക്ഷണം ചെയ്യാൻ പ്രേരിപ്പിക്കുന്നതെന്താണെന്ന് നോക്കുന്നു. ഒരു ഫാൻ ഫിക്ഷൻ നിർമ്മിക്കുന്നതിന് മുമ്പ് വായനക്കാരൻ സൈക്കോസെക്ഷ്യൽ വികാസത്തിന്റെ വിവിധ ഘട്ടങ്ങളിലൂടെ കടന്നുപോകുന്നുണ്ടെന്ന് വായനക്കാരന്റെ മനസ്സിലേക്ക് കൂടുതൽ ആഴത്തിൽ പരിശോധിക്കുന്നതിൽ മനസ്സിലാവുന്നു. "ദി പോസ്റ്റ്-വെഞ്ചർ ഫേസ്" എന്ന പാഠത്തിൽ സൈക്കോസെക്ഷ്യൽ വികസനത്തിലെ കൂടുതൽ പുരോഗതി പ്രകടമാണ്. ശരിയായ പ്രതിരോധ സംവിധാനങ്ങളിലൂടെ ആരാധകനായ എഴുത്തുകാരൻ അബോധാവസ്ഥയിലുള്ള ഫാൻ റീഡറുകൾ പൂർത്തീകരിക്കുന്നു. ഫാൻ റീഡർ ഫാൻ ഫിക്ഷൻ എഴുത്തുകാരനിലേക്കുള്ള രൂപമാറ്റം മാനസിക ലൈംഗിക പുരോഗതിക്കൊപ്പം നടക്കുന്ന മൂന്ന് ഘട്ടങ്ങളുള്ള ഒരു പ്രക്രിയയാണ് എന്ന കുറിപ്പിൽ തീസിസ് അവസാനിക്കുന്നു. സർഗ്ഗാത്മക രചനയുടെ സംവിധാനങ്ങളിലെ ആഴത്തിലുള്ള മനോവിശ്ലേഷണ വശങ്ങൾ പുറത്തുകൊണ്ടുവരുന്നതിൽ ഗവേഷണം പ്രധാനമാണ്.

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INTRODUCTION

There are diverse ways in which one can engage with a work of fiction. Readers, at times, relate and identify with the characters, fully immersing themselves with the plot and events of the text. There are many times, however, when the readers assume a degree of agency over the text and try to actively interpolate the plot in such a way that it satisfies their creative urge. It so happens that some books remain with them even after they close the last page. They may ponder upon them, with imagination and feelings. Through imaginative reading, the reader may construct images of the characters, events and settings in the fictional text. They are engaged with the text both imaginatively and emotionally, in other words. They may have felt some incompleteness or certain disagreements regarding what happened in the plot. It is even possible that they imagine an alternative ending or turn of events in the story. This is what eventually develops into a fan fiction.

Ashley Barner, in “I Opened a Book” (2016), rightly points out that fan fiction is closely connected to imaginative reading (3). They are the fictions that are written by a fan of a text based on that text. A fan fiction can be any story by a fan that is a further development or an alternative dimension to an already established fiction. In other words, it is a reader’s response to a fiction that he or she has read, and adopts and adapts ideas from that work. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines fan fiction as “stories involving popular fictional characters that are written by fans and are often posted on the Internet” (“Fan Fiction”). Fan fiction is defined by scholar Bronwen Thomas, in an article “What Is Fanfiction and Why are People Saying Such Nice Things About It?” (2011), as “stories produced by fans based on plot lines and characters from either a single source text or else a ‘canon’ of works; these fan-created narratives often take the pre-existing story world in a new, sometimes bizarre, direction” (1). The writer of a fan

fiction makes use of the events and ideas in the original text, and invests the text with an additional dynamics.

If the fan reader feels some kind of incompleteness or has some disagreements with the text and desires to consider it from an alternative perspective, it may culminate in a fan fiction. In other words, it is the curiosity and creativity of the fan reader that engender a fan fiction. In case of fan fiction, the reader, who is very much involved in a particular fiction, finds certain incompleteness or gaps, which he or she feels the need to be filled. Making use of the content already available in the source fictional text and adding more to it, the reader then develops a fan fiction. A metamorphosis from the state of reader (who receives meanings from the text and also may generate their own interpretations) to the state of writer is perceived here. Any form of writing that express one's imagination, emotions and originality in thought are said to be creative. It is a subjective experience and is based on personal preferences.

Recently, creative writing has developed as an academic field with many international universities offering it as a course. Despite generating a large number of books on the genres, techniques and experiences of creative writing in the publishing market, there has not been a comprehensive theory on creative writings, stating specifically its formal rules. It is indeed difficult to comprehend the mechanism behind the creative act of writing fiction, as it thrives on individuality, creativity and innovation, making it resistant to rigid formalization. While the romantic myth, that fictional writing is the result of a sudden lightening-like inspiration that the artist experience, does emphasize the beauty, novelty and innovation of the writing, it does not give us much insight into the process behind creative writing. In "Writing as a Collaborative Act" (2009), R. Keith Sawyer explains that many believe writing to be a "personal expression of a person's very private inner vision" (166). The emotions and thoughts of the writer are

inevitable in any form of creative writing. The acts of critical reading of a text, forming ideas from that reading and expressing them in writing are all interconnected (169).

The act of writing fiction, however, is not merely a personal experience but also a social act. It is about being part of a reading community as well. It is from such critical reading experiences that one develops the skills to write fictions. As Jenkins emphasizes in *Convergence Culture* (2006), contemporary storytellers have developed “a more collaborative model of authorship, co-creating content with artists with different visions and experiences” (96). Working on the premise that good critical reading skills are important for one to be a good writer, this thesis enters the debate on the need to trace a theory on the process of creative writing, specifically the transformation of a reader into a creative writer. What interests the researcher is how the writer regulates and manipulates the emotions and thoughts while in the reading act, and also before and while writing a fictional work. Besides the personal preferences and identities, the social and cultural environment in which the individual writer places him or herself are important in determining what he or she expresses in the writing. Hence, unlike the romantic myth, the individual writer is part of a larger process rather than a very personal isolated process. When it comes to creative writing, the talents, imagination, emotions involved as well as the social and cultural contexts are all equally significant. Due to this, developing a comprehensive theory on creative writing is not an easy task. However, the process can be understood more deeply and comprehensively when examined through the lens of relevant literary theories.

This thesis aims to understand why some people devote their time and energy into the creation of imaginary fictional narratives. It is said that only a good reader can be a good writer. In order to understand how and what prompts an individual to write a fiction, it is important know the individual as a reader and also as a writer. Both reading and writing aspects are

important in creative fictional narratives. Fan fictions have the potential to provide information on both these aspects, because they are the written manifestations of the reader's response to a source text. They are the results of intense reading of a particular text and writing based on that text. The analysis of fan fiction texts provides insights into the response of the reader to the source text and also the mechanisms behind the act of writing. Hence, this research has taken fan fiction as its primary subject of study.

The research thus begins from the point of view of the reader and follows the gradual progression into writer. It primarily looks at the mechanisms of the production of a fan fiction. It attempts to trace the development of a reader into a fan fiction writer. In other words, it aims to bring out the various phases through which a fan reader goes through so as to develop into a writer and produce a fan fiction.

Fan fiction websites like FanFiction.net and Archive of Our Own (AO3) record that J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* (1997-2007) novels have garnered one of the highest number of fan fiction. As Natalie Samutina observes in her article, "Fan fiction as world-building: transformative reception in crossover writing" (2016), the quantity of the fan fiction produced and also the fact that *Harry Potter* has an important position in the history of first-generation internet readers both qualifies *Harry Potter* fan fiction to be the most suitable subject for a study on fan works (435). Along with Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, this research focuses on two popular fan fiction of *Harry Potter: the James Potter* series (2007-2017) by G. Norman Lippert and *Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality* (2010-2015) by Eliezer Yudkowsky. The select fan fiction stand out from other fan fiction in their professional writing style and quality as well as the impact they have been capable of creating within the *Harry Potter* fan community. Both these fan fictions are novels, which in itself is not common in case of fan fiction. Choosing

novel-length fictions is important because, besides providing first-hand information on the reader's response to the *Harry Potter* books, they would give content rich enough to allow for detailed textual analyses, rather than a poem or short story or fan art. Both Lippert and Yudkowsky's fan fiction, due to legal restrictions, are available only in their respective websites and are not published in the print form.

Researches on creative fiction writings usually focus either on the content or the form of creative writing. The methods, the genres and the tools used for writing have been analyzed by various scholars. Over the twentieth century, various models have been proposed for the process of creative writing. The most prominent of these are Wallas' four-stage model, Hayes' model and the Geneplore model (all of which are discussed in detail in a later chapter). These models take creativity as a social and cultural product. In other words, they mostly focus on the extrinsic factors and do not give much insight into the unconscious processes behind the act of creative writing. Gregory J. Light, in his article "Towards a Theory of Creative Writing" (1996), calls for a suspension of the assumption of independent textual quality and the assumption of an independent self in the act of writing. While acknowledging that, unlike the earlier concept of the Author, the *writer* is much more dynamic as "an individual grounded in his or her socio-cultural situation" (27), Light asserts that the writer must be understood in terms of individuality, personal voice or creativity. The study, however, looks at writing as a cultural practice only. The psychological aspects are not explored.

Coming to the studies on fan fiction specifically, this is one of the least explored areas in literary studies. Post 1990, there has been a few books on fan fiction, relating the genre to popular culture. Henry Jenkins' *Textual Poachers* (1992) is, perhaps, the first work to analyze fans, fandom and fan fiction in depth. Jenkins' work is an exploration of the television fandom

from the early 1990s, with emphasis on the intersection of fandom, popular consumption and media theory. Later, Jenkins further contributed to the oeuvre of fan studies with his ideas of convergence culture and participatory culture, besides many others (*Convergence Culture*2006). Other prominent media studies scholars like Matt Hills, Lev Grossman, Kristina Busse, Karen Hellekson and Anne Jamison have brought out the commercial, legitimacy, cultural and social aspects of fan fiction and fan communities. Their works have been the major sources for researches in the field of fan studies in the recent years.

Although a large number of researches are being carried out on creative writing and also in the field of fan studies, the researcher would like to narrow down the review of literature to those studies that include both creative writing and fan fiction as their subject, since they are the subject and tool of this research. Recent studies in this field mostly focus on how fan fiction help in promoting creative writing practices, on how fan fiction are used as a way to develop social relationships and the therapeutic effects of creative writing. In “Making Fanfic: The (Academic) tensions of Fan Fiction as Self-Publication” (2017), Murdock questions the current notions of publishing. She explains how fan fiction is against the paradigms of conventional practices in academic writing. A more recent study that looks into both creative writing and fan fiction is “Feedback Exchange and Online Affinity: A Case Study of Online Fanfiction Writers” (2022) by Cheng and Frens. Emphasizing the importance of feedback in creative writing, this study enquires into the methods opted by fan fiction writers for identifying and building connections to seek feedback. Gemma Hawkins studies the creative development of fan writers in online communities. Her thesis, “The Art of Fanfiction: Exploring the Social, Cultural and Creative Contributions of Fanfictions for the Creative Writing Classroom” (2022), looks at how online fan communities act as a space for developing critical thinking skills. Based on interview and

questionnaire methods, this study also assimilates how both traditional education and fandom can be used as complimentary pedagogical tools to facilitate the nurturing of creative and critical skills of students. These studies, again, look at creative writing from pedagogical aspects and the after-effects of creative writing. They do not probe into the mechanisms behind writing.

The review of literature discussed above gives us a picture of researches carried out on the social, cultural and also pedagogical aspects of fan fiction and creative writing. It also highlights a gap in the existing literature. There have not been studies that concern the mechanisms of creative writing by discerning the unconscious psychological processes. This research offers to bridge this gap by bringing together creative writing, fan fiction and the unconscious mechanisms of both the reader and writer. This thesis would therefore be a useful contribution to the debates on the needs to develop a theory of creative writing. It proposes to bring in the psychological aspects into the debate and thereby develop a theory that explains the production of a fictional work by a skilled reader.

To understand this metamorphosis or transformation from reader to writer, certain questions must be raised. The fan fiction writer, when attempting to complete the gaps (the incomplete parts) in the source text, chooses particular gaps and ignores many other gaps. What is the nature of the gaps chosen from the source text by the fan fiction writer? Why are these particular gaps chosen? Is it satisfying the writer in some way, culturally, socially or psychologically? While the emphasis of the romantic myth on the sacredness of the text is debatable, the role of the text in leading the reader into writing cannot be ignored. Hence, what is the contribution of the source text in facilitating the development of the writer? Does it invite the reader or constrain the reader from generating meaning and promoting creativity? Fan fiction writers, while acknowledging the authority of the author over the source text, also seems to

believe that, as readers, they have some agency over their favourite text. They feel free to express their agreements and disagreements, through their fan fiction and fan arts. It is also worth enquiring into what the role of the source text is in assisting the reader to assume an agency over it. Also, a study on the transformation from reader to writer would not be complete if it does not look into the psychological processes behind it. The psyche has a major role in every response that is generated by the reader. In other words, the response of the reader is not only to the text being read but also to certain psychic desires. To what extent does the psyche play a role in satisfying this creative urge of the fan reader? These questions will be addressed in this thesis.

While tracing the transformation from reader to creative writer, the thesis refers to fictional narratives only. The research does not cover non-fictional narratives like history, science and other types of writings. The primary interest of this study is fan fiction since they provide us access to both the reader as well as the writer. Also, fan fiction, unlike fan arts or other fan produced works, allows more scope for details and explorations. As Mark A. Runco explains, in “Writing as an Interaction with Ideas” (2009), “It is quite possible that there is more information [in writing] than in, say, one painting or one dance, and therefore more potential for catharsis, exploration and self-disclosure” (185). Besides the popularity and the large quantity of fan fiction garnered till date, the *Harry Potter* fan fiction also fulfil the above-mentioned conditions for a study. Hence, *Harry Potter* fan fictions seem the most suitable subject for this study.

Fan fiction and the Evolution of a Virtual Fan Culture

The definitions of fan fiction, given briefly at the beginning of this thesis, give a general picture of the genre. Any fiction that is based on another fiction can be included under the definition of fan fiction. However, if such is the case, any literary text would be categorized as a fan fiction, which is not how fan fictions are generally understood. It is therefore necessary to narrow down the scope of such a definition for fan fiction. Although there have been a large number of literary works based on other works in history, they are mostly classified as adaptations and the like. Fan fiction, in its contemporary understanding, has only been recognised in recent times.

The term “fan fiction” did not appear in print until the second half of the twentieth century. When used, it was a reference to the fiction about fans, rather than a fiction by fans. Also, it focused on the fan works related to science fictions. Karen Hellekson, in *The Fan Fiction Studies Reader* (2014), mentions that this meaning of fan fiction “fell out of use in favor of the notion of fan fiction as the imaginative interpolations and extrapolations by fans of existing literary world” (6).

In the contemporary times, fan fiction, in general, are understood as stories that twist the plot of the source text, may even modify the quality of its characters and, in the process, add multiple dimensions of meaning to the text. They, sometimes, make visible that which was underlying. For instance, slash fan fiction (which are usually accused of pornography) are used to elevate the underlying sub-texts. But slash fictions not only do this. It breaks certain stereotypes, taboos and rules that are normally followed consistently in the canon texts.

Fan fiction, however, are not mere imitations of an already established work of fiction. There is much more. G. Norman Lippert, the author of the *James Potter* series, describes his fan

fiction of *Harry Potter* novels as “reheated leftovers of another writer’s creations” (*The Curse of the Gatekeeper* 365). Rephrased, one could argue that the text contains elements that remain incomplete, which the reader engages with and reconstructs. When Karen Hellekson mentions that fan fiction is the “imaginative interpolations and extrapolations by fans”, it points at the major role the reader would have in this. It is the reader who decides the particular dimension of the text that must be emphasized while generating a meaning to it or while elaborating upon it. Besides this, it is important that a fan fiction be the result of the interaction of the writers and readers within a fan community. Fan fiction is written for the members of that community and the writer may look forward to the responses of the fans for related feedback.

Over the 20th century, fan fiction and fan communities have been feeding the creative urges of the fans, allowing them to engage in their own literary forte. The fans found such communities as a way to engage in and discuss their favourite stories, explore their own creativity with the backup of a community of like-minded people. This was also a women-dominated territory, unlike other dominant mainstream media. Women writers controlled and asserted their roles as writers, publishers, editors and distributors in the world of internet (Coppa 321).

By the year 2000 and with J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* books, the practice of reading and writing fan fiction online and forming fan communities had been quite common. This has also been a good starting point for an entire generation of writers in the future. Many professional writers today had begun their career through fan fiction. It is true that fan fiction as a genre till date have not been able to garner much commercial success. The number of fan fiction or related books published in print is very low. But this does not mean the impact it has made can be overlooked. “This shift to writing as a social, communal activity is already having a

profound impact on the economics and production of fiction as well as on the relationship this fiction represents and itself forges and relies on” (Jamison 167). The online fan communities and platforms were the spaces for open conversations for different people who wanted to talk about it and express themselves, without the fear of repercussions from the society around them.

With the advent of internet and its easier accessibility to the common people around the globe, the nature of the relationship between the author, the text and the reader has changed. While the authors and readers of the pre-internet era depended on the hard copies of texts, the children of the late 1990s and the 21st century grew up with the soft copies of various texts. Consequently, the response to a text from the reader is faster than what was imaginable in the earlier times. The readers’ responses can be in varied form. It can be a simple appreciative message or a mail, a review posted in a social media website, or a new fiction based on the fiction that the reader has read. For instance, the 2011 novel *Fifty Shades of Grey*, by E. L. James, is admittedly a *Twilight* fan fiction, originally titled *Master of the Universe* and was published in the fan fiction website, FanFiction.net. Rarely has any fan fiction become as successful as *Master of the Universe*, which eventually got published into a book and then made into a movie. However, there are many fan fiction which became popular and celebrated, although they could not find a place in print publications due to legal restrictions and the copyright laws. Fan fictions exist in a grey area of intellectual property law (Tushnet 88).

In literary history, there are a number of examples of fan writing. However, they are not exactly the same as the present-day concept of fan writing. Over the centuries, our notions regarding the writer, reader and the relationship between them have changed. What has not changed is the fact that writers have always negotiated with or intervened in various ways with a familiar work of art. This habit of writing from other sources has always remained over

centuries, though they have been called by various names like “fan-fictions”, “fan-fics” “adaptations”, “rewritings” and the like. Creative differences and legal differences have a role in the name attributed to these works. In the contemporary sense, fan fiction are those stories that are written for a specific fan community who are already in need of it, who wants to discuss it and may even write more on it.

The first fan fiction is that of the *Star Trek*, in the fanzine “Spockanalia”. This was during the 1960s. However, going by the definition that they are works written by readers based on an already existing work of art, fan fiction seems to have existed for ages. Anne Jamison, in *Fic* (2013), even suggests that Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, which was based on *Ur-Hamlet*, has the nature of a fan fiction. George Eliot herself had once admitted of writing a fiction based on other works, in an epigraph to a chapter in *Middlemarch* (1871). Unfortunately, this fiction (or fan fiction) is long lost. William Thackeray had also written for the fan readers of Sir Walter Scott’s *Ivanhoe* (1819). Many of its readers wanted the hero to be married to the Jewish Rebecca, rather than Rowena. Jamison explains that Thackeray’s reasons for writing such a fiction was his dissatisfaction with the novel’s conventional end in marriage and the resultant frustration, a desire for wish fulfilment, besides having fun in writing and also the intellectual pleasure in criticism (47). These reasons are quite familiar to fan fiction writers as well.

The popularity and success of a work is hugely dependent on its close relationship with the media. The Sherlock Holmes fandom was the first to use the media in an organized way to share their perspectives on Doyle’s work. In the latter half of the 20th century, they published their works based on Sherlock Holmes in journals, which were eventually called fanzines. Even today, Sherlock Holmes has a high number of fan fictions. The Baker Street Irregulars is a formal fan club, founded in 1934, dedicated to Sherlockian fandom, fan writing and fan

communities. It has a journal with the same name and still continues to publish till date. This fan club has also moved on to use internet for its purposes with its own website (Jamison 52).

It has been nearly a century since fan writing began to emerge in its formalized form. “The previous century made adapting, continuing, transposing and reinterpreting Sherlock Holmes familiar and popular enough to support our own century’s current cultural obsession” (Jamison 53). There have been various versions of Sherlock Holmes by many writers. Fan fictions as a genre have remained a shadowy one, with no sponsors to back them up or any monetary benefits for the writers. However, an examination of the history of Sherlock Holmes fan writing reveals that it is both enigmatic in nature and commercially advantageous. What remains common over the century is the impulse to retell and reframe what was once authored by Arthur Canon Doyle.

The early fan writings existed mostly at a very personal level. George Eliot’s fan writings were written solely for her own entertainment. There is currently no existing record of it. It was a solitary activity, which was built on a close relationship between the writer and the source/story that she read. The author of the source text rarely comes into this relationship. However, in the 20th century, the *Sherlock Holmes* fandom and the *Star Trek* fandom moved out from this personal level and to a social level, forming fan communities, clubs and fan journals. Eventually, there were fanzines like *Spockanalia* and *Starsky and Hutch* (both *Star Trek* fan publications). In 1926, the science-fiction magazine *Amazing Stories* provided a column space for its readers, who would send letters expressing their opinions, expectations, disagreements and other ideas. These were published along with their addresses. This allowed people to find others with similar thoughts and ideas. Fans began to connect with each other through the addresses obtained from these magazines. The formation of acquaintances in a fan community is different from the usual

way in which people know each other. It is built upon a common knowledge and passion that they share. Communication between them may or may not occur at a personal level, through the fanzines and letters. The practice of exchanging fanzines made the readers feel that they are now part of a community. When they had a means to produce, they began producing fan fiction magazines, which were initially called amateur magazines. It was so called because most of its contributors were amateur writers, rather than professional writers.

Early science fiction fandom was not focused on the source text. They were more about the fans and fandom. They were mostly written as jokes and for light reading. Early science fiction fanzines were distributed among fans in return of other fanzines and letters of review. Though the science fiction was discussed, more emphasis was given to the fandom and its activities. The fanzines had a great role in creating a fan-produced culture. Fans had a means to express their difference of thoughts. Jacqueline Litchenberg, in her article “Recollections of a Collating Party” (2013), expresses how she and other fans shared the same emotion when the *Star Trek* broadcasting was stopped. “All of this fan outrage stewing and brewing through those years – how dare they cancel *Star Trek!* – had found an outlet: fanzines” (106). The fans of this show were imposing their authority over it. The result was *Star Trek Lives!* (1975). This was one of the earliest publications that discusses *Star Trek* fandom, the various activities of the fans and the fan clubs, co-authored by Litchenberg, Sondra Marshak and Joan Winston. They explored the relationship between the TV show and its fans, thereby reacting against the sudden cancellation of the show. Reflecting on her experiences as a writer, Litchenberg says, “A fan becoming my co-writer might seem strange to some, but it wasn’t odd to me. From participating in fandom and working on *Star Trek Lives!*, I was already used to thinking about the line between readers and writers as fluid” (110). Fan fiction writing has always been a social-collaborative work.

In its initial years, fanzines were male-dominated. This changed, however, with the change in technology. Anne Jamison says in *Fic*:

What zines meant, and what fan-fiction meant, changed as fandom sources shifted from print (literary) to media-based interests. Fanwriting culture also changed in response to technology, which increasingly allowed fanwriting to reach more readers, just as broadcast television ultimately reached more fans – at least more fans simultaneously – than print could. (86)

With the shift from print to digital media, fans and fan fiction could reach much wider audience/readers, which was not easily possible earlier. People could now easily access the sources, which were then broadcasted on the televisions. Besides the change in technology, the sexual revolution and women's liberation movement all had its influence on fan fiction. More and more women came out to express their thoughts. Gradually, fan fictions were growing into a domain of female writers, though not entirely. Fan fiction became more active and vibrant. *Star Trek* had the greatest number of women fan writers, followed by *Star Wars* and *Beauty and the Beast*. The *Star Trek* fandom proved that the act of watching television was no longer a passive activity, but a participatory one. Although the fandom was very small in number, they actively discussed their views. This fandom was, in fact, “laying the social, procedural and cultural groundwork that has influenced every fanwriting fandom since” (Jamison 134). It focused mainly on the relationship between the major characters, rather than the plot. Hence, Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock were shipped together, and there were lots of discussions and controversies on homosexuality and homophobia. “With *Star Trek*, fanfiction becomes a true collective ... enterprise, the kind of super-social community affair it is today” (Jamison 136). Sexuality was explored from various perspectives in fan fiction. This, though not so novel, trend did influence

the mainstream science fictions also. Jamison observes that it was the *Star Trek* fandom that inspired the first slash fandom. Women writers mostly wanted to explore a relationship which was on equal terms, rather than one partner dominating the other. They explored the possibilities of such a relationship, which the mainstream culture was adamantly refusing to offer. Slash stories were being circulated through letters and later through fanzines. By then, the possibility of homosexual relationship between Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock was already established in the community of *Star Trek* fandom. This was the period of pre-internet fan fictions, which were increasingly blurring the line between canon and fanon. Everyone was telling their own versions of the stories, in different ways. Interestingly, fanzines were encouraged and also followed by the creators of the canon. It gave them insight into the fan taste and concerns.

By the latter half of the 1990s, it became more and more usual for a person to search a favourite book or movie or TV show on a search engine and find a number of websites with related discussions and fan stories. Fans wrote and expressed what they felt should have been included in the original work. And people argued in support and against this. With the advent of Internet, the speed of communication increased tremendously. Communities and conventions were being formed faster. The websites, blogs, and mailing systems also permitted fans to remain anonymous. Unlike the earlier fanzines, now fans need not reveal their true identity or address or phone numbers. Anonymous or pseudonymous usernames and email IDs sufficed. This opened up a new kind of adventurous freedom for the fans. Anne Jamison notes this change in the nature of fan fiction: “Fanfictions became free, open and public ... revealing someone’s ‘real-life’ identity and location quickly came to be understood as a sin of great magnitude, whereas in the days of zines, such information was commonly shared” (125).

The possibility of anonymity allowed people to try on new styles and genres and also explore more daringly sexualities that they would not have done had the revelation of true identity been necessary. Internet and the possibility of anonymity have its pros and cons. Anonymous and pseudo-identities sometimes are used by writers to promote their own works and also attack upon their rivals online. The possibilities of the internet were taken advantage of by the creators of the American supernatural drama television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (by Joss Whedon) in 1992. They created an official website for the show and added an interactive comment section in the web page, where fans could comment on each episode. The creators of the show could now easily know what their fans were expecting and what their concerns were, through this virtual space. Fans were not interacting among themselves alone, but also with the creators of the show, and this made it more interesting. Fans could question certain things, and the creators could either defend themselves or had the option to make amendments. A sense of community, with the same tastes and interests, was being created on the virtual platforms. Also, the participation of the creators also made this fan activity more legitimate. The advent of such social media websites and the easy access to it in the 1990s were all favourable conditions for the success of one of the most popular children's books, J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* (1997-2007).

The *Harry Potter* phenomenon and the Fandom

From the day of the publication of the first book of the series, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997), it has attracted a lot of attention of children and adults alike; people all over the globe were being hooked to the books in their own ways. The years 1997-2007 were an extraordinary period in which children's literature exploded into the mainstream popular and literary culture. Suddenly, everyone was talking about *Harry Potter* and children's fiction in all its varieties.

y and invention. With the breaking of records by the *Harry Potter* books, earlier children's literature, like *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-1957) by C. S. Lewis, reappeared in book stores in new editions. And throughout the decade, children's fiction reached bigger audiences than ever. In addition to books, the Potter phenomenon has branched out into many other areas of media. J.K. Rowling had brought people from televisions, phones, and radios back to one of the most basic forms of entertainment and enlightenment: reading.

The *Harry Potter* series depicts the personal development of the main character, Harry Potter, as well as several other characters surrounding the protagonist. Each of the novels takes a step forward with its events. Thus, an orphan boy's journey starts from the moment he finds out, on his eleventh birthday, that he is not a normal boy, but a wizard with magical powers and belongs to a very different wizarding society. Harry grows from an eleven year old to a young man over the course of the series. As Rowling's original readers would be growing as the series progresses, there are several inbuilt reasons why the series would attract even a greater number of audiences.

The seven books in the series are *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997), *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (1998), *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (1999), *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (2000), *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (2003), *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (2005) and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2007). Each book covers each year in the protagonist's life. Harry is eleven years old, when the story begins, living in the abusive house of the only living relatives he has- the Dursleys. On his eleventh birthday, he discovers that he is not an ordinary child but a wizard enrolled in Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry to learn magic. He finds a new home at Hogwarts, with friends (especially Ronald Weasley and Hermione Granger), enemies (especially Professor Snape and Draco Malfoy, an age-mate), and mentors (especially the elderly Headmaster Dumbledore). Over the years,

Harry realizes that he has a special destiny. The evil wizard, Lord Voldemort, more powerful than any other wizard, wants dominion over wizards and ordinary mortals. Voldemort had come close to ascendancy of power in the past. But, because of a prophecy that neither he nor Harry could live if the other lived, he had murdered Harry's parents and tried to murder the infant Harry. However, surprising the wizarding world, Harry became the only person in history to survive the killing curse when it mysteriously rebounded and destroyed Voldemort's body, although Voldemort survived as a spirit. The infant boy was marked by a lightning-shaped scar on his forehead.

In each of the first three books, Harry defeats Voldemort's attempts to regain a body, but Voldemort succeeds in the fourth book, *The Goblet of Fire* (2002), by using Harry's blood. Hereafter, the story turns darker. Harry, gradually, learned about the prophecy, and realized that it is up to him to kill Voldemort. In the remaining books, good battles evil, although much of the evil is represented not by Voldemort and his cronies, but by cowardly, untruthful adults who refuse to stand up to Voldemort and instead turn against Harry and his allies. At the end of the series, Harry finds out that, to save the wizarding world, he must allow Voldemort to defeat him, and Voldemort 'kills' Harry—though Harry is not truly dead; only a part of the soul of Voldemort within Harry is destroyed. Upon his return, Harry has a final confrontation with Voldemort, in which he again repels Voldemort's killing curse, and Voldemort dies with his own curse rebounding upon him.

A fantasy setting is an effective tool to connect with the readers quickly and in depth. *Harry Potter* series is an excellent example of this. The characters, events and issues remain familiar to the readers, making it believable and relatable. Maria Nikolajeva, in her article "The Development of Children's Fantasy" (2012), writes that the fantasy genre allows authors of children's literature to deal with "important psychological, ethical and existential questions in a

slightly detached manner” (61). Hence, by using the fantastic form, the author can communicate stories and lessons that might be more persuasive because they are described in an imagined universe which is far removed from the readers.

Not surprisingly, the *Harry Potter* fandom broke all the records of the highest number of fans garnered in a very short span of time. It established the system of online fan writing on a much broader scale. It had a greater reach than any other fandom till date. These subcultures so constructed became a model for another upcoming fandom. By the time Stephenie Meyer’s *Twilight* came to the forefront, the online fan culture was very well set up and on the go. There were already fan writing competitions, awards and conventions, and even provisions for feedback.

The first book in the *Harry Potter* series alone had garnered a surprisingly large number of fans in 1997. Fans had always eagerly waited for the next book to be published. This had only increased with the publication of *The Chamber of Secrets* (1998) and *The Prisoner of Azkaban* (2000). When, in the year 2000, Warner Bros. announced that a film was to be produced based on Rowling’s first book, fans’ excitement took them to the internet where they expected to find more information. Chris Rankin (the actor who played Percy Weasley in the *Harry Potter* films), in his article, “An Excerpt from Percy Weasley’s University Thesis” (2013), narrated the events that followed:

...fans turned to the internet to see what they could find out. The answer, at the time, was very little. The solution was to create the information. From this, the Harry Potter fan community, as we see it today, evolved. (171)

This marked the beginning of a global online fan community. As Melissa Anelli puts it in *Harry: A History* (2008), “The Internet changed Harry Potter about as much as the Internet was changing everything else” (88). This act of creativity, that began in 1999 and has not yet ended, opened up myriad opportunities in writing, art, social networking, animations and films.

The Harry Potter fandom focused majorly on the canon alone. J. K. Rowling or her other books never really bothered their fan writings. Chris Rankin mentions that the fans of Harry Potter are “fans of a book series, its related subjects. In their hearts, what they connect with is the literature, and the message it sends out” (171). This makes it different from all the other fandom. They tended to stay closer to the books (or films), although they may be exploring diverse aspects of the characters or the whole magical world. Some fan fiction strictly adhered to Rowling’s characterization, some did not. Despite this, it was easily recognizable.

In other words, the Harry Potter fandom was working on the traditional lines, despite being on a new kind of platform. Their works were more like a tribute, and expression of their admiration or disagreements with the canon. This was seen in the earlier fanzines of Sherlock Holmes and Star Trek. These were mostly written out of love for the series. The *Harry Potter* fandom caused a revolution in the internet fan culture, leading to even commercial success for some fan fiction writers.

The *Harry Potter* fandom, and even the various fandoms before that, had made sure that the authorial intent would not influence the fans’ explorations on the characters. There have also been many fan fiction that explored the sexual lives of the teenage characters. This had caused discomfort for the creators. There have been many instances where lawsuits were issued. When J. K. Rowling announced that Albus Dumbledore, Harry Potter’s school headmaster and one of

the most controversial characters in the series, was a gay, it opened a large number of possibilities for the fan fiction writers (Smith, “Dumbledore”). As Jamison puts it, “Harry Potter slash helped shape and challenge attitudes toward sexual diversity among the generation that grew up reading it and arguing about it (a lot) online” (166). Reading and writing fictions were no longer a personal experience but were about being part of a community of similar-minded people.

Mainstream literatures often place the artist at a high position that the reader necessarily is placed in a subordinate position. Fan culture, however, seems more open to rewriting and participation unlike the completed mainstream arts and literatures. In essence, fan culture does not emphasize on the quality of permanence of its products, unlike the traditional mainstream literatures. As John Fiske explains in “The Cultural Economy of Fandom” (1992), “Indeed its disposability and constant, anxious search for that which is new, stimulating and yet acceptable to the people are among its most valuable characteristics” (47). There is no question of ownership when it comes to a source text and fandom, but it is about belonging, being a part of a huge similar-minded community, sharing the same interests and passions. This is evident in the select fan fiction.

The *James Potter* series by G. Norman Lippert

The *James Potter* series, one of the most popular *Harry Potter* fan fictions, by G. Norman Lippert is set eighteen years after the events of the *Harry Potter* novels. Releasing the first novel of the series, *James Potter and the Hall of the Elders’ Crossing*, in 2007, the fan fiction has garnered a high number of followers in the following years. The first book was soon followed by *James Potter and the Curse of the Gatekeeper* (2008), *James Potter and the Vault of*

Destinies (2010), *James Potter and the Morrigan Web* (2013) and *James Potter and the Crimson Thread* (2017). Written as a sequel, this novel series has Harry Potter's eldest son, James Sirius Potter, as the protagonist. Along with a huge fan base, the series also grabbed a lot of media attention, causing it to be an international success. It has been translated into nine different languages.

Being a computer animator himself, Lippert was able to develop a website solely devoted to this fan fiction. He also developed a logo for the same. The logo, which was a transformation of the *Harry Potter* logo into the James Potter logo, caught the attention of a large number of *Harry Potter* fans on the Internet who immediately supposed that the website and logo were an official announcement for a continuation for Rowling's novels. However, both Rowling and Warner Bros. (who had the copyrights to the *Harry Potter* movies) immediately denied being related to this sequel series, which was later threatened with legal action from Rowling's side since they found it to be an infringement of copyright laws and right to intellectual property laws. Later, Rowling's agency dismissed legal allegations on the ground that they would receive an advanced copy of the novel before its release to the public ("Legal Disputes").

Lippert claims that the series was written in order to fill the void that prevailed over him after he finished reading the seventh and final book in the *Harry Potter* series. In fact, he welcomes similar-minded readers to his book thus:

If, on the other hand, you simply loved the Harry Potter stories and characters and were sad to see them come to an end, then welcome ... If, in short, you believe that the story is king above all else, then this story, most definitely and affectionately, is for you. Enter and join us on the ongoing journey! I hope you have a grand time.

(The Curse of the Gatekeeper 3)

Clearly, Lippert intended his books for the fans of *Harry Potter* and celebrates the fact that they are all part of a common passionate reading community.

The James Potter series revolves around the adventures of James Potter, Harry Potter's son, at Hogwarts and Alma Aleron, the British and American schools of witchcraft and wizardry. Following the same structure as that of Rowling's novels, each book covers one year in James' life in which he slowly uncovers a plot to reveal the secret magical world to the Muggle (non-magical) world, with the assistance of Lord Voldemort's bloodline. The story has frequent references to Harry Potter and his past life, and is based on the events in *Harry Potter*. The antagonists in this fan fiction are determined to undo the work of Harry Potter and Albus Dumbledore, believing Voldemort to be a martyr and the saviour of the wizarding world.

Lippert's fan fiction is set in a magical world, hugely based on Rowling's story, but split between her version and an alternative challenging version of the story. There is a group of people who, overtly or covertly, support Voldemort, his mission, and wants him to return; and another group of people who staunchly support and believe Harry Potter. James is somehow caught up in proving the original version to be true. The fan fiction series ends with James, joining hands with Petra Morganstern (Voldemort's bloodline), succeeding in saving the wizarding world from evil forces.

Complying with the plotline of *Harry Potter*, this fan fiction follows the same style of Rowling's work. It seems to accept the magical world as such and does not challenge the events or ideologies in the canon much. It develops its own plot from the events described in the canon. In short, it does not change the history of the magical world, and is more like a sequel. In other

words, Lippert strictly sticks to the events in the canon and seems to admire the books while at the same time takes his liberty to add more to the canon.

***Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality* by Eliezer Yudkowsky**

If the *James Potter* series is written as a sequel, Eliezer Yudkowsky's fan fiction *Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality* is presented as an Alternate Universe fan fiction.

Published as a serial from February 2010 to March 2015, it is one of the most popular *Harry Potter* fan fictions on the website FanFiction.Net. Yudkowsky, who wrote under the pseudonym Less Wrong, brings science, philosophy and logical reasoning into Rowling's magical world, thereby giving it a scientific perspective. The story covers one year in Harry Potter's life, mostly revolving around the Philosopher's Stone and Voldemort's quest for it, but takes into account almost all the major events in Rowling's seven books.

Unlike Rowling's Harry Potter, this 11 year old boy is the adopted and well-cared son of Petunia Evans, who is married to an Oxford professor, Michael Verres-Evans, who showers him with books. By the age of 11, Harry James Potter-Evans-Verres is an expert in various scientific theories and rational thinking. A brief introduction to the book is given by the author himself in the initial page of the book: "Petunia married a biochemist, and Harry grew up reading science and science fiction. Then came the Hogwarts letter, and a world of intriguing new possibilities to exploit. And new friends, like Hermione Granger, and Professor McGonagall, and Professor Quirrell..." (1).

Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality explores concepts of heroism and the battle between good and evil. It takes us through Harry's arrival at Hogwarts and his attempts to understand the magical world based on his scientific, rational thinking. He quickly befriends Hermione Granger, who is in Ravenclaw House (not Gryffindor), and Draco Malfoy. Ron

Weasley is a minor character, with less than three scenes in the whole fan fiction. Harry's initial weeks at Hogwarts are spent with him exhibiting the powers and possibilities of Muggle science to Draco Malfoy. After teaching him about DNA, Harry eventually succeeds in convincing Draco that the idea of the superiority of the purebloods in the magical world is, in fact, a myth. Not ready to accept anything without a logical, scientific explanation, Harry works with Hermione to understand the underlying principles behind magic through various scientific experiments. Meanwhile, Harry finds a mentor figure in Professor Quirrell. Unlike Rowling's Harry, who finds the paternal protection in Albus Dumbledore, the head master, this Harry develops an emotional bond with Quirrell. Over the course of the novel, it turns out that Quirrell was in fact Lord Voldemort himself in disguise. Voldemort, using Quirrell's body, is trying to steal the Philosopher's Stone, which would grant him immortality. This final turn of events is distantly similar to Rowling's *The Philosopher's Stone*. Here, however, Harry and Voldemort go through the seven tasks set by the Hogwarts professors for the Stone's protection, together. While in the final task, Dumbledore turns up to save Harry (who was by now threatened with the death of all Hogwarts students by Voldemort) but ends up sacrificing himself for the same. Voldemort forces Harry to help him retrieve the Stone. Once he had the stone, he prepares to kill Harry. However, a novel magic that the young boy had discovered with the combining of Muggle Science and the magical branch of Transfiguration, and that which he had not discussed with Quirrell, saves him. Voldemort is defeated. Harry, joining hands with Hermione, takes the philosopher's stone to use it for the well-being of the wizarding and the Muggle worlds.

Unlike the *James Potter* series, Yudkowsky's fan fiction challenges many concepts in Rowling's books. It does not seem to admire the canon text, but rather takes this as an opportunity to question the absurdity of the magical world. Yudkowsky changes many events in

the canon to suit the plot of his fan fiction. There are changes in characters as well, which will be explored in detail in later chapters. Overall, the fan fiction has presented the magical world as much more dark and evil than that presented by Rowling.

The fan fiction selected for this research are evidently results of the writers being part of the larger *Harry Potter* fandom and the frequent interactions between them and other fan readers. Both Lippert and Yudkowsky directly address the readers as fans of Rowling's story through their 'Note to Reader' and the epigraphs for each chapter. On the surface level, these fan fiction probe into certain issues that are both implicitly and explicitly manifest in the source texts. However, it is worth noting here that the select fan fictions are quite opposing in their tone and attitude towards their source texts. While Lippert's fan fiction seems to adore Rowling's story, Yudkowsky's fan fiction has a more sceptical tone to it and frequently questions the ideas in *Harry Potter*.

Fan communities and fan fiction communities are the result of the collective efforts of fans who struggle to represent themselves through counter-narratives. There is a resistance to the idea of a single narrative through multiple fan fiction of the same text. The process of rewriting the original author's narratives is mostly aimed to reflect the diversity in experience and thus to assert one's existence in a world which refuses to provide voice or space for the marginalized.

Fan fiction is usually criticized for its quality of writing and its content as well. The age of the fan fiction writers and readers (which are mostly in their teens and tweens) are also under criticism for its lack of maturity. As a result, there are many stereotypes associated with fan fiction, its consumers as well as its producers. Henry Jenkins, in *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (1992), while agreeing that there is a factual basis for this

stereotyping, also argues that the anxiety caused due to the questioning of a dominant cultural norm causes one to put up defenses. Hence, negative stereotyping and rejection is mostly a defensive strategy against the anxiety. In his own words,

The fans' transgression of bourgeoisie taste and disruption of dominant cultural hierarchies insures that their preferences are seen as abnormal and threatening by those who have a vested interest in the maintenance of those standards (even by those who may share similar tastes but express them in fundamentally different ways) ... (17)

Despite the negative responses and stereotyping from outside, fan fiction and fan communities have only grown exponentially over the years. Fan fiction does not claim themselves to be an autonomous work of art. In fact, they celebrate the fact that they do not stand alone and always acknowledges its source. Familiarity with the source text is not always essential for understanding the fan fiction. For most writers, fan fictions become a platform for first attempts at writing. Fans can write on hitherto unexplored dimension of a text that they find interesting, without being conscious of the issues of class, caste, race, gender, sexuality, and the quality of writing as well as the content. "The majority of this not-for-profit writing is written by women, or if not by women, then by people who are willing to be (mis)taken for women" (Jamison 32). Matters like gender or sexuality online are not as transparent as it seems be. Questioning the prevailing notion regarding gender and sexuality has long been part of the tradition of fan fiction (especially through slash fictions). They have even been used as a means of rebellion. Jamison observes that "...there are all kinds of possibilities we might like to imagine or look in on, even (especially?) where preference or plumbing would preclude our actual participation" (32). Hence, Sherlock Holmes is portrayed as madly in love with his investigation partner John

Watson. And Harry Potter and Draco Malfoy, the arch-enemies in Rowling's books, are shipped together.

The right way to interpret a given text is almost always influenced by the particular identity of the fan that places him or herself within a particular community. Henry Jenkins maintained that this is part of the socialization process where fans would be familiar with the conventions and practices within the fan community. He observes that it is the frequent interaction with the fan readers that shapes the fan writers' perceptions, which closely conforms to the fan community's reading (*Textual Poachers* 19). It is, however, an obvious fact that all fans within the same community may not respond the same way. Nevertheless, as Lucy Bennet says in her article, "Tracing *Textual Poachers*: Reflections on the Development of Fan Studies and Digital Fandom" (2014), every fan community usually accept a 'right way' of approaching a text, though this may be negotiated within the fandom as well as between the fans and the producers (13). Fan texts are the outcomes of the process through which a fan reader transform into a fan fiction writer.

The research aims to look at how this transformation occurs. For this purpose, one would have to probe into the responses that a reader would have to a fiction and how the psyche is involved in the expression of the responses. Hence, this research has adopted literary theories such as the reader-response theory, psychoanalytic theories as well as psychoanalytic reader-response theories for inquiring into the mechanisms behind the transformation from reader to writer.

With the theories like New Criticism and Formalism in the 20th century, literary criticism turned its focus from authors and their intentions to the literary work. The first half of the century

saw the author as merely the constructor of the work. The reader-response theory, which was gaining popularity by the 1930s, held that the reader was equally important while analyzing a literary work. Readers are not passive consumers of the meanings presented through the text. In fact, it is the active response of the readers that help in generating meaningful interpretations of a text. Louis Rosenblatt, in 1937, had argued that the process of reading is a unique experience that occurs between the reader and the literary work. Both the reader and the literary work act upon each other. The experience is unique because the reader brings in his or her own personal beliefs and subjective understandings in order to comprehend the text. Roland Barthes, in his 1967 essay, "Death of the Author", famously declared that the reader is born with the death of the author. The author, in other words, has no say in the meaning of the text penned by him or her. The reader is the source of the multiple meanings generated by a text. Later critics rejected the absolute autonomy of the text. The text is dependent on the reader's active involvement.

Stanley Fish, another reader-response theorist, understands reading as a process in which the reader is continuously constructing meanings and interpretations, only to re-construct them in favour of a new one, based on the hints provided by the language of the text. In his essay, "Is There a Text in this Class?" (1980), Fish gives the anecdote of a student and his colleague, who is asked this question, to illustrate how readers can come up with multiple interpretations of the same text based on how they comprehend a given situation. He explains that it is the result of many misreading as well as pre-readings that leads one to different interpretations.

Wolfgang Iser opined that every text has potential for multiple meanings. However, the text itself is capable of establishing certain limitations and norms so that the reader does not go astray to an unrelated meaning, but is lead to a configurative, acceptable one. In other words, the text is capable of manipulating the reader into certain responses, to an extent. In his 1972 essay,

“The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach”, Iser argues that the evaluation of a text must be based on both the text as well as the response it evokes in the reader. Picking up hints from the sentences of the text, the reader may have certain expectations, which may be modified and may be reflected upon as the reading progresses. Iser points out that reading is not always a smooth process. The reader may be interrupted by the text. There are always some unwritten parts in a text. These interruptions are what Iser calls the “gaps” (285). The gaps allow the reader to ponder upon the text and explore its various interpretations. The text inherently allows these multiple meanings, thereby fulfilling its potential. The reader fills in the gaps with his or her own imagination, to bring out a consistent meaning to the text. Also, the readers’ hunger for creativity is satisfied.

As discussed above, the reader response critic looks into the response generated in a reader while in the act of reading. Critics also examined the mental process occurring behind the production of meaning, when the reader encounters a text on various levels. They began to analyze the role of the unconscious part of the psyche in the interpretation of the text. This led to psychoanalytic reader-response criticism. Psychoanalysis, although not developed as a literary theory but as a method of therapy, has been largely used in literature for the interpretation and analysis of texts. It looks at the surface content of a text and aims to bring out the covert or unconscious content. This aids in disclosing the repressed desires and fantasies of an individual, or, in case of fictions, the writer. Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, elaborated on his theories of the various parts of the human mind, in the early 20th century. In “From the History of an Infantile Neurosis” (2005), he proposed that the mind has a tripartite structure consisting of the id (containing the psychic instincts), ego (embodies our reality) and super-ego (stands for morality and social acceptance) (17). Freud had proposed his theories as a treatment for mental

illnesses and also to explain the various human behaviours. However, his ideas were largely taken up later by scholars both within and outside the field of psychoanalysis.

In another essay, “Creative Writers and Daydreaming” (1949), Freud explores the connection between dreams, daytime fantasies, and literary constructions and attempts to isolate the psychological processes that cause these forms of fantasy exploration, hoping to discover the root of the human need for fantasy. He opines that fantasy literature is designed to serve certain functions like wish-fulfilment, symbolic confrontation with repressed memories or guidance towards psychological growth. What are represented in these fantasies are the manifestations of the repressed desires of the unconscious mind. Fantasies allow readers to express negative emotions and to reconcile inner anxieties within the conscious. He further suggests that, as a child grows into an adult, it is the need for acceptance from the society around and an element of shame that makes a man drop his child’s play and eventually the habit of day-dreaming. However, the artist somehow transcends these impediments and succeeds in achieving a pleasure in the psychic fantasies.

Norman Holland, the American literary critic who largely focused on psychoanalysis and reader-response theories, draws a lot of his own theories based on Freud’s concepts in psychoanalysis. If Freud explored the act of writing, Holland applied almost the same principles to comprehend the act of reading. He was of the opinion that the meanings generated by the reader, while in the reading process, are heavily influenced by certain psychic desires and drives; and hence, one can analyze the psychological response of a reader by analyzing their readings. Holland provides a model of this psychoanalytic reading in his 1968 book *The Dynamics of Literary Response*. According to this model, the psychic fantasies within the reader are

introjected onto the text by the reader. It is then modified by the defense mechanisms of the ego and super ego parts of the psyche into an acceptable interpretation.

The interpretation that the reader brings would be a reflection of his or her own identity. Based on Freud's theories, Holland holds that the ego protects the id and has the function of bringing the readers to a level of comfort. Once the ego defends the psychic fears and desires in a satisfactory way, the reader would now readily introject his desires and fears (the psychic fantasies) in a socially acceptable manner, onto the text. The resultant interpretation would be, according to Holland, a transformed one. Holland understands the process of interpretation in these three stages – the defense mode, the fantasy mode and the transformation mode. The main motive, all the while in the act of reading and meaning-generation, is to maintain the psychological equilibrium of the reader so that the guilt and anxiety-generating fantasies are not acknowledged, yet are satisfied. The psychological dimensions of the meanings generated are not obvious to the reader because the ego has succeeded in disguising them into intellectual or aesthetic form that is socially acceptable, so that the reader is not alarmed. Holland believes that the interpretation a reader develops may or may not tell us much about the text, but it can tell us a lot about the reader's psychology. Since this research delves into the psychology of both the reader and writer, it seems suitable to apply Norman Holland's psychoanalytic reader-response theories for the analysis of the select primary texts, along with Freud's theories in psychoanalysis as well as the concepts in reader-response proposed by Iser, Fish and others.

This thesis probes into the psychology of the reader and also the psychology of the writer, using the literary theories discussed above. In order to trace the progression from fan reader to fan fiction writer, the thesis is divided into three core chapters (besides the introduction and conclusion). It is assumed that the fan reader, while transforming into the state of fan fiction

writer, progresses through a step-by-step process. The fan reader would proceed from reading to pondering upon the text in depth and then, later, move onto writing. This is like a travel or a venture into the depths of the source texts as well as the psyche of the reader and writer. Hence, the core chapters have been titled according to the phase of transformation.

The first chapter, titled “The Pre-Venture Phase”, looks at the initial stage of reading where the fan reader responds to the source text. It elaborates on the conscious and unconscious experiences and the state of active imagination of the fan reader. It is a psychoanalytically-oriented analysis of the reader’s response to a source text. Theories of psychoanalysis, reader-response and fan studies are taken in this chapter to evaluate the role of the gaps in the source text and also the role of the unconscious mind in influencing the response of the reader. This chapter also attempts to understand the nature of the bonding between a fan reader and the source text. Also, the central fantasy working within the fan reader is pin pointed here.

The second core chapter, titled “The Venture Phase”, refers to the next stage of progression, where the fan reader has noticed the gaps within the source texts and is in need of exploring the gaps further. It looks at how the nature of the relationship between the fan reader and source text would change and also how and why the fan reader would assume agency over the source text and develop a fiction based on it. In the light of the select fan fiction, this chapter brings out the psychological development of the fan reader into fan fiction writer. The chapter also points out how the fan reader progresses through the initial stages of oral and anal psychosexual development.

The third core chapter, titled “The Post-Venture Phase”, looks at the final stage of transformation, where the writer has converted his ideas into written text. The fan fiction texts

are regarded as the point of convergence of the fan reader and fan fiction writer, and hence, they are considered for discerning the final phases in depth. Theories proposed by Holland, Freud, Donald Winnicott and others have been taken into account to understand the psychological aspects of creative writing. The central fantasy detected within the fan reader in the initial pre-venture phase, is noted to be manifested in the fan fiction as well. The chapter highlights how the further progression in psychosexual development is important for the fan reader to transform into fan fiction writer.

The concluding chapter of the thesis summarizes the three phases and addresses the research questions raised posed at the outset of this thesis. The psychological aspects of the gaps and the reasons behind the choosing of them by the fan reader are explained briefly. Also, the role of the text in triggering the imagination of the reader, in guiding and manipulating the reader into certain meanings are explored.

The concluding chapter further highlights the relevance of this research. It elaborates on how the thesis assists in breaking the stereotypes regarding creative writing. The thesis also proposes to promote an interdisciplinary approach to understand the mechanisms behind creative writing, through the example of fan fiction. Fan fictions bring out the social collaborative nature of the act of creative writing on the surface level, yet it has many deep psychological aspects which are explored in this research. The conclusion is followed by recommendations, highlighting the future scope of research in this area.

CHAPTER I

THE PRE-VENTURE PHASE

To trace the transformation of the fan reader to fan fiction writer, it is essential to understand both the reader's surface-level engagement and the underlying psychological processes. Reading is the first and inevitable act before venturing into the process of writing. This is in the initial phase of the transformation and hence is named the pre-venture phase. In the pre-venture phase, the reader is in the state of active imagination and reads a literary work, enjoying it aesthetically and also deciphering its meaning at the same time. He or she is intellectually and emotionally involved with the text. This is a phase where the reader decides whether the fiction is worth reading (perhaps, more than once), and whether he or she loves it or not. The response of the reader to the source text (here, the *Harry Potter* books) and also the psychological processes while reading are important here. To explore this phase in greater depth, it is essential to examine the distinction between a casual reader and a fan reader, as well as the dynamics of interaction between the reader and the text.

Reading, a dynamic act, is an active transaction between an individual and a text. A text is not simply the words written on the pages. It can be in any form, in any medium. It is any form of communication, be it on a page or a mobile screen or even a voice message. However, any text that one produces is always intertwined with and situated within its particular socio-cultural background. Text comes alive only when a reader interacts with it (Rosenblatt 35). It is through the reader that the text develops a meaning. Otherwise, it is mere words on a page. So, to locate the meaning of a text, one must look at the response of the reader and their transactions with the text. The author, as Roland Barthes has established in his phenomenal essay, "Death of the

Author” (1967), has no authority over the meaning of the text (148). The reader depends on the text to decipher the meaning out of it. The process of meaning deciphering is vital in reading. The reader has to pay attention to the linguistic structures and also, at the same time, fill in certain gaps within the text in order to make sense of what is being read. A meaning is constructed, that he or she assumes to be equivalent to the intended meaning sent out by the author of the text.

Wolfgang Iser speaks about the role of the text and the reader in defining the meaning of a text, in his essay “The Reading Process” (1972). Iser, similar to Rosenblatt, opines that the text becomes alive only when the reader meets with it actively, making use of the various perspectives that the text offers. Thus, it is through the reader that the dynamic nature of the literary text is revealed, and this awakens certain responses within the reader (280). The reader’s imagination must be active and creative to evoke responses. Otherwise, it would be only passive and unproductive reading.

The meanings deciphered from a text would be different for each reader. This is so because, the reader, here, pays attention to the specific signifiers within the text. Speaking in Saussurian terms, a text can be identified as a combination of the signified and the signifiers. Thus, the text becomes the “sign”. The signifiers are the words, gestures, and the like that one sees on the pages of the book. The signified is the specific context in which these signifiers make sense to the readers (“General Linguistics” 2013). Wolfgang Iser, in “The Role of the Reader in Fielding’s *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*” (1978), opines that reading is like a journey in which the reader is encouraged, by the occasional reflections of the author as well as the text, to develop a meaning to the text. The reflections by the author are, in fact, to be regarded as the resting places, says Iser. These resting places, which allow the actual reader space for his or her

reflections, are what he calls the “vacant pages” (34). Text usually opens up multiple ways for the reader for interpretation. In *S/Z* (1973), Roland Barthes had called such texts “writerly texts” (4). They require some effort from the part of the reader to understand the meaning (unlike readerly texts, which are straightforward and easy to grasp). One cannot derive an ultimate meaning for a writerly text and, hence, such texts allow readers to appreciate its plural nature.

While the role of the reader is important, the role of the text in the generation of meaning cannot be denied. According to Stanley Fish, it does not matter whether the reader is aware of the structure or discourse within the text or not. Any meaning that the reader deciphers would be “severely constrained” within the context of the text (“Is There a Text” 305). This is so because the sentences of a text are always placed within a particular discourse relevant to the text and creates meaning with the interaction between the sentences. In short, the text may lead the reader to certain meanings. Besides the readers’ own subjectivities, the context in which the words of the text are placed also has a role in deciding the meaning of the text. When it comes to the process of deciphering the meaning of the text, the influence of the author cannot be overruled either. The author’s ideology and identity would be reflected in the writings. These facts do matter to the readers, especially fan readers.

Not all readers turn into fan readers. Different readers engage with the same text in varying intensities. There are a lot of creativity and imagination involved in the act of reading, along with the curiosity of the reader. Reading, for many, is for pleasure and the need for escapism. It allows them to experience a life that is very much different from their own. Fans are those kinds of readers who engage with a particular text with intense imagination and have a higher level of emotional involvement. They also pay close attention to the minute details within

the text. This close reading enables them to question certain aspects, which may or may not be non-normative in the mainstream literary society.

Fans and fandom are not restricted to particular class, gender, sexual orientation or even a national identity. One becomes a fan of a text, not because of the place of its origin, but when the reader experiences a subjective moment of affection towards it regardless of the origin. This does not mean that such factors are not important. Instead, they are all positively contributing factors. Fans connect with the text by relating it to their own socio-cultural contexts. The digital world of today has made it difficult to draw any such boundaries. Also, there is no such thing as mainstream fan culture and peripheral fan culture, so far in the field of fan studies. They are all equal parts of one large culture which does not recognize thick boundaries of division. If at all separated, it is only due to the barriers of language, availability and accessibility. This too is being out of question in the digital world.

Henry Jenkins, in *Textual Poachers* (2012), refers to Michel de Certeau's comparison of active readers to nomads. Like nomads, active readers "poach" upon someone else's copyrighted works, use it for their own benefits and move on when they feel like it. However, a fan reader is not exactly like a nomad. They do not easily move on. They are serious members of a fandom who already has a deep interest in a particular object, like a fiction or a character. They mostly cling to this nurturing land. Like the genre of fan fiction, fan activities are also often marginalized and unacknowledged. But, unlike normal active readers, fan readers are more active and vocal regarding their opinions, capable of forming a community of their own, sharing the same interests and opinions; and, thereby, even capable of developing a fan culture. The act of encroaching into someone else's intellectual property, which may be arguably illegal, is given an aesthetic value. As Jenkins puts it, "fans are not unique in their status as textual poachers, yet,

they have developed poaching into an art form ..." (29). For Jenkins, fandom is a place where a text is both consumed and produced. The fandom becomes a platform for the formation of a community and a culture. The members in a fandom are committed to it and provide a stable support to its writers. Hence, this has become a good starting point for many of today's professional writers. Amateur writers could polish their writing skills and eventually establish themselves as good writers.

To call fans "poachers" is problematic. The term "poachers" refers to someone who enters and uses another person's property with or without the consent of the person in authority. The term implicitly gives another agency a superior position, a position from where they may impose their authority. In other words, the owner/author of the text may claim the right interpretation of the text. As far as the fan reader and writer are concerned, the author of the source text has no say in the interpretation or the meanings deciphered. The value of authorial meaning is rejected. There is no original or authentic meaning. There are only multiple versions of the same text. Nothing dominates the other. The idea that one type of meaning is valued over all the other types of interpretations is questioned through fan writings. This does not always mean that the meanings produced by the fans contradict that which is put forward by the author of the source text.

Since the publication of *The Philosopher's Stone* in 1997, J. K. Rowling's wizard story has captured and engaged the imagination of fans all over the world. Rather than being restricted to London or the European continent, Harry Potter has become a global hero within a very short period of time. This was mainly due to the huge fan base it had, and the rise of fan websites and fan communities that developed immediately following its publication. Although marketed as a young adult literature aimed for teenage readers, readers of all age groups were falling in love

with the magic of the wizarding world, irrespective of their age. Fans eagerly waited for the release of each book and sometimes wrote their own version of Harry Potter in the form of fan fiction.

1.1 Reader as the Receptive Generator of Meaning

Reading fantasy literature is a different experience, compared to other realistic or non-fictional works. Fantasy literatures have always been a subject of interest for theorists of psychoanalysis. Freud, in “Creative Writers and Day Dreaming” (1949), opines that fantasy literatures are designed such that our psychic desires are addressed and there is guidance for psychological growth. The artist is capable of transcending the impediments put forward by the psyche and thus succeeds in achieving pleasure on both conscious and unconscious levels (423). Reading always involves a roller-coaster ride of emotions. Fantasy literature is almost always far away from reality, with the magical and supernatural elements. Readers of fantasy stories usually anticipate and actively look forward to this anti-realistic nature of fantasy. They expect to be immersed in this illusion of magic, while reading novels like the *Harry Potter* books. The world that these books offered is one of such illusions, although Rowling did make sure to keep many elements realistic. But the reader is not expected to act on these emotions in real life. This allowance, or rather privilege, of inactivity is, perhaps, what prompts the reader to freely immerse themselves in the fantasy. They tend to accept this world without breaking the illusions. In other words, the readers subject themselves to what Samuel Taylor Coleridge has called the “willing suspension of disbelief” (*Biographia Literaria* 208). The reader would deliberately abstain from logically examining or criticizing the unreal aspects presented within the text, so that he or she can enjoy it. This is necessary to experience catharsis.

Norman Holland, in *Dynamics*(1968), inquires into how the reader allows this suspension of disbelief and the role of the text in this process. He observes, “What is harder to see, I think, is how deeply this conventional separation of action from literature reaches into our mental life” (72). The boundary between the reader (who is a separate self) and the text is blurred, when the disbelief is willingly suspended. Holland is of the opinion that, here after, it is the text that shapes the readers. The readers allow themselves to be passive so as to merge with the text and be a part of it. The text “has a kind of authority over its expectant audience” (84). However, this does not mean that the reader loses his or her autonomy. The merging with the text, in fact, causes the reader’s imagination to proliferate. Even though the reader may consciously wish to remain passive while reading (fantasy allows escapism), it is not always the case. The imagination within the reader becomes active, triggered by certain fantasies within the psyches. The boundaries between fantasies, desires and fears begin to blur. The readers’ mind is not relaxed but is working hard to decipher an acceptable meaning from the text. The author can guide the reader to certain interpretations through his or her words. However, these words are inert if they are not acted upon by a reader. In other words, the words on the page become a catalyst for the readers’ imaginations.

While reading a text like the *Harry Potter*, which can be categorized in the fantasy genre, the reader is experiencing something far from his reality, with the wizarding world, magic wands, spells and the Hogwarts School for magic. The privilege of not needing to experience the reality and the opportunity to immerse in a fantasy world would conveniently lead the reader to relax his or her mind and immerse themselves in the text. The reader, however, is not only in the receiving end of the text, but is, at the same time, forming his or her own unique text, through a process of expectations, retrospections and modifications (“The Reading Process” 287). As a

result, the text being formed within the reader would be different, in a way, from the one that the author originally created because the reader's own subjectivities come into play. However, this newly formulated text is conceived from the thoughts of the author. In other words, it is a relatively new fiction based on the text that he or she is reading. Iser has established that the text becomes alive only when the reader engages with it. Roland Barthes argued, earlier in 1967, that the author of the text has no authority or agency over the meaning of the text. Considering both perspectives, it can be concluded that the interpretation and meaning derived from the text are ultimately determined by the reader.

Norman Holland explains that every character, in a fiction, is basically a creation of the reader. The readers re-create the characters while attributing them with a sense of reality. Like the author uses the text and character as a tool to convey his or her fantasies, the characters are also used by the reader to fulfil their needs and desires. Holland says that this happens through the processes of introjection and projection (*Dynamics* 265). The reader is projecting onto the character his or her own desires, fears and other subjectivities, and is taking in from the character what his or her psyche is in need of. This is why each reader comprehends the same character in different ways. The characters encountered in a text are, in essence, constructs of one's own creation at a deeply personal level. The reader is creating a text of his own in his mental space, without actively identifying with the author, although he or she may internalize the author's thoughts. The process of identification with a character or event in a text is a highly subjective one. Identification, it can be said, is a process by which the readers experience the text as though it were really happening to them. It is important because it contributes to the development of the reader's self-identity. Identifying with the events and characters allows us to experience social reality from other perspectives and, thus, shape the development of self-identity and social

attitudes. This is an internal process, and not external or behavioural. The readers almost always do not realize the process of identification occurring within them.

What we perceive in a character- whether it be their speech, attire, or behaviour- reflects what we personally seek, while what we project onto the character is equally a product of our own interpretation. Holland observes that identification is a continuous process which occurs along with the moment the reader willingly suspends their disbelief (278). If the author has created a character in his text, the reader is also creating or recreating the character at a very personal level. “The characters are real or not real only as we endow the characters with our wishes and defenses. We are, in effect, partners with the artist” (280). Holland also suggests that the medium of the artists is not exactly the words he uses, but the mind of the readers – “and all the greater an artist is he – or any writer – because he creates us into creators” (280). The division between the concepts of author and reader is blurred here when the reader themselves shows capabilities of creators. Considering the aforementioned ideas of Barthes, Iser, Freud and Holland, it can be argued that both the reader’s mind and the text play equally significant roles in stimulating the reader’s imagination and thereby producing a meaningful interpretation.

Wolfgang Iser, in “The Reading Process” (1972), observes that every literary text is incomplete. It has many “unwritten parts”, which he calls the “gaps” in the text (280). The unwritten gaps leave a lot of space for the reader’s imagination. The text merely gives certain suggestions and direction, and the rest is left to the readers. The reader can, as Norman Holland would say in “Hamlet – My Greatest Creation” (1975), now explore several “semantic possibilities within a single thought”. Iser draws from Roman Ingarden to argue that a sentence in a text becomes meaningful only when it is related to the other sentences that precedes and follows it. This correlation between sentences is important to reveal the discourse in which they

are placed. The interaction between the sentences is offering the reader various perspectives. They also have the function of foreshadowing what is to come. This leads to an element of expectation on the reader's part. According to Iser, the expectations make the reader's imagination more active.

Expectations are not always fulfilled. While the reader progresses through his or her reading, the expectations are modified with the interaction among the sentences in the text. This may eventually result in surprises, amusements, or frustrations on the reader's mind:

While these expectations arouse interest in what is to come, the subsequent modification of them will also have retrospective effect on what has already been read. This may now take on a different significance from that which it had at the moment of reading. (Iser 283)

Rowling has left many things unexplained in her work. The reader of the *Harry Potter* novels would notice these incomplete elements, but put it in the back of their memory, as they are pursuing the story of Harry Potter. These incomplete parts may later be evoked, but within a different background.

Based on Iser's theory, the reader's experience can be succinctly summarized as follows. The reader starts out with some expectations and forms some illusions. As the reading process progresses, the expectations can be shattered. The reader would become aware of the illusions. What follows is the reader's consistent attempt to balance between establishing a configurative meaning and disruption of its consistency, which is caused by the gaps in the text. The interpretations and meanings that the reader makes out are "threatened ... by the presence of other possibilities of 'interpretations', and so there arise new areas of indeterminacy (though we

may only be dimly aware of them, if at all, as we are continually making ‘decisions’ which will exclude them)” (Iser 292-93).

The configurative meaning of a text is achieved when the reader, on a conscious level, mostly focuses on the explicit meanings and ideologies illustrated in the text. For reading of a fiction to progress, the reader must find some elements of wonder and rationality in it. Pure rationality and pure wonder is not advisable, as this would make reading dull and less pleasurable. Since it is a mixture of both, the reader will be enchanted and disenchanted by the text. This partial disenchantment is necessary for the reader to notice the gaps in the text and also to evoke responses to the ideologies.

Ideologies can be both explicit and implicit in a text. Whether a reader approves of an ideology encoded in a text or not, depends on the reader’s position, his or her subjectivities and how he or she relates to the text. It can so happen that the readers may collectively disapprove certain messages that are conveyed through the text and may focus on other aspects instead. This is evident in the controversies related to Albus Dumbledore’s administration of Hogwarts School. Albus Dumbledore, the headmaster of Hogwarts School, is seen as the hero and saviour of the wizarding world as he is the only wizard that Lord Voldemort ever feared. However, there are many instances in the novel where readers felt Dumbledore has failed as a headmaster, owing to the fact that students’ safety has always been in jeopardy at Hogwarts. Within the wizarding world, issues of societal oppression and discrimination, pure-blood superiority, corrupt politician and mismanaged administration, oppressive teaching practices all exist. These issues are addressed and criticized. These are a few instances of the explicit ideologies within the novels.

There are implicit ideologies too. Implicit ideologies are those ideas which the author assumes to be true. The relationships, for example, in *Harry Potter* are all heteronormative. Be it the Dursleys from the Muggle world or the Weasley's from the wizarding world, all are married and have children. Homosexual relationships (like that between Sirius Black and Remus Lupin) are only hinted and not elaborated upon. Harry, Ron and Hermione all end up married, have children and lead a happy life, as was described in the Epilogue of the series. The novels subtly suggest that the heteronormative, traditional family system is the one socially acceptable and the preferable one, as it leads to a happy, content life.

The question that arises here is how the ideologies propagated in the text are related to the gaps within it. The ideologies (either agreed by or questioned by the reader) serves as the socio-cultural aspects that the reader takes up at a conscious level, while delving into the gaps to satisfy certain psychic desires. In other words, they are the means to conceal the processes occurring at the unconscious level. While responding to a text, the reader may bring in minute details. With the instance of three students, who were given a clause in one of William Faulkner's short stories to respond, Norman Holland draws the conclusion that "we actively transact literature so as to re-create our own identities" ("Reading and Identity" 1998). The reader, while responding adopts certain "defensive and adaptive strategies" so that their deep inner fantasies are gratified and the fears are defeated, in an acceptable manner. This is what he called DEFTing (Defense, Expectation, Fantasy and Transformation).

According to Holland, DEFTing is a process that occurs at the point of intersection of the inner reality and outer reality. The text is the outer reality, which is a new experience for the reader. But the new experiences provided by the text are understood based on the personal identity of the individual reader. Our past experiences are brought to the new experiences. The

past does influence our understanding of the text. The responses arising from a reader are, in other words, the result of what the reader allows from the outer reality to enter his or her own mind (defenses), the expectations that the reader puts into the text being read, the meaning that the reader has endowed upon the text (transformation) and also what the reader has allowed to be outside, in a toned down acceptable way (fantasies). The reader's personality is being projected onto the work.

As personalities are specific to each reader, the same text yields multiple interpretations. Thus, one common, widely shared response to a text is not possible. Depending on the differences in their personalities, the reader's may feel dissatisfactions, or disagreements or a sense of incompleteness. However, as Holland's DEFTing theory indicates, the reader is always in search of pleasure from the text. It can be a pleasure that satisfies at an intellectual level, while his or her attention is focused on the explicit and implicit ideologies conveyed in the text. And, at the same time, the unconscious psychic desires also tend to influence the response of the reader. As Freud had explained earlier, the fantasies would seek a way to be expressed and gratified.

It can be asserted that the reader's emotional response to a work of fiction arises from the fantasies within the psyche, although the ego ensures that these fantasies remain implicit. It is the curiosity for intellectual content and the desire for emotional satisfaction that makes a reader to continue with a text, despite the disturbances caused by the gaps in the text. The need for pleasure is the motivating factor behind the demand for aesthetic and intellectual meaning from a text. The play with ideas and words is an additional source of pleasure, while reading. The reader is in search of a configurative, complete meaning, and hence tends to ignore the gaps. The gaps are put into the back of his or her memory, as per Iser's observations. The act of willing suspension of disbelief occurs because of this need for meaning that is both intellectually and

emotionally satisfying. The reader manages to handle the competing demands of the id and ego (Holland 179). The process of how the reader manages this will be explored now. The role of the ego in the transformation of the unconscious fantasies, ensuring they do not cause distress to the reader, will also be examined.

1.2 The Unconscious Fantasy of the Union of Binary Opposites

The gaps within the text can cause disturbances to the reader. Despite the distractions and discomfort, what prompts the reader to continue with the text, ignoring the gaps? Once the reader has merged himself or herself with the text, the next step that occurs in the psyche, according to Holland, is introjection. This means that the reader takes into oneself the feelings or emotions and other elements of the text. The central fantasy in the psyche also exerts pressure upon the mind. With the help of the ego, the reader would find ways to censor and analogize and, thereby, alter the forbidden fantasy in a defensive acceptable manner. “Once past the censor, at the ‘higher’ level, the level of conscious, intellecting ego, we perceive the literary work as separate, we think about it, we discover its meaning” (92). Thus, the meaning of the work is deciphered.

The deep inner fantasies within the reader must be gratified in some way so that text is enjoyed. DEFTing is a continuous process. It is now necessary to look into the kind of fantasy within the reader, which he or she strives to defend from the conscious self and, at the same time, gratify to attain pleasure. Sigmund Freud, in “From the History of Infantile Neurosis” (2005), describes the case of a “wolf-man”, from which he coined the term *Urszene*, meaning primal scene (160). He explains that the primal scene fantasy is important in the psychosexual development of a human being. It refers to the image, either actually observed or imagined by an infant, of a sexual union of the parents. An infant may perceive this scene as a violent, sadistic

act by the father upon the mother. Freud, based on his case study, observes that this would generate anxiety within the child, who is, at that age, unable to understand or cope with it. For the child, it may be a traumatic experience. He or she would find themselves to be helpless too as it is the parents who are involved in the act. Freud also points out that, despite the helplessness and anxieties, there is a possibility that the primal scene fantasy may evoke sexual excitation within the child. Since neither the sexual excitation nor the anxiety is acceptable, the child's mind may look for distractions. Thus, the defense mechanisms come into play. This is similar to the experience of the reader of a text. The primal scene fantasy also comes into play when a text is being engaged with by the fan reader, who would then look for certain defense mechanisms.

Norman Holland, in *Dynamics*, develops a model representing the psychological response of a reader to a literary text. He calls it the Fantasy-Defense model. Similar to his DEFTing theory, Holland illustrates that the meanings that a reader deciphers from a text is influenced by the motives that he or she would have within the psyche. There is a central fantasy within the unconscious mind, which is transformed such that the reader is not aware of it. The transformation is done with the use of certain defenses within the text. What the reader would consciously interpret as the meaning of the text is actually the transformed form of the fantasy from the psyche. Holland's Fantasy-Defense model will be quite useful in our analysis of *Harry Potter* books and the fan readers' response to them.

It would be helpful to look into the fantasy embedded within a text in order to understand the reader's response to it. The text's role in influencing the response of the reader must be understood. With the example of Matthew Arnold's *Dover Beach*, Holland illustrates that the form of the text is capable of putting the reader in a tranquil, satisfactorily peaceful state (105). Any kind of disturbances (caused due the gaps or the threat of the primal scene fantasy being

revealed) within the text is defended by a deviation into some other form. According to Holland, this kind of deviation enables the reader to return to the disturbances again (118). Besides this, the text always offers the reader an emotionally satisfying intellectual meaning that corresponds well with the ego part of the mind. This promise of intellectual meaning can hold the curiosity of the reader.

Holland explains that there are fantasies of gratification as well as fantasies associated with anxiety in a work of literature (*Dynamics* 293). The fantasy associated with anxiety and fear is easy to notice in the *Harry Potter* books. The theme of good versus evil is exhibited in every book. The union of the good and the evil (two binary opposites) is an exciting but frightening performance as far as the reader is concerned. It involves some kind of sadistic violence as well. Stories are capable of taking us back to our childhood situations and also help us to master those disturbing emotional situations by aesthetic and intellectual strategies. The merging of the binary opposites, the union of the good and the evil all can cause such a disturbance. Holland equates the position of the reader to that of a “child’s situation surrounded by big and manageable forces” (174-175). The reader is like a child, involved with a primal scene fantasy, who cannot control the direction of the events in the text. The fan reader of *Harry Potter* would also be in a similar situation, when the text hints at possible union of that which ought not to unite, the good and the evil.

In the first two books of the series, the return of Lord Voldemort is thwarted successfully. However, in the fourth book, Voldemort rises back to power. What is interesting to note here is that Voldemort’s return is aided by Harry’s own blood. “*B-blood of the enemy ... forcibly taken ... you will ... resurrect your foe*” (*The Goblet of Fire* 540). The readers, here, are witnessing a violent union of the evil and the innocent, fuelled with the sadistic attitude of Peter Pettigrew.

Here after, the series turns much darker in its theme. The prophecy and the truth behind Voldemort's hunt of the one year old Harry is revealed at the end of *The Order of the Phoenix*. Professor Trelawney's prophecy hints into this anxiety-arousing fantasy: "... and either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives..." (628). The good side and the evil side cannot exist together. One must destroy the other. It is this union of the binary opposites that arouses the fear within the readers.

However, this union is stopped using certain barriers Rowling uses throughout the series. This is explicit in the text. Within the reader, the fear of this union is aroused. There is anxiety about the consequences of a clash between the good and the evil. Deep within the psyche, such scenarios can revoke childhood situations, thereby causing disturbances. It is now necessary that the ego intervene and distract the conscious mind so as to protect the reader from feelings of anxiety and guilt. The necessary distractions, or the defensive managements, can also come from within the text.

Language is the means through which the inner desires are expressed. It is through language the defensive mechanisms are applied and fantasy is managed, via "pseudo-logic that offers mastery of the fantasy material" (*Dynamics* 158). Holland observes that language can gratify and/or violate our expectations. Either way, both are pleasurable to the reader in its own ways. The fantasies concealed in the text as well as the fantasies within the reader are mastered using the defense mechanisms through language. The emotional responses that the reader has towards a work are due to these fantasies, although the ego makes sure that the fantasies are not made explicit. As previously noted, it is the curiosity for intellectual content and the need for emotional satisfaction that makes a reader continue with the text, despite the disturbances caused by the gaps in the text.

Every time there is a possibility of union between Harry and Voldemort, his parents, come in between. Lily Potter dies, protecting one year old Harry from Voldemort's killing curse. Harry is again guided by his parents in the graveyard scene in *The Goblet of Fire* and also in the Forbidden Forest just before he goes up to Voldemort in the last book:

“You’ll stay with me?”

“Until the very end,” said James.

“They won’t be able to see you?” asked Harry.

“We are part of you,” said Sirius.

“Invisible to anyone else.” Harry looked at his mother.

“Stay close to me,” he said quietly. And he set off.

(The Deathly Hallows 700)

There is tension on the conscious level, for the return of Voldemort to power is terrifying. There is also tension, at the same time, at the unconscious level.

In *The Goblet of Fire*, with Harry's miraculous escape from the graveyard with Cedric Diggory's dead body, the union of the binary opposites is postponed, granting relief to the reader. As soon as he hears that Lord Voldemort is back to power, Albus Dumbledore calls back his secret organization, The Order of the Phoenix, to fight back Voldemort and his allies. The presence of the headmaster himself is an assurance for the characters and the readers that such a clash would not occur. If Dumbledore and the members of the Order are accepting the possibility of such a union, there is also denial of such a possibility through characters like Cornelius Fudge,

Dolores Umbridge and the majority of the wizarding world. However, at the end of *The Half-Blood Prince*, Dumbledore dies and this assurance is no longer there. There is fear throughout the wizarding world. When the seventh book of the series begins, there are a lot of uncertainties regarding the safety of the wizarding world. The Order of the Phoenix is still fighting its war to protect the wizarding world as well as the Muggle world. However, these defenses seem to be weak with the growing power of Voldemort.

This leads to the introduction of the Deathly Hallows. Believed to be mythical by the larger magical world, the Deathly Hallows are the three objects (the Resurrection Stone, the Invisibility Cloak and the Elder Wand) which eventually aid Harry in his defeat of Voldemort and his allies. Each of the Horcrux is destroyed at different times in the book. However, the union of the binary opposites cannot be postponed infinitely even within the narrative of the book.

In *The Deathly Hallows*, along with the tale of Severus Snape's true loyalty, it is revealed that a part of Voldemort's soul has always resided within Harry. The good and the evil have been united long back. This was very well veiled in the earlier books, although the scar connection between Harry and Voldemort pointed to this union. Again, the reader is given a glimpse of this unconscious fantasy. The text, again, provides a way out of this unacceptable union. The last Horcrux, the one within Harry himself, is destroyed with the combined power of the Deathly Hallows. The possibility of the union of good and evil is a factor that can cause anxiety and fear within the reader. However, the knowledge of the Deathly Hallows is again a reassurance for the conscious and unconscious mind of the reader that such a union can be thwarted. Albus Dumbledore, the Order of the Phoenix and the Deathly Hallows are all tools, or rather the formal defensive mechanisms, to stop the mingling, or undo the mingling, of the good and the evil.

Despite the strong barriers, the narrative of *Harry Potter*, again leads to this union towards the end. This union, scary and unacceptable to both the characters and the readers, is given a proper reason through the memory of Severus Snape. The final truth is revealed to Harry in “The Prince’s Tale”, where Dumbledore tells Snape that Harry must be killed by Voldemort himself to destroy the part of Voldemort’s soul within Harry (685). Harry is forced to join Voldemort in the Forbidden Forest. The reader is provided with a convincing reason, within the wizarding world, for such a union and the text itself undo the effect of this rather shocking exposure, so that the reader is guarded from the anxiety arising within the mind. There is relief on the part of the reader, who is now reassured.

With the anecdote of the young man and the old witch, Holland demonstrates that the transformations of the unconscious fantasies are reversed in such a way that the fearful elements are turned into desirable form. In literature, the unconscious fantasy is transformed so that a socially acceptable interpretation is possible for the reader and does not cause distress on a conscious level (*Dynamics* 27-28). Hence, Harry’s meeting with Voldemort within the Forbidden Forest becomes a necessary evil in the story. It is evil because it is the violent and sadistic union of binary opposites, and necessary because it is the only way to destroy Voldemort.

Norman Holland’s Fantasy-Defense model shows that there is an interaction between the psychic drives within the reader and the psychic drives embodied in a text. The meanings that a reader deciphers from a text are the result of this interaction followed by a transformation into an acceptable form. If the defenses provided by the text are such that the fantasy is well transformed in an acceptable way, the reader may like the text and agree with it to a great extent. If it is not so, the reader may dislike or have some disagreements. In other words, the defenses offered must be morally and intellectually satisfying to the reader. Weak defenses would not satisfy the reader so.

This can even be associated with negative reactions like anxiety, boredom or guilt. This can cause the reader to reject the work altogether.

The basic pattern, from a psychoanalytic perspective, followed in each *Harry Potter* book is one in which the psychic impulse is immediately followed by a necessary defense. The response of the reader to *Harry Potter* is not merely at the conscious level but also from an unconscious place. The response is both to the happenings in the book from their socio-cultural point of view and also to the anxiety-arousing fantasy within the psyche. This anxiety-arousing fantasy is depicted in the books as well in a transformed form. This may leave the reader satisfied and free of guilt or fear, as illustrated above. As Holland puts it:

The transforming of a central fantasy toward meaning creates a far more orderly mental process in us than we usually experience ... our effects, when we respond to literature seem deeper and larger- because we bring to a work of literature a longer, deeper range of response (283).

A primal scene fantasy, of an unacceptable dangerous union, is transformed through disillusionment and reassurance. The unconscious contents become more vivid in the final scenes of each book. It begins with a tension on the conscious level, and then dips into unconscious fears and horror, and finally there is reassurance in the form of denial or partial acceptance. Since the reader is guaranteed of protection and reassurance, he or she would be more prepared to delve into the unconscious aspects.

The final adventure in every book of *Harry Potter* is set in deep, mysterious places, be it the several floors below the trapdoor in Harry's first year, the Chamber of Secrets in his second year, The Shrieking Shack, the Graveyard, the Department of Mysteries, the Cave or the

Forbidden Forest. In order to reach these places, Harry, Ron and Hermione have to get past a lot of obstacles also. This adds to the depth and inaccessibility of these mysterious places. What is interesting to note here is that each of these places take Harry and his friends away from their normal world. The graveyard in *The Goblet of Fire* is a blend of both the non-magical and magical worlds. The other final settings, despite them being connected to the magical world, leave the characters disconnected to it. They are places from where Harry and others cannot easily go back and has to face their worst fears. Each of these places equate to the nature of the unconscious mind, where all the deep desires are hidden yet yearning for a release. The final settings in the *Harry Potter* books always hint at the dangerous union of the good and the evil. Harry has to face his worst fear. He has to fight Voldemort either to thwart his return to power or to escape his murder attempts when risen to power or to destroy him forever. Also, there are violence and sadism in all these scenes. The greedy manipulating Professor Quirrell, the cunning young Tom Riddle in the Chamber of Secrets, Peter Pettigrew in the Graveyard, the Death Eaters in the Department of Mysteries and also in the Battle of Hogwarts scene all add to the elements of violence and sadism. The final settings are, in other words, physical spaces within the narrative of *Harry Potter* that leads the plot of each book into a conclusion, and at the same time, has the possibility of being a metaphorical space, hinting at the unconscious mind. It is here that the psychic desires embedded within the text become much more explicit.

The final settings in each *Harry Potter* may be understood as a thirdspace that is twice removed from the readers' reality. Edward Soja, in *Thirdspace* (1996), defines the thirdspace as an alternative way of understanding the spatiality taking us beyond the restrictions of binary opposites. It is a space that has the potential to engage with the complex and dynamic nature of spatial phenomena. Thirdspace is a more holistic approach to understand the power dynamics

within a space (57). When Harry Potter is within the Chamber of Secrets in his second year or is magically transported to the graveyard in *The Goblet of Fire* where he is forced to fight Voldemort, he is in a space where the rules of neither the magical world nor the non-magical world apply. The Graveyard is situated in such a space where both the magical and non-magical worlds are blended. The action occurs at the grave of Tom Riddle Senior, Lord Voldemort's father, close to his place of origin; but at the same time, it is a space where one of the most evil magic occurs, the murder of Cedric Diggory and the rebirth of Lord Voldemort:

Voldemort began to laugh. He raised his wand. "*Crucio!*"

The Death Eater on the ground writhed and shrieked; Harry was sure the sound must carry to the houses around. . . . Let the police come, he thought desperately . . . anyone . . . anything . . .

(*The Goblet of Fire* 545-546)

Harry's wishing for the non-magical police to rescue him from the evil magic hints at the blending of both magical and non-magical spaces. It is in such Thirdspace that the deep psychic fantasies are made explicit and delved upon. This can cause anxiety to the readers as well. Norman Holland, in *Dynamics*, observes that any kind of disturbance is defended by a deviation into some other form. The plot, characters and the form of the text all may act as defensive modifications of the psychic drives. In the graveyard scene, when Voldemort and Harry begin to duel and their wands are magically connected, the reader, from a psychoanalytic perspective, is witnessing a violent union of the binary opposites. Here, the text itself brings in the most effective defense mechanism so that Harry Potter finds a way out to escape from Voldemort and also the reader is saved from the generated anxiety:

And then an unearthly and beautiful sound filled the air. . . it was coming from every thread of the light-spun web vibrating around Harry and Voldemort. It was a sound Harry recognised, though he had heard it only once before in his life . . . phoenix song.

It was the sound of hope to Harry . . . (559)

Albus Dumbledore later explains to Harry that, since Voldemort and Harry's wands are made out of the same material, they cannot work against each other (586). The psychic fantasy of the union of binary opposites is glimpsed, or perhaps briefly explored, and then veiled with the aid of a convincing defensive mechanism from within the text.

The fantasies are transformed in such a way that the reader does not feel the guilt or anxiety. The various defenses itself can increase the intensity of pleasure. This increase in pleasure allows one for a still greater pleasure through gratification of unconscious drives. And this is why the reader is willingly suspending the disbelief. As Holland says, the form is used as defense against the revelation of the unconscious content, but this would only double the pleasure and gratify the psychic needs. In other words, the defenses lead to a pleasure. As a result, the reader would be committed to the text.

In short, the reader is making sense of a text by mastering the psychic drives and fantasies, although partially. Also, the different meanings that different readers bring out of the same text are, in fact, the different ways they make the fantasy within the text and within themselves acceptable to the ego. The meanings deciphered from a text are, therefore, ultimately aimed for fantasy gratification.

The intellectual meaning from a text helps to keep our ego engaged. Our conscious mind is focused on finding solutions to our curiosity and thus is distracted from the "less relevant, less

presentable thoughts” (Holland 164). The literal meaning is satisfying at the conscious level and it distracts the readers’ attention from the real source of pleasure so that there is not any guilt or fear. Our social and moral inhibitions are displaced with the demand for intellectual meaning. Outward actions (like the hunt for Horcruxes and the assembling of the Deathly Hallows) become a substitute for the unrevealed inner emotions. The intellectual meaning contributes to the sublimation of the unconscious content. This is done by frequent denial of the content, despite the recognition of it. This can be illustrated with an example from *The Order of the Phoenix*.

After Arthur Weasley is attacked by Voldemort’s snake, Dumbledore realizes that there is strange connection between Harry and Voldemort. He instructs Severus Snape to train Harry in Occlumency, a magical method to defend one’s mind from external penetration (394). As Severus Snape puts it:

“The curse that failed to kill you seems to have forged some kind of connection between you and the Dark Lord. The evidence suggests that at times, when your mind is most relaxed and vulnerable - when you are asleep, for instance - you are sharing the Dark Lord’s thoughts and emotions. The Headmaster thinks it inadvisable for this to continue. He wishes me to teach you how to close your mind to the Dark Lord.” (403).

The intellectual meaning projected out for the engagement of the conscious mind is that Occlumency is to stop Voldemort from using Harry as a spy upon Dumbledore’s secret organization, Order of the Phoenix. However, from the above words, it is obvious that it was important to stop the mingling of the good and evil. It is a merging that occurs when Harry is

asleep, or, in other words, it occurs in the unconscious realm. This is dangerous and unacceptable, and must be stopped. Harry, however, is reluctant to take the Occlumency classes. The reason he says is that he did not want to be trained with Snape due to their mutual hatred. However, later he almost admits that he did not want to completely close this connection with Voldemort, despite Snape no longer being his trainer. Harry is more curious to know what is behind the door of the Department of Mysteries that he always sees in his dream (436). It is also interesting that every time Harry has these strange dreams, he takes the position of Voldemort. When Mr. Weasley is attacked, Harry was Nagini (Voldemort's snake who was sent by Voldemort on the mission). It is Harry who passes through each door in his dreams, not Voldemort. Although, while awake, Harry seems to regret having the dreams and is also aware of its danger, while asleep he appears excited to be a part of it.

The presence of the unconscious desire for the union is again manifested when Harry has the dream of Sirius' capture, while he fell asleep in History of Magic examination. The meaning projected by the text is that Sirius Black is in danger and must be saved. Harry, since the moment he woke up from the dream, has an unstoppable urge to go to the Department of Mysteries (which represents the unconscious realm and the place for a union of the opposites). There are interventions from the ego and super ego in the form of Hermione's doubts and Umbridge's suspicions:

“But... Harry, think about this,” said Hermione, taking a step towards him,
 “it's five o'clock in the afternoon... the Ministry of Magic must be full of
 workers... how would Voldemort and Sirius have got in without being seen?
 Harry... they're probably the two most wanted wizards in the world... you
 think they could get into a building full of Aurors undetected?”

“I dunno, Voldemort used an Invisibility Cloak or something!” Harry shouted.

“Anyway, the Department of Mysteries has always been completely empty whenever I’ve been -”

“You’ve never been there, Harry,” said Hermione quietly. “You’ve dreamed about the place, that’s all.” (548)

When obstacle comes in the form of Umbridge, Harry and Hermione find a way out by trapping Umbridge in the Forbidden Forest. Eventually, Harry is succumbing to the pull of the unconscious desire. He manages to go the Department of Mysteries, despite a lot of obstacles on the way. Again, once he is in the place, he realizes that Sirius was never there and he has pulled himself and his friends into danger. The capture of Sirius Black was just a pretence put forward by Voldemort to lure Harry into the Department of Mysteries. Here, once again, a series of defenses in the form of the fight with the Death Eaters, the members of the Order of the Phoenix who come to save the children and Dumbledore are evident.

Throughout the final chapters of this book, it is evident that as soon as the protagonist is close to the gratification of a psychic impulse, there is some kind of defense put in by the text. There is building up of anxiety and fear within the reader, followed by some relief. This is both at the conscious and unconscious level. And this continues as a cycle. According to Holland, the reader of a literary text is given a glimpse of the desire, and then there is distraction using some intellectually engaging defense, thereby diminishing its priority for the time being. The focus of the reader shifts to the intellectual meaning and undoes the effect caused by the unconscious desire. In the *Harry Potter* series, this is a long and repeated process. Similar examples as above can be cited from each book. The books frequently take the reader to the unconscious realm but

then put in remarkable barriers. In case of Rowling's books, the psychic fantasy embedded within the text is that of the union of binary opposites. The text itself puts in defensive mechanisms so that the reader is saved from the guilt, anxiety or fear of the exposure of the fantasy.

1.3 *Harry Potter* as Transitional Object and Its Bonding with the Fan Reader

How do the fan readers relate with their source texts? J. R. R. Tolkien discusses the role of fantasy literatures in his essay, "On Fairy Stories" (1947). He perceives fantasy as a sort of recovery from boredom and the loss of faith in the beauty of the world, and as a place for catharsis and dreaming. He introduces the term "eucatastrophe", meaning a final turn toward resolution within the story that evokes a sense of beauty, hope and wonder within the mind of the reader (22). Fantasy literatures create a renewed sense of wonder in the real world. The fantasy should connect to the imagination of the reader to create a new lens through which to see the world. The sense of hope evoked by the fantasy tales brings an awareness of meaning and value in the world that would have been overlooked without a venture into imagination. It is the momentary sense of joy drawn from the moment of eucatastrophe that distinguishes fantasy texts from other fictions. Fantasy literature creates a safe space for the reader to explore his or her own inner self. Bruno Bettelheim, the child psychoanalyst and author of *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (1976), too, agrees that readers are likely to feel hopeful when their child heroes are empowered to overcome the most challenging tasks in the story. When the hero succeeds in the task, the readers would naturally feel positive about their own future. This triggers them to move forward in life, and contributes greatly to the healthy developments of their minds. In *The Goblet of Fire* (2000), Harry comes face-to-face with death several times in the Triwizard Tournament and, eventually, fights off Lord Voldemort who has

returned to full power (unlike his first three years in Hogwarts). Here, Harry endures physical and mental torture. But as a maturing hero, he is ready to resist it:

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

(428)

This event should demonstrate that even the meekest can succeed in life and are capable of forming meaningful rewarding relations with the world around them. By demonstrating that conquering these struggles is possible emotionally, psychologically and even physically, fantasy may evoke hope in the minds of its readers.

Every book in the series ends with a positive note, no matter how dark or evil the previous pages are. Although the tone with which the later three books end is of disappointment and anxiety, there is still an element of reassurance. The reader cannot help noticing that even after the death of important characters in the story, Harry does not accept defeat. He remains determined and strong. As the closing line of *The Goblet of Fire* (2000) reads, "As Hagrid had said, what would come, would come ... and he [Harry] would have to meet it when it did." (479). The happy, positive ending of the series is more important, as far as the reader is concerned. This happy ending offers hope that they too can change the future. As Emily Griesinger states, in "Harry Potter and the 'Deeper Magic': Narrating Hope in Children's Literature" (2002):

Specifically, Harry Potter articulates the hope that goodness will triumph over evil, that wrongs done to the small and the weak will be righted, that courage, loyalty, and friendship will overcome hatred, bigotry, and fear. We gain hope from Harry Potter—hope that in an age where moral goodness does not seem that important and evil is on the rise—that one little nerdy person, not terribly smart or good-looking, can make a difference. (330)

Therein lay a hope offered to readers, a hope that they too can make a difference and experience a “happily ever after”.

Identifying with the characters and the events of a story is an important factor in the transformation of a fan reader into a writer. It means that the readers are able to relate to the characters and the events, and this helps them to find meaning and understand one's own self. It gives an ability to explore real life through imaginative interaction with unreal characters and situations. Bruno Bettelheim used the concept of identification when he discussed the importance of children's tales in the emotional development of a child (8). He argued that by identifying with the hero of a tale, children psychologically experience the triumph of good over evil and learn that being good pays. Identification is an imaginative process, and it does not require actively or wilfully taking on the identity of the other, but, rather, sharing their perspective and internalizing their view of the world. Thus, the ever-changing magic of *Harry Potter* is the magic of the fan reader's own experiences, feelings and imagination. For a fan reader, the *Harry Potter* novels are a fantasy, like a fairy tale, which takes them into a very different magical world.

Feelings of positivity and hope can be experienced by the fan reader consciously while reading the books. It will be worthwhile to look into what the books do to the fan reader on the

unconscious level. The *Harry Potter* novels are set in a magical framework. Freud, in “Animism, Magic and the Omnipotence of Thought” (1913), explains the psychology behind magic in two terms- magical thinking and animism (41). Magical thinking, being produced by certain cognitive developmental factors, may lead people to believe that their thoughts can bring changes in the world. Engaging in magic, Freud believes, would have significant positive impacts upon the development of a child who suffers a lot of inner pressures and anxieties. Animism is experiencing the non-human world as alive in a human-like way. This is by means of some artistic creations like the child’s play, so the internal wishes are projected onto the external world. Although aware that these creations are not real, the child may experience a special kind of relationship with them. He or she may feel a mixture of wonder, pleasure, curiosity and sense of meaning in the magical framework. Besides being special to the child, the animistic creations have an independent existence. This is what Donald Winnicott, the psychoanalyst, drawing his ideas from Freud, called the transitional object (*The Maturation Processes* 109). Winnicott held that the transitional object was important for a growing infant so as to develop a sense of what is self and what is non-self. The infant has to experience the self and the separate simultaneously. He also added that this capacity to experience the transitional object remains throughout life (183).

Unlike a normal reader, fan reader is much more dependent on the text on an emotional level. Hence, the relationship between a fan reader and the text would be much stronger. Norman Holland, in *Dynamics*, describes a child’s realization of difference between the self and the other, during the end of the oral stage of psychosexual development. The child constantly attempts to incorporate things and make them a part of himself. Thereby, “he ensures that they will always be with him ... that they will never be there – outside” (37). There is a tendency for the child to

continue to depend on the mother or parent figure. Also, there is a fear that this source of comfort is being taken away. This fear and the desire to hold on are characteristics of the oral stage in the psychosexual development. Like the child in oral stage, the fan reader has the wish to *take in* from the text. However, the wish to always take in is countered at some point in the child's life. The mother may start saying "no" usually when the child develops the hearing senses. For the child, who has always been provided, this would be a withdrawal from the mother's side. The result is anguish, the deep wish to bring her back and a void, which would require filling in. For the fan reader, too, the end of the text on which they are so dependent would bring anguish. There will be great yearning for bringing back the text. Holland describes this as "something like a child's anguished howls to prevent his mother's withdrawal or bring her back ... or replace the void she leaves" (122-123).

In the previous section of this chapter, it was explained how the *Harry Potter* books give the reader a peaceful state of mind, protecting him or her from guilt or anxiety caused due to the pressure of hidden psychic drives. It was also explained that Holland equates the readers' situation to that of a child's experience. The fan reader, being more deeply involved, is going through the repeated processes of glimpsing the unconscious desires and saved from the negative feelings with the aid of appropriate defense mechanisms. At the same time, the reader may feel safe to explore and gratify the inner desires as well. This would be a kind of motherly protection. It can thus be concluded that the relationship between the source text and its fan reader is similar to that of a mother and her child. The child or fan reader, who has problems of anxiety and guilt due to psychic pressures, is comforted both on conscious and unconscious level, by the text. The fan reader is like a child who cannot control the direction of the events in the text. However, the reader may find solutions for the disturbances (caused due to the gaps) from within the text itself.

Since the text itself consoles the reader in its own way, there is much scope for emotional dependence upon the text. The fan reader would turn to the text itself for protection and nurture. The text is protecting the fan reader and also, at the same time, offering more. This is the nurturing quality of the text, feeding the curiosity of the fan reader through intellectual means.

Although Freud and Winnicott's ideas were in relation to the psychosexual development of an infant or toddler, the same can be applied to this study on fan fiction as well, since the relationship between a fan reader and the source text is similar to a mother-child relationship. The gaps and the end of a fiction cause, within the fan reader, the similar anxiety of separation that the infant would experience when separated from his or her mother. Since they provide a sense of security from the emerging negative emotions from the psyche, the *Harry Potter* books become a transitional object for the fan reader who is emotionally invested in it. The withdrawal of the caring, nurturing mother-figure (or, the end of the series being read) can leave the fan reader disturbed and unsatisfied because he or she is now losing the security and comfort offered by the text. The anxiety-arousing fantasy (of the unacceptable union of binary opposites) in Rowling's books is strongly managed with the defenses illustrated above. Despite this, the fan reader remains unsatisfied and frustrated. The feelings of anxiety and guilt, when strongly managed, culminate in a sense of triumph and positivity. The anxiety and guilt, however, are taken care of so that the original fantasy, to unite with the mother-figure now stands clear. When the gratification is denied, there is frustration, anger and eventual yearn to reunite with the mother-figure.

When the fan reader is deliberately choosing to be passive (because when the reader is looking for pleasure via reading, he or she does not expect to act on the emotions aroused through the text), the anxiety is immediately overlooked and pushed to the back of the mind. The

end of the story marks the end of the mother-child union between the source text and the fan reader. This evokes a deep desire to return to the mother-like text. Lippert himself admits that it was sad to see the *Harry Potter* series come to an end (*The Curse of the Gatekeeper* 3). The deep yearn for reunion pulls the fan reader from the state of passivity. In other words, the fan reader shifts from deliberate passivity to deliberate activity. Also, the feeling of anxiety, which was once put to the back of the mind, must be evicted out, without overpowering the nurturing, protective mother-figure. The psyche of the fan reader would strive to find ways to achieve these means. The following example of Lippert's own words at the end of one of his fan fiction best illustrates this:

But do you want to know a secret, dear reader? I am almost positive I will eventually, in some way, shape or form, write the rest of James Potter's story, even if I never release it. Why? Because I, myself, want to know what happens! You may laugh, but it's true. I know the basic outline, but I don't know the details at all, and I'm very, very curious to find out ... Someday, somewhere, I believe I will write the rest of these stories, because I want to find out for myself. And if I do, I probably will share them.

(The Curse of the Gatekeeper 366-367)

This leads us to the impression that a fan reader's assumption of agency over a source text is, in fact, a need of the psyche on both a conscious and unconscious level.

This chapter gives an insight into the fantasies involved in the reading processes. There are, in other words, two kinds of fantasies manifested here: the fantasy of the union of binary opposites and the fantasy of the reunion with the mother-figure. The creative urge that comes to a fan reader is the result of the yearning to reunite with the mother and to evict out the anxiety or

other negative feelings. The psyche, thus, has a huge role in compelling the fan reader to satisfy their creative urge.

CHAPTER II

THE VENTURE PHASE

Having explored the reading experience of the fan reader in depth, this research would now move on to the next phase of the transformation of the fan reader into fan fiction writer. In this phase, named the venture phase, the fan reader is aware of the separation of itself from the mother-like source text and is in need of more, and thus deliberately explores the gaps within the source texts. He or she, with a continuing active imagination, moves into a stage of reflection. Fan readers may now ponder on the nature of the relationship between themselves and the source text.

The reasons for the choice of the casual reader to be fan reader, the psychological aspects behind the act of reading, how the reader is involved in the generation of meaning and also the importance of gaps in source text are demonstrated. Norman Holland's Fantasy-Defense model has been useful to understand how the text, with the defenses through form and intellectual meaning, has managed to distract the reader from the gaps and the resultant negative feelings, while reading. This was illustrated in the previous chapter. One would wonder what is it that prompts a reader to venture into the gaps in a text that is already read, completed and has its fantasies well defended. What makes the reader to ponder more on it?

The reader becomes aware of the separation of the text, most probably after reading. There is a kind of uncertainty within the reader. The text gives out certain impulses which the readers may detect and try to make sense, while in the reading process. It can create conflicts within. These conflicts are confronted by using one's own intellect. Norman Holland, like Wolfgang Iser, agrees that the gaps which were once put into the back of the mind will be

revoked sometime later (*Dynamics* 158). At this point, the fan reader would feel that the text, by distracting the reader via the promise of an intellectual meaning, has offered only a pseudo-solution to the problem. The fan reader is not completely satisfied.

This is a point where the fan reader would feel that the work has not always complied with the expectations. It may sometimes violate our expectations (Iser, “The Reading Process” 280). It can even disorient us. Such a violation does not please the fan reader, who is involved in the text with higher levels of curiosity, imagination and emotions. The fan reader can be irritated with the text, and may even attempt to find his or her own solutions. And it is these solutions that are expressed through their fan fiction.

Wolfgang Iser’s ideas on the interaction between a text and the reader and Norman Holland’s psychoanalytic reader response theories can be again a useful theoretical framework to understand the fan reader’s tendency to explore the gaps further and metamorphose from the position of a reader to the position of fan fiction writer and thus the creation of a fan fiction. Iser, however, separates literary texts from other texts (like media). But, confining these theories to literary texts or traditionally published fictions alone would only limit its wide possibilities. If a text, be it in print or in digital form, can evoke a response within the reader, it can be assumed that Iser’s theory of the interaction between text and reader and Holland’s Fantasy-Defense model can be ascribed to all kinds of texts.

2.1 The Absence of Transitional Object and the Deviation into the Gaps

The fan reader, now aware of the gaps and simultaneously experiencing certain negative feelings like anxiety or guilt, is also struggling between the questions of ‘what is me’ and ‘what is not me’. This is because of the anxiety caused due to the awareness of the separation from the

mother-like text. Maintaining contact with the transitional object (here, the *Harry Potter* books) is important for further progression of the fan reader. It was illustrated in the previous chapter how the *Harry Potter* books, as a transitional object, have been a safe haven for exploring and negotiating the inner conflicts of the reader while reading. Thus, after the initial phase of reading, if the fan reader continues to have negative emotions, turning to depend on the transitional object is also a natural response for the fan reader. The transitional object has been assisting in the negotiation between the two minds without causing distress to the fan reader. However, when this communication is hindered in some way (like the gaps or the end of the fiction), the psyche tries to make its presence known through other ways. One such way is to force the reader to venture into the gaps.

According to Norman Holland's theory in *Dynamics* (1968), this affect after reading, the dissatisfaction or feeling of incompleteness, occurs because the fantasy was not managed well by the defenses offered by the text. The gaps in a text remain because the expectations of the reader's psyche were not fulfilled in the desired way, due to the improper management of the fantasy. The text failed to resolve this gap or the incompleteness in the plot, which has evoked the response of the reader. As Holland puts it:

...where the fantasy is one of drive-gratification and the fantasy is weakly defended or not much managed, the affect seems appropriate to drive gratification: satisfaction, sexual or aggressive arousal, 'resonance', the 'evocative', and amusement. Not a surprising result. Where the fantasy is anxiety-provoking and is not much managed one experiences anxiety or a 'sense of inner danger'. Again, this seems sensible enough. (293)

Holland also adds that if a drive-gratifying fantasy is strongly defended, the effect upon the reader would be one of intellectual level (294). While giving the fan reader a complete fantasy story of Harry Potter's fight against Voldemort, Rowling's magical world has also implicitly served as the transitional space for the fan reader. At the same time, it has also been an object of drive-gratification. The fan reader, as said in the previous chapter, has enjoyed the security and comfort of being in close contact with the mother-like text. However, when the end of the series is marked, this desire of being united with the mother-figure is no longer fulfilled. This causes discomfort within the reader, as the awareness of this drive is anxiety-causing for the conscious mind.

In *The Curse of the Gatekeeper* (2008), the fan fiction writer, G. Norman Lippert, expresses a wish to hold on to the *Harry Potter* books, wishing Rowling's series had not come to an end. He introduces and invites his reader to read his own fan fiction thus: "If, on the other hand, you simply loved the Harry Potter stories and characters and were sad to see them come to an end, then welcome" (3). With the end of the series, the fan reader, who was emotionally involved with the events and characters, realizes that it is time for a separation. What Lippert shares with his readers is a desire for a return to that feeling of oneness with the *Harry Potter* books, like the one a child is said to feel when being separated from the mother. The child or fan reader's trust that he will be nurtured and taken into a comforting environment begins to waver. The intellectual meanings offered by the text are, in fact, the disguised forms of the unconscious fantasies, according to Holland. The text would intellectualize and thereby distance the fan reader from the disturbing influence of the pressures from the id. However, with the end of the fiction series, these attempts to intellectualize fail or such attempts are no longer relevant. The

disturbances once experienced (due to the gaps) come back, building up tension within the reader (Holland 129).

What the reader has enjoyed while believing to be in a passive state is now present as separate from his or her self. The reader, now, finds it difficult to merge with the text with the same easiness as before. There will be a strong urge to express the disappointment of not being able to merge with the text on which he or she was once dependent; the reader would resort to one or the other way.

In these inappropriate reactions, feelings become too strong ... the afflicted members of the audience resorts to motor action in the supposedly real world. He has not simply lost on defence; he has substituted another way of dealing with the feelings aroused in him ... he confesses what was objectively in front of him has become subjectively within him, and he thrusts it out again.

(Holland 97)

It is evident that certain psychic needs were not fulfilled as expected by the fan reader. This causes the reader to step out of the text, thereby suspending the act of willing suspension of disbelief and look at the text from a different perspective. The response caused by a deviation from the text would be expressed in real life. The reader is pressured to thrust out his or her feelings of dissatisfaction.

The fan reader would now want to deal and come to terms with these disturbances. Having already dealt with such kinds of disturbances with the help of the text while in the reading process, the fan reader would now be confident that it can be dealt in a healthy way

again. He or she may turn to the text as well as to one's own inner self for this purpose. Besides, there is also the strong desire to reunite with the mother-like text.

In "Creative Writing and Day-Dreaming" (1908), Freud observes that humans have a desire to alter the existing world of reality, which they find unpleasant or unsatisfactory. Their mind is directed, knowingly or unknowingly, to invent alternative situations in which the unsatisfied wishes are fulfilled. Freud notes that when this activity of creating alternatives is too powerful, it leads to some kind of mental illness. However, the artist is not mentally ill, but merely unsatisfied, as in the case of the fan reader. This element of dissatisfaction becomes the writer's choice of subject matter for a work of art in a future time. Freud opines that the chosen subject matter is motivated from a mixture of unfulfilled childhood wishes and the "recent provoking occasion" (420). These are reflected in the artist's work, or in this case, the evolving fan fiction. The fan reader would consciously want to continue to be part of the source text, and yet somewhere deep within his or her mind, there is an uncomfortable (or unacceptable) desire as well. The fan reader has enjoyed the pleasure of being in the comfort zone provided by the source texts.

Freud further argues that it is difficult to relinquish a pleasure once experienced. A grown-up man would not engage himself in plays because the society around him would not expect so from him. He would find himself, perhaps repeatedly, in mental situations which bring forth the contrast between play and reality. Freud says that man, however, does not give up anything.

What appears to be a renunciation is really the formation of a substitute or surrogate. In the same way, the growing child, when he stops playing, gives up

nothing but the link with real objects; instead of playing, he now *phantasies*. He builds castles in the air and creates what are called *day-dreams*. (422)

Freud insists that the motives of the day-dreams are the unsatisfied wishes, and the fantasies one develops in his or her mind are a fulfilment of these unsatisfied wishes (425). The motivating wishes may vary according to the person and the circumstances. This is similar to what Iser put forward when he said that the readers, while in the process of reading, finds and fills certain “gaps” in the text, to decipher meaning of their own. Thus, Iser’s gaps may be equated to what Freud mentioned as the unsatisfied wishes. Fan fiction, like the day-dreams and phantasies, develop from the unsatisfied wishes of the fan reader.

Norman Holland also observes that the text’s authority over the meaning can be challenged due to the active imagination of the reader. It is not always the case that the reader responds as per the directions of the text. The introjection takes place until it goes well with the psychic or fantasy needs of the reader. If not so, the response of the reader would also tend to be independent of the literary work. Unfulfilled fantasies or needs create a feeling of dissatisfaction. The reader tends to disagree with certain aspects of the text being read. This is a turning point to fan fiction.

When the readers stop to immerse themselves in the text an artistic distance occurs. The fan reader becomes aware that they are no longer part of the text and is a separate self. While in the reading process, the readers may push this feeling to the back of their minds. Wolfgang Iser observes that, though the reader may find a consistent, satisfying meaning out of the text, he or she may still experience certain conflicts making him or her aware of the various other possibilities that the “unwritten part” of the text is offering. These other possibilities might not

be in agreement with the expectations and illusions that the text offers (“The Reading Process” 291). These conflicts may be acknowledged in fan fiction. The moment when they stop themselves from merging is also the moment when the gap in the text becomes explicit.

Gaps in a text add to the element of curiosity. They leave the reader in need of more. There must be something outside the reader’s normal experience and knowledge so as to arouse the curiosity of the reader. In order to achieve the gestalt meaning, the reader would continuously strive to normalize the text. However, the text would not always make this easy. As Wolfgang Iser had explained, if a text appears normal to the reader, there is no element of curiosity in it as it is a mere reflection of the reader’s experiences. But, if the reader is challenged or his or her expectations are contradicted, then that would require some thought on the part of the reader. The reader would now look into new tools to normalize this gap, so that their expectations and beliefs and sense of self are satisfied. The fan reader, here, is bridging the gaps in the source text. However, if venturing into the gaps and exploring it in depth, the fan reader would now include that which is only required from the text and exclude the non-required, so that the gaps are normalized and correspond with their expectations. As Cornel Sandvoss explains, in “The Death of the Reader? Literary Theory and the Study of the Texts in Popular Culture” (2017):

Most texts – mediated or literary- can neither be fully normalized and thus emptied of all alien elements, nor truly fantastic, evading all forms of concretization. The extent to which (fan) texts thus reflexively challenge our perception is a matter of degree and one that requires a different answer in each and every case of text-reader interaction. (41).

Eliezer Yudkowsky and G. Norman Lippert's fan fiction can be understood as the multiple interpretations of Rowling's *Harry Potter* novels. Each individual reader may fill the gaps, based on his or her own decisions. If the author of the text has no say in the meaning, then this task is directed towards the reader. The act of reading is not merely an interaction between the text and the reader but also certain social and cultural commitments. There is intertextual interaction occurring between the reader's subjective knowledge, previous experiences, imaginations, expectations, along with the author's intended meanings (provided through the various textual structures). Cornel Sandvoss observes, "in this process of dialogue between text and reader, meaning is created as the reader 'concretizes' the text" (39). It is only when this intertextual interaction occurs does the gap in a text come to life. Till then, they are put to the back of the memory, for the reader is in search of gestalt meaning out of the text being read. In order to give these gaps a concrete shape, the fan readers would require looking into their subjective knowledge, perspectives and experiences, besides the source text. Thus, to comprehend the unfamiliar part of a text, one is compelled to align our past experience with it as closely as possible.

2.2 The Fan Reader's Assumption of Agency Over the Source Text

It is from the gaps that the authorial authority slowly begins to disappear. Gaps are a space with no expectations for the reader. He or she, once into the gaps, is free to fill it with anything. It is a space outside the didactic, guiding influence of the text. In other words, it is *readerly gap*, a space very much specific to the reader ("What's in the Gap" Beauvais). Yet, one cannot claim that the reader may completely sever ties with the author's influence. Although outside the didactic influence of the author's thoughts, gaps can only be understood by what surrounds it. The gap invites the reader's imagination to fill it. The response that is evoked

within the reader may be varied and unpredictable. Yet, it exists within a space that is structured (either knowingly or unknowingly) by the author. Thus, the source text and, perhaps indirectly, the author's influence cannot be completely ignored.

Clementine Beauvais, in a 2015 article, "What's in 'the gap'?", observes that:

The gap ... always shows two dimensions at the same time: hollowness and fullness, control and release, determinacy and indeterminacy, [author]-centeredness and desire for [reader]-centeredness. Gaps are at once enclosed by the texts, and seen as almost infinitely fillable by the readers.

This implies that the gaps in a text are covertly comprised of the author's influence or authority. But this does not mean that the gaps have the authority to guide the reader as to what is to be done with the influence. That authority to decide whether to accept, reject, partially accept, partially reject or subvert the author's thoughts will always reside with the reader. Which gap, out of the infinite gaps available, must be filled is also a decision of the reader alone.

It is clear that an incomplete gap in the text plays an important role in the deviation of the fan reader from the source text and imagining a different dimension for the story. A text may have many numbers of gaps. It depends on the reader as to which gap is chosen to be filled. The conscious desires as well as the unconscious desires within the psyche may become a deciding factor in this. The meanings deciphered from a text, while reading, is usually restricted within a particular structure designed by the author via the text (Fish 304). However, a deviation through the gaps would mean that the reader is attempting a meaning that is different and, perhaps, outside the structure of the text. Fan fiction are said to be the filling of these particular gaps.

Despite a number of available gaps, it is interesting to note that the reader chooses one or a few particular gaps.

It makes sense to assume that this particularly chosen gap is somehow closely related to the reader, perhaps, at a psychological level. Holland proposes that the reader's response to a text is associated with the reader's identity. The psychoanalytic theory of identity is a rethinking on how people sense and know things. The response evoked from a reader is, in fact, a reflection of the reader's own identity. In "Reading and Identity" (1998), which is a description of the identity theory based on the results of the "inquiry into the way readers read", Holland observes that any work of literature may or may not evoke a commonly shared response from the readers. But "each person who reads a story, poem, or even a single word construes it differently. These differences evidently stem from personality" (Holland). Each response from a reader is a re-creation of his or her identity. If the gap chosen to be explored is closely related to the reader, then the exploration is, in fact, the reader's own response to the identity in indirect ways. It now becomes impossible to reduce a text into a single meaning. Because, if the task of meaning-deciphering is left to the reader, his or her own subjectivities as well as the cultural and social preferences all come into play. Hence, what emerges is multiplicity.

The gaps in the text are also those areas where the anxiety-arousing fantasies are weakly managed by the defense mechanisms within the text. Weak management arouses anxiety within the reader, who would unconsciously or half-consciously skip this part and focus on other parts of the text. As Wolfgang Iser has explained in "The Reading Process" (1972), the reader would initially look for a gestalt meaning out of the text and, hence, would not prefer to venture into the gaps in the initial reading. The venturing into the gaps would occur only after reviving that which was put back into the back of the mind. In other words, when the reader decides to deal

with this anxiety, at a later stage, he or she would venture into the gap. Again, the defense mechanisms come into action in a different way. Here, the central fantasy has a major role. Also, the defenses adopted and the particular characteristics (which includes the subjectivities) of the person responding to this anxiety-driven fantasy are important. Here, the reader would again try to gratify the drive of the fantasy by dealing with the anxiety in an acceptable manner.

The feeling of dissatisfaction, or the yearning for more pleasure, can revoke the disturbances that were once put into the memory. However, the revoked memories can build up tension within the reader. The reader again would try to defend by his or her own subjectivities. If the reader is pondering on the gaps, the defensive mechanisms would again begin to act, as had happened when the reader was reading the source text. The ego part of the mind would never let the central fantasy to be revealed in its true form. Once again, defensive strategies (like sublimation, omission, cross-cutting, splitting) come into play, doubling the pleasure for the fan reader, who is now developing his or her own solutions to the gaps in the text. Holland puts this quite interestingly:

If such defenses lead to a kind of passionate commitment, this may be the key not only to the reader's pleasure, but the writer's. Is the formal or defensive aspect essential to creativity? Once again, we are led to the surmise that the poet's secret, the novelist's, the film-maker's, perhaps the mere literary critic's, lies in his being able to take pleasure not only from the drives but also from the very defenses inherent in what he does. (132-133).

Holland's words give us an insight into why the fan reader turns into writing. The need for double pleasure that is attained through the adoption of various defense mechanisms is an important factor here. The defense mechanisms not only protect the fan readers' conscious mind

from the negative emotions but also promote the reader to creatively ponder more upon the gaps. The desire to gratify a psychic need of reunion with the mother figure, the tendency to overcome the resultant anxiety and the need for pleasure via the defenses all prompt the fan reader to venture and explore the gaps in depth. In other words, fan fiction is born when the reader refuses to suspend the disbelief in the text and takes a deliberate effort to re-evaluate his or her relation (either merged or a separate self) with the text.

One might feel that when the reader re-evaluates the relation with the text, by stepping outside of it, he or she completely severs ties with the text. This is not the case. The reader, who was and still continues to, find pleasure and relief in the source text would want to hold on to the text. This is what Freud called the repetition compulsion (“Remembering” 395). This is a psychological state in which a person feels the need to repeat or “re-live” something that has touched the mind. In other words, there is reluctance to break free from the text and also a refusal to accept it blindly.

This refusal to accept as well as reluctance to break free is explicit in Eliezer Yudkowsky’s *Harry Potter* fan fiction, *Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality*. The 11 year old Harry Potter of this fan fiction is a science geek who looks at the magical world with a rational eye. He tries to find answers to the mystery of the magical world using scientific theories he has learned from his early childhood days. He does not simply accept the unbelievable magical spells and their effects. In other words, in case of this Harry, there is no willing suspension of disbelief. Thus, it can be stated that this fan fiction does not suspend the disbelief in magic and raises question as to why the magical world is so, through the protagonist. Despite the obvious disagreements, this fan fiction continues to depend on the *Harry Potter* story for its own plot development. G. Norman Lippert, the author of the *James Potter* series, in the ‘Note to

the Reader' of *The Curse of the Gatekeeper* (2008), admits that his fan fiction was a result of his wish to continue with and stay longer with the *Harry Potter* books (3).

In short, the guarantee of protection and the double pleasures achieved through the application of defense mechanisms as well as the basic human tendency of repetition compulsion are all contributing factors in pushing a fan reader into writing. Once the fan reader's attention is diverted to the unwritten part, the gaps, the initial stage of assuming agency is reached. The deep fantasies within the readers continue to play their part. The fan reader, of course, always has the choice to explore further into the gap or ignore it, or, retain it or eliminate it. However, the reader here is well aware that these are derived from the original source text (which may be attributed the qualities of a parent). So, dependency, to at least a small extent, is inevitable. He or she is very well aware of the separation from the source text and also the desire to hold on to it for comfort. When the fan reader takes a step forward and begins to explore the gaps for its further possibilities, he or she has attained more agency over the source text. The assumption of agency over the source text has other psychological implications as well.

2.3 From Oral to Anal: The Emergence of Fan Fiction from the Gaps

As has been inferred in the study of the pre-venture phase, the fan reader and the source text share a mother-child bond between them. Here, the fan reader is dependent on the text for the gratification of the psychic desires or fantasies and also seeks protection from the anxieties and fears. The text, being the transitional object, provides the comfort, security and nurturing environment for the fan reader. Thus, the fan reader, while in the pre-venture phase, is in the oral stage of psychosexual development. However, the withdrawal from the mother's side and the

resultant anguish of the child are all indicative that the child now moves on to the next stage of development.

Drawing his ideas from Freud, Holland explains that the end of the oral stage of psychosexual development in a child is marked by a desire to “devour” out those things which he sees as a threat (41). In this case, the gaps in a text are those threats which distract the reader from the text. As said before, they threaten the reader in such a way that the reader becomes aware of his or her otherness from the text. The reader responds by devouring them out, or venturing into the gaps. When a reader attempts to explore the alternate possibilities through the gaps, the reader is choosing to stand outside the text and also allows to be influenced by the text. Exploring the alternate possibilities is a kind of mastering the inner world of the text. The reader is, in fact, standing outside the text and exploring the various relations within the text. By basing thoughts on the text itself and exploring the alternate possibilities opened up through the gaps, readers are enjoying the security offered by the text and, at the same time, risking that very security. This combination of risking and being secure adds to the pleasure element of the reading process and the exploration into the gaps. For the fan reader, the gap in the text is where some meaning is missing. Meaning has a defensive function, as illustrated earlier. But this goes missing in the gaps. So, the fan reader, who is in *need* of a meaning, would become aware of themselves as being separate from the text. With the withdrawal of the text (which was like a mother figure) from its nurturing and protective role, the reader would be dissociated from the text and, at the same time, yearning to be associated with it again. Here, the fan reader wills to participate with the text but is less absorbed in the text. He or she is a separate, working person, asserting their own independence from the text. The bond between the text and the fan reader would now be weaker than that of a mother and child. When the reader explores the gap, to find

solutions of his or her own, it does not mean that they no longer feel the earlier affection for the source text. The reader has earlier found the text quite fulfilling, which is why they have become a fan of it. As Holland says, “it is only when one can perceive the work of art as partly fulfilling (and partly violating) ... that one finds pleasure in it” (*Dynamics* 149). The fan reader is now very well aware of the discontinuities in the source text. Certain expectations are not gratified. But this non-gratification is necessary for the fan reader as it gives him or her some sense of mastery and control over the psychic pressures. Hence, venturing into the gap becomes more welcoming for the fan reader.

As was evident from Iser’s essay, “The Reading Process” (1972), certain gaps are excluded or overlooked while the reader attempts to formulate a whole, well-arranged meaning to the text. At a later stage, when these gaps are pondered upon, it is evoked back from the reader’s memory resulting in a new text, which is different from what the author of the text has created and also different from what the reader had once formulated while in the process of reading that text. This is, perhaps, what develops into a fan fiction. This can be established with the arguments put forward by Freud and Holland. Freud, in “Creative Writing and Day Dreaming”, describes the mechanism behind the formation of a day-dream thus:

Mental work is linked to some current impression, some provoking occasion in the present which has been able to arouse one of the subject’s major wishes.

From there it harks back to memory of an earlier experience (usually an infantile one) in which this wish was fulfilled; and it now creates a situation relating to the future which represents a fulfilment of the wish. What it thus creates is a day-dream or phantasy, which carries about it traces of its origin from the occasion which provoked it and from the memory. Thus past, present and future

are strung together, as it were on a thread of the wish that runs through them.

(424)

G. Norman Lippert defines his fan fiction as the “reheated leftovers of another writer’s creation” (*The Curse of the Gatekeeper* 365). This definition is similar to Freud’s description of dreams.

As Holland says:

Freud’s basic description of dreaming is: thought leftover from the day before sink to deeper levels of unconsciousness where they draw strength from infantile wishes and are elaborated by the kinds of radical condensations and displacements that make the dream into a visual fantasy. Then the dream proceeds to consciousness through a secondary elaboration that makes it approximate coherence. (88)

This shows that fan fiction is relatable to certain psychological processes.

What goes into the memory of the reader (the unwritten part of the text) is from one discourse, while in the initial reading of the source text; and what is evoked later will have a modified discourse, which is unique to each reader, depending on their individual dispositions. This shows that each reader connects to the text in different ways, not in a single way. The reader is filling the gaps in the text in their own way, excluding the various other possibilities. This exclusion is important to the reader in order to maintain a consistent well-arranged meaning to the text. Drawing from Iser, it may be inferred that fan fiction are a result of a very selective reading process, where the fan reader has attempted to fill certain gaps that might have appealed the most to him or her. In the process of reading and interpretation, the reader puts in a part of himself or herself while filling the gaps in the text. It has already been noted that the process of

reading is a combination of anticipation and retrospection, and, therefore, many modifications. When the reader attempts to fill the gaps in the text, it will be a mixture of the reader's own experience and also a new experience, because the elements evoked from memory may now be placed in a new discourse.

Expectations are not always fulfilled. While the reader progresses through his or her reading, the expectations are modified with the interaction among the sentences in the text. This may eventually result in surprises, amusements, or frustrations on the reader's mind.

While these expectations arouse interest in what is to come, the subsequent modification of them will also have retrospective effect on what has already been read. This may now take on a different significance from that which it had at the moment of reading. (Iser 283)

Rowling has left many things unexplained in her work, like the story of Merlin and the story of the four founders of Hogwarts School. This was elaborated in the *James Potter* series. Drawing from Iser's ideas, the reader of the *Harry Potter* novels would notice these incomplete elements, but would put it in the back of their memory, as they are pursuing the story of Harry Potter. These incomplete parts may later be evoked, but within a different background. As said before, the elements that are evoked are placed in a discourse that is different from the discourse offered by the *Harry Potter* novels. Here, the reader is developing his or her own version of the story. Hence, the story of Merlinus Ambrosius and Judith, and James Potter's time-travel adventure with Salazar Slytherin (in *The Curse of the Gatekeeper*) are developed with connections that were not seen in Rowling's novels.

A common pattern can be traced in the formation of a day-dream and the creation of a fan fiction. A wish that remained incomplete or unachieved plays an important role in provoking a person into a day-dream. Likewise, an incomplete gap in the text plays an important role in the deviation of fan reader from the source text and imagining a different dimension for the story. If, for a day-dream, the trigger is the current situation, then for fan fiction, the triggering factors may be the withdrawal of the source text, the awareness of the gaps and the resultant anguish within him or her. For the fan reader, the present experience is strong enough to trigger a memory from the past (the void he or she felt while reading but put in the back of the mind). It is this memory that will be processed and developed. Thus, Freud says that from the memory “there now proceeds a wish which finds its fulfilment in the creative work. The work itself exhibits elements of the recent provoking occasion as well as of the old memory” (426-27). The result of both is an imagined dream or fiction. Hence, a fan fiction, like any creative writing, is a continuation of and a substitute for the early unfulfilled expectations or wishes.

The fan reader is learning of the alternatives while exploring, based on his or her inner fantasies. This is, therefore, a reflection of the reader’s identity, addressing the deep fears and desires, without any harm and in a reassuring manner. As noted before, this exploration into the unwritten parts does not occur immediately as the reader would prefer, consciously or unconsciously, to continue with the text to achieve its whole meaning. The venture occurs only after sometime, when it is revived from the memory. There is both the need to stick on to the source text as well as deviate from it. In other words, a “defiance-submission relation” between the written and unwritten parts develops (Holland 39). Along with these, a desire for social acceptance is also arisen. These are characteristics of the anal stage of development in the child’s psyche.

Holland explains that during the anal stage, the child has a strong desire to get “things out of other people or thinking of oneself as being forced to deliver things” (41). Assume that the fan reader exploring through a gap is passing through a like-wise anal stage, there would be a strong tendency to express the meanings of these gaps that he or she has deciphered, in a proper, socially acceptable manner.

Lippert’s own words in his note to the reader also reflect a similar level of fantasy. The author finds himself compelled to write the remaining of the story and fill in the gaps in his own fan fiction, because he himself is “very curious” and “want to know what happens” (365). Having an outline of the further story, he expresses the deep desire to explore how both Scorpius Malfoy and Ralph would deal with their respective family heritage and also how James and Petra’s relationship would further develop now that Petra’s dark side is being revealed. Lippert calls this ambiguity in Petra and James’ relationship as a struggle “we all have in our hearts” (365). The writer of this fan fiction seems to be forced into writing this fiction, due to his curiosity or some kind of pressure from the psyche. This is, therefore, a reflection of the writer’s identity, addressing the deep fears and desires, without any harm and in a reassuring manner.

2.4 The Production of the Fan fiction

The mother-child relation shared by the fan reader and the source text causes the fan to cling onto the text and, at the same time, stay independent from the text. Certain pre-existing interests, needs and desires are to be expressed, disguised in such a way that they are socially and culturally accepted. The psyche of the fan writer and the text must be compatible. However, like nomads, the fan readers are not usually restricted to a single source text. They can move from text to text, appropriate any text with any new meaning. Henry Jenkins, in “Textual Poachers”

(2012), says that fans find more pleasure in the intertextual nature of fan writing. Intertextuality is inevitable, in case of fan fiction. Texts are not simply consumed and forgotten. Instead, they are always capable of producing meaning. The past experiences are interwoven with the present meaning interpretation (43). It is also due to this that a reader can decipher multiple meanings from the same text. Fan texts are also intertextual in nature. Both fandom and fan texts produced by them encompasses the multiple identities of the fans and the multicultural elements (as fandom is a global phenomenon). In other words, both fan identity and fan texts are trans-cultural in nature. A text produced by a fan based on another text incorporates this multiplicity in it, although it may never be possible to distinguish each element. The reader would simply construct meaning based on the context. “Fans, like other consumers of popular culture, read intertextually as well as textually and their pleasure comes through the particular juxtapositions that they create between specific program content and other cultural materials” (Jenkins 33). The meanings produced by the reader are somehow closely connected to the personal identity and life of the reader. The meaning thus produced acts as a foundation for future readings and forming perceptions.

Stanley Fish, in his essay, “Is There A Text in this Class?” (1980), explains how the process of interpretation of a text always works within a restricted framework. Giving the anecdote of his colleague and student, who raised the question “is there a text in this class?”, Fish explains that “Because both my colleague and his student are situated in that institution, their interpretive activities are not free, but what constraints them are the understood practices and assumptions of the institution and not the rules and fixed meanings of a language.” (304). Similarly, fan fiction, too, operate within a well-defined structure (the source text), that is already well-established as well. How much ever the fan fiction attempts to operate freely, it will be

pulled back to its source text. This is evident in Lippert's and Yudkowsky's fan fiction. The meaning of a text in two different situations may vary. However, the meaning deciphered is usually based on, to use Stanley Fish's words, the "institutional structure within which one hears the utterance" (304). This implies that interpretation is not a free activity. It is usually restricted within a particular framework, provided the reader or hearer is aware of the "structure" (in this case, the *Harry Potter* books), within which the utterance is occurring. Fish, further in his essay, observes that a hearer or a reader who is not aware of the said structure might interpret the text in a very different way. Hence, there is a possibility that "... every utterance has an infinite plurality of meanings" (305). Confining a text to a single meaning is not possible. It can have multiple meanings. And, hence, there are multiple fan fictions for a single work of fiction.

Fish is of the opinion that it may be possible to discriminate the meaning of an utterance in different situations. But this is possible only due to prior awareness of the situations (305). The contextual setting is important in deciding the meaning of an utterance. In the epilogue of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2007), there is an instance where James Potter, Harry Potter's eldest son, reports to the adults in his family that he witnessed Ted Lupin and his girlfriend, Victoire, together. Rowling does not elaborate on the context or background of this particular event. It is left to the readers to imagine the context of this incident, regarding James' character, the relationship between Ted and his girlfriend and the like. According to Fish, to imagine the unwritten part in the text is "already to have given it a shape that seems at the moment to be the only one possible." (307). In *The Curse of the Gatekeeper* (2008), Lippert gives the very same words used by Rowling from a different perspective, making it look like the whole conversation was planned between James and Ted:

James remembered the news he was supposed to share. He ran ‘toward his family, dodging and weaving through the crowd. As he approached, he heard Uncle Ron say to Rose in a pointed voice, “Don’t get *too* friendly with him though, Rosie. Granddad Weasley would never forgive you if you married a pureblood.” James was glad to interrupt the uncomfortable pause that followed. “Hey!” he yelled as he approached. Rose saw him first and smiled. The rest of the family turned curiously. “Teddy’s back there. Just seen him. And guess what he’s doing? Snogging Victoire!”

The adults looked down at James rather blankly. James raised his eyebrows, exasperated at their lack of response. “*Our* Teddy! *Teddy Lupin!* Snogging *our* Victoire! *Our* cousin! And I asked him what he was doing—”

“You interrupted them?” Ginny said incredulously. “You are so like Ron...”

James plowed on, committed to telling it like Ted asked. “—and he said he’d come to see her off! And then he told me to go away! He’s *snogging* her!”

Lily spoke up, “Oh, it would be lovely if they got married.”

James rolled his eyes, ignoring the rest of the conversation. Well, at least he’d succeeded in getting the word out. Ted would be satisfied. (42)

The meaning projected in Rowling’s book is different from the one in Lippert’s work, although Lippert has taken the very same words, and adding some more to it, that Rowling used. In other words, Lippert has embedded the words in *Harry Potter* in another context, as a result of which a different meaning emerged. In case of fan fiction, the other possibilities of the text are emphasized more strongly. The reader ponders on the other dimensions (the possibilities) of this text. The reader is looking into a perspective that is different from the meaning that he or she has

deciphered from the text. The reader may “organize and reorganize” the different perspectives that the text offers (Iser 293).

Active readers always tend to read between the lines and decipher meanings that are beyond the literal, concrete definitions of the words in text. They may respond consciously or unconsciously to the physical characteristics in sentences like the spaces between the lines, the place where sentences start and end and the like. The instance of James Potter’s reporting of Ted and Victoire's relationship to his parents is an example of this. Lippert's account of the same scene is manipulated such that the reader now gets a contradictory impression of James' character. While Rowling's words depicted James as an immature or impatient young boy who is not satisfied that the adults are not surprised or shocked as him, Lippert’s words depicted James as a calculating boy who is satisfied that his job (of reporting what Ted has asked him to) is done. As Martin S. Lindauer, in “Literary Creativity and Physiognomy” (2009), points out, the author (here, fan fiction writer) has manipulated the words from the source text such that a contradictory meaning arises. This can cause a tension within the readers such that they are curious and encouraged to read more, so that the disparity in meaning is resolved. The meanings deciphered from between the lines of the text can be either contradictory or complimenting to the literal meaning. It, however, enriches the reading experience and also helps to understand the events or characters in more depth. There is more pleasure and enjoyment while developing such meanings and “perhaps an ‘ah-ha’ moment of insight is provoked” (123). In a nutshell, the fan reader, while exploring a particular gap in the source text, has manipulated it such that a more interesting and contradictory meaning arose out of it. This is manifested in the fan fiction.

One may notice that, although a different meaning emerges in Lippert’s work, it operates within the framework that Rowling has already set through her works. This shows that, in case of

fan fiction, the writer of the fan fiction may alter and develop the meanings derived from the source text but he or she is not completely free to confer any meaning that he or she prefers to that particular utterance. The fan fiction, how much ever it deviates from the source text, is still bound to it. To put it in Fish's words, "the change from one structure of understanding to another is not a rupture but a modification of the interests and concerns that are already in place; and because they are already in place, they constrain the direction of their own modification" (313). Since it is already claimed that Lippert's work is a fan fiction of *Harry Potter*, any meaning conveyed through this fan fiction is already situated in the context of Rowling's work. There will be certain pre-assumptions, practices and purposes that are specific to Rowling's *Harry Potter*, and within which the meanings of this fan fiction develops. The fan fiction text is a point of convergence of the fan reader and the fan fiction writer. It is a point where information regarding both the fan reader and the fan fiction writer may be obtained simultaneously. It is the product of the process through which the fan reader has travelled in order to develop into a fan fiction writer.

Extending Fish's idea again to fan fiction, it may be inferred that the reader of a fan fiction, too, would interpret the text within the framework of the source text only. In this case, the reader is already aware that the particular text that he or she is reading is based on the earlier (source) text. Hence, his or her understanding and process of deciphering meaning from the fan fiction text would move in an already determined path. In the essay, Fish argues that the readers tend to interpret the text and decipher meanings based on the situation or circumstance in which they are placed. In the case of fan fiction, they are already placed in the framework of the source text, even before a reader reads the fan fiction.

The meanings expressed in the various fan fiction of *Harry Potter* series is independent but, at the same time, bound to them. This binding to the particular structure makes them part of a social group. Yudkowsky's *Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality* and Lippert's the *James Potter* series are derived from Rowling's work, are unique in their own ways, and yet are bound to the context of *Harry Potter* inevitably. The source text and its multiple fan fiction can be considered as part of the same family with their own uniqueness. As seen in the case of the select fan fiction, the fan reader is bound to fill in the gaps in the source text, due to their higher level of emotional involvement, commitment and curiosity. However, since the gaps are surrounded by the thoughts or ideas of the source text, the meaning they generate would also be bound to it.

Any alternative meaning that the reader develops is relevant to a particular unconscious fantasy and also to the projected, literal meaning of the source text. Holland, in *Dynamics*, opines that "meaning is a dynamic process: the [text] transforms the unconscious fantasy at its heart into intellectual terms" (12). It makes sense to assume that the same can happen in the case of exploring an alternative meaning. The sense of incompleteness or dissatisfaction that the readers feel while reading would lead them to find a gratification through alternative meanings. Which gap the reader chooses to fill depends upon the ultimate form of fantasy. It is this deep-rooted fantasy that generates every minute response of the reader. The meanings thus expressed will also be after a transformation of the unconscious fantasy into a reassuring, acceptable form.

A psychoanalytically-oriented reading of the fan fiction allows the researcher to comprehend the writer's individuality from his own works and also leads to the source of his creativity. The clues collected from the fan fiction direct us to the probable underlying fantasies and defenses. The mother-like source text may be idealized in the fan fiction, it may be

questioned or ridiculed or rejected. This is analogous to a child's reaction to his mother while going through the various stages of psychosexual development. The model proposed by Holland, in which a text is a fantasy transformed through various defenses, allowed us to understand the various phases through which the fan reader go through while deciphering the meaning of the source text. But "it can be turned around. We can go from the text not only to the audience's mind but also to the writer's and from thence to his life to confirm a pattern of fantasy and defense" (*Dynamics* 242).

The meaning that the reader constructs would almost always be within the limits of the text. The venturing into the gaps of the text is an act of elevation for the fan reader. The reader expects the guidance from the text and also trusts his or her own mind to develop a different perspective for the text. This can be understood as the reader's elevation to a level of independence, though the reader continues to hold on to the text. Complete liberation of the reader from the influence of the text is not possible. The act of venturing into and the further exploration of the gaps strive for familiarity, fulfilment of expectations, and although not overtly, the fulfilment of psychic desires. Hence, the act of fan fiction writing is one of double pleasure for the writer. This explains why fan fiction texts mean so much to many people, despite being marginalized and almost always unacknowledged.

CHAPTER III

THE POST-VENTURE PHASE

The final stage of the transformation of the fan reader into the fan fiction writer is the post-venture phase. In this phase, the fan reader, who has passed through the oral stage and has also experienced the pressures of anal stage, has finally ventured into and explored the gaps within the source text. In order to understand the post-venture phase in depth, the select fan fiction, *Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality* by Eliezer Yudkowsky and the *James Potter* series by G. Norman Lippert, are analyzed as they are the products of this final phase. The fan reader, after the venture phase, has now converted his or her ideas into written text. On a surface level reading of the select fan fiction, one would be able to recognize the ideologies adopted as well as rejected by the fan reader from the source texts. Also, one can pinpoint how the fan fiction is a filling up of a particular gap in the *Harry Potter* books. However, to trace the further development of the fan reader beyond the venture phase, the psychological aspects of the fan fiction text must also be taken into consideration.

In the previous chapter, it was analyzed why a fan reader is tempted to venture into the gaps and explore it further. Using Holland's theories, this venture is associated with the psychosexual developments and the role of the psyche and its desires. In the pre-venture phase, the unconscious desires are transformed in such a way that they are presented in a socio-culturally acceptable manner. The effect of reading upon the psyche has already been discussed in detail. What now deserves attention is the process of creative writing and its effect upon the minds of the artists. Unlike the act of reading, however, the act of writing or the production of a creative work is not as easy as it apparently seems:

“It’s really strange,” [James] commented to Ralph, who was bent over his Arithmancy problems. “I can totally remember you telling us the story in class. I could probably sit here and tell it back to you right now. But when I try to write it down, it goes all murky in my head.”

Ralph sat back and stretched. “What do you mean? If you could tell it, why can’t you write it?”

“Beats me. I mean, I know it starts with a guy walking through the woods. I write down that much, and suddenly, I can’t remember if it’s day or night when he’s walking. I start to imagine where he might be walking to. Why’s he so far away from his own home? And why is it no one else lives anywhere around for miles and miles? It’s mice he sees, right? Only, when I start to write, I keep imagining squirrels. Or voles.”

“Voles?” Ralph repeated, making a face. “What in the world is a vole?”

“I don’t know,” James said, throwing up his hands. “Some kind of little animal, I guess. But that’s just the thing. The story sort of squirts away whenever I try to write it down. It’s like it wants to become something else entirely.” (*The Curse of the Gatekeeper* 113)

This short excerpt from G. Norman Lippert’s fan fiction depicts how difficult the act of writing can be even if one has developed the creative idea. Retelling a story, like writing a story based on an already existing story, is a complicated process because the narrations can change without the narrator himself being aware of it. Imagination, desires, socio-cultural preferences and

individual subjectivities all come into play while one attempts to fill in the gaps in the original narration and put them down on paper (or on screen).

A literary work is the creative output that is used to analyze the amount of creativity exhibited by the writer. As noted earlier in the case of reading, the writer has to overcome the pressures from the unconscious part of the mind and also the hindrances put forward by the ego and the super ego. The writer, besides this, also has to keep in mind the social and cultural implications of what he or she writes and how it will be accepted by the reading community. The creative act involves a number of cognitive processes and personality traits. A creative person must be able to detect a problem and find solutions to it. He or she must be capable of generating a variety of ideas and also transform them into an acceptable form. The act of writing is beneficial for the writer as it allows one to adapt with the problems. In writing, the problems can be concretized in a better form, rather than merely thinking about them; and, this helps the writer to address it more clearly and perhaps solve it.

There have been quite a few studies on the act of writing and the psychology behind it. Various models for the process of writing are proposed by scholars like J. R. Hayes, Graham Wallas and others. Graham Wallas had explained the process of creative writing in detail in his work, *The Art of Thought*(1926). This theory is highly cited in many scholarly articles on creativity. Wallas proposed a four-stage model, which are preparation, incubation, illumination and verification. Preparation is the initial stage where you identify and define a problem. This is a conscious work and involves your subject knowledge and analytic skills. In relation to fan fiction, it is at this phase that the fan reader catches attention of the gaps in the source text. He or she is conscious of the dissatisfaction felt and can also pin point the reason behind it. This may be in the pre-venture phase. Preparation is followed by incubation. As the term suggests, this is a

sleeping phase for the conscious mind. However, the unconscious mind continues to ponder on the problem identified and tries to form associations. The writer may form ideas during this stage, rejecting many and accepting some (80). When an idea so formed breaks into the conscious mind, it is called the illumination phase. The fan reader is exploring the various aspects of the problem identified, attempting to understand it from various perspectives and evaluating its scope of further development. This may be in the venture phase. Wallas suggested that this is a very delicate phase and the writer can be easily distracted away from the emerging idea (86). If the writer manages to be not distracted, he or she moves on to the next phase, the verification. This is a phase of conscious work again, where he or she may evaluate and refine the idea so developed. Wallas also noted that the writer may return to any of the earlier phases if the idea so generated is found to be flawed (112). This model helps us to understand the problem-solving aspect of any creative process. When a writer attempts to express their thoughts or feelings, they are recognizing that a problem or, as in the case of fan fiction writing, certain gaps exist in the source text. Hence, he or she is engaged in the task of solving the problem thereafter, consciously. Thus, Wallas' model of creative writing can be appropriated to fan fiction writers since they are also attempting to solve a problem and fill in the gaps they find in the source texts through the fan fiction.

John R. Hayes and Linda Flower observed, in "A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing" (1981), that while planning to write something, the author must have adequate knowledge regarding the subject in hand and the author must also be able to decide which topics must be emphasized more (368). This is in accordance with what Iser had said earlier, regarding the reader's choice as to which aspect of the gaps must be delved into. The next step, according to Hayes, is to draft the text, based on the decisions made. This involves generation of both

conscious and unconscious ideas. Both logical ideas and emotional ideas are involved in this stage to develop the text. Idea generation can occur in both the planning stage and the drafting stage. Post-drafting, the text is subject to revisions and editing.

There is also the Geneplore model of creative writing proposed by Ronald Finke, Steve Smith and Thomas Ward in their book *Creative Cognition: Theory, Research and Applications* (1992). According to this model, a literary work is the result of two phases of thought- the generative phase and the exploratory phase (17). In the generative phase of thought, similar to Wallas' stages of preparation and incubation, the author produces ideas which may or may not have the potential for further creative development. They are called the pre-inventive ideas since they have some creative potential as “workable and marketable products” (86). The gaps in the text and the curious questions that follow in the mind of the reader are instances of such pre-inventive ideas. If the author recognizes certain creative potential in these ideas, then he or she may exploit them “further for creative purposes” (18). This is the exploratory phase of thought, also similar to Wallas' stages of illumination and verification, which ultimately leads to the creative product. However, the creative process is not a simple movement from the generative phase to the exploratory phase. It involves repeated interaction between the two phases, before arriving at the final product.

It is worthy to note that the Geneplore model, Wallas' model or any other models of creative writing can be appropriated to fan fiction writing as well, in order to understand the process. However, fiction is not written by following a particular model of writing. It may be assumed that the writers might have gone through these phases before and while writing. There is no one right model to write a fiction. Each writer would find a different method and may choose what works best for them. They may stick to one method or may experiment with other

methods, whichever suits them and their story best. When it comes to fiction writing, what is more important is the pleasure it gives to the writer as well as the readers. All the above-mentioned models of creative writing do not elaborate on the pleasure aspect either. The amount of creativity that is manifest in the literary work matters. And this pleasure in writing has certain conscious aspects and unconscious aspects.

Ron Hogan, in his article “Literary Playtime, or a Childhood Shaped by Fic” (2013), reflects that he did not find it strange that he was delving deep into other peoples’ stories “and giving it [his] own spin”, but found it rather ordinary. He describes his fascination for developing fan fiction as something that started when he began seeing his texts as “toys” to be played with (122). His approach toward his childhood stories was not a passive one, but an active and vibrant one, where he explored various aspects of it, using his imagination, and developed a new narrative. He further says,

some of us just move on to another stage, where instead of getting the results of our own playful imagination out of our heads by moving figurines around our bedroom floor or living room coffee table, we set them down in text. (122).

Sandra W. Russ, in “Pretend Play, Emotional Process, and Developing Narratives” (2009), argues that both childhood pretend play and creativity have some common elements like the involvement of feelings and emotions, intrinsic motivations and flexibility. Pretend play is usually without any restrictions and does not follow a specific outline. However, adult creativity demands more improvisation. Also, intrinsic motivation is important in creativity so that the individual channels his or her energy to the task of solving the problem. It must be added that

“the concept of an unresolved conflict or desire driving creative acts is a psychoanalytic one that has little empirical support, but has much clinical anecdotal material underlying it” (250).

As Sigmund Freud has observed, the primary thoughts that lead to creativity or pretend plays are usually driven by certain desires and are not subject to the rules of logic or reality. In childhood play, there is a free flow of thoughts that children experience a pleasure in manipulating the thoughts and ideas. The intense feelings are thereby managed. It is important to learn to regulate the intense emotions and thoughts for a healthy development. Also, childhood pretend plays help in storing emotional memories. Russ agrees with Freud in that plays help children to master and contain their intense emotions and this can provide as an early practice with transformations when it comes to artistic productions in adulthood. Russ' suggestions are evidenced on the studies performed on children in 2006 and also on interviews of a few writers. Based on the findings in her studies, Russ concludes that childhood pretend plays are more important in the development of creativity. It was observed that it helps in facilitating both divergent thinking and transformation ability of the creative writer. Also, the pleasure of pretend play is rediscovered in the act of writing (263). Freud had also noted that one would not give up a pleasure that he or she has once known. One would only attempt to find substitutes so that the pleasure is achieved without the repercussions of the society (“Remembering” 394). The writing of the fan fiction, which fills in the gaps in the source text, is such a substitute.

A psychoanalytic reading of the select fan fiction would help us in understanding the underlying fantasies and defenses. It is true that the text will be socio-culturally conditioned. The central fantasy is not expressed as such but they can be detected through the choice of words and the various images used by the writer. As Holland puts it in *Dynamics*(1968):

If, however, the writer chooses to air his fantasies, he is likely to arouse the reader's defenses against them – we will feel this as disgust, anxiety, boredom, or any one of a number of negative reactions. He can counterbalance this tendency, though, by providing either defensive structuring (so that the reader need not defend) or by providing a good deal of transformation into objective meaning or ... opportunities for the audience to do the transforming into meaning. (221)

The previous chapter explained how the fan reader, while in the venture phase, is exploring the gaps for various perspectives and also for fulfilling some unconscious desires. According to Freud, in the anal stage, the infant has some autonomy over their body and actions. It was also illustrated how, being in the anal stage of psychosexual development, the fan reader would take agency over the source text and feels the pressure to express the conscious and unconscious thoughts. However, by the time the infant reaches the anal stage, the super ego has developed. So, there would be restrictions to be aware of what is acceptable to the society around and what is not acceptable. The super ego assists in the further development of the infant. After the anal stage, social acceptance becomes very important for the fan reader.

The next stage of psychosexual development is the phallic stage in which the child may poke into or inquire into “things, particularly in a fearful or helpless way” (Holland 43). This is a stage of further exploration into the unwritten part. This exploration is now strongly influenced by the central fantasy within the psyche of the fan reader, who may experience both helpless, fearful emotions due to the pressure of the psychic impulses. When the reader's mind enters the hitherto unexplored areas of the source text, the pleasure of the psychic impulses as well as the hindering of the super ego (for social acceptance) must be balanced. This balance and the further

psychosexual stages into which the fan reader has developed may be reflected in the work produced by the fan reader.

When an author is able to write with little or no angst, it is said that he or she has achieved the flow in writing. This flow comes when there is an intrinsically driven motivation, says Susan K. Perry, in “Writing in Flow” (2009). The intense interest that an author feels, without the expectations of future rewards, lead to creativity and flow in writing (215). Extrinsic motivations may also combine with this. Also, frequent feedback enables writers to maintain the flow as it feeds their motivation. In usual literary works, feedbacks from outside sources are rare, until the work is completed.

This is not so for fan fiction, where the writers would get frequent feedbacks on the fan fiction from its own readers, as many fan fiction are either published in episodes or are published after being involved in some way (following the community and/or being involved in related discussions and debates) in the fan community. Unlike the traditionally published literary works, the fan fiction writers are very well aware of the tastes of their readers in advance and hence can quickly revise their works. However, there is a possibility that the external pressures of feedback can inhibit the writer’s creativity. Perry is of the opinion that writers eventually learn to provide feedback for themselves. If that is the case, the thought of audience’s response can only be secondary in the creative writer’s mind while writing. They can be either least conscious of their reader’s critical judgments or such thoughts, even if present, do not hinder the flow of writing and their creativity.

Writers who have an expectation of being published and being read find ways to incorporate their audience into themselves in such a way that is not inhibiting.

Rather it is part of the ongoing process of making choices as to what will work.
(216).

This can be true in the case of fan fiction writing too, since there is constant interaction with the fan fiction community. Mark A. Runco, in the article, “Writing as an Interaction with Ideas” (2009), agrees with Russ and Perry that for a creative production, the writer must have both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (certain interests and intentions). This is the driving force behind creativity so that the writers put in some effort into the act of writing. “Creative writers have the potential to construct original interpretations of their experience, but they also have the discretion to find an effective balance of originality and fit” (187). This balance between originality and effectiveness is important for the literary work to have a desired social impact. If the original thought is put forward in isolation, without considering its effect upon the reading community, it can appear meaningless and unrealistic, and therefore can be rejected by them. Usually in fan fictions, the writers debate upon the explicit and implicit ideologies within the source text to put forward their idea and to catch the attention of their readers. This has deeper implications.

3.1 The Fan Reader’s Further Exploration of the Gaps in the Source Texts

Writing is a process, rather than a product. What the readers ultimately get is the product of this process. It is this act that benefits the writer as it provides opportunities for adaptations, reflections on various perspectives as well as self-discovery. Susan K. Perry had interviewed a few best-selling authors to know how they perceive the act of writing in flow. Many of the writers described it as:

opening a faucet, peeling layers... entering a cave that at first seems unbreachable but that finally reveals an opening just as you are about to leave. They describe going down deeper and deeper, beyond the day light level of thought to where unexpected material and insights usually hide. (214)

In the above quote, phrases like “peeling layers”, “cave” and “beyond the daylight level of thought” all indicate the intervention of the unconscious mind in writing. Writing has the unique advantage of more detailing and exploration, unlike other creative products. More information can be covered in writings of novel and fictions than in a painting or a video. This means that writing helps to locate the source of anxiety more specifically. This can relieve the psychic tension and hence leads the writer to a stage of catharsis. They become more aware of what is troubling them, engage with the identified problem in a healthy manner and find suitable solutions, thereby bringing back the psyche into a balanced state. As said before, while writing a fan fiction, the conscious mind tends to focus on the ideologies in the source text, and the unconscious mind tends to delve into the gaps to fulfil the psychic desires of union of binary opposites and also attain the desire to reunite with the mother-figure.

The gaps in a text are the causal factors leading to a fan fiction. The end of the series, the resultant anguishes and yearns to replace the void leads to the birth of a fan fiction, as seen in the case of Lippert, who addresses his readers thus:

If, on the other hand, you simply loved the Harry Potter stories and characters and were sad to see them come to an end, then welcome. If you delight in shared adventure more than solitary navel-gazing, then come ahead and join hands. If you prefer battling evil over battling one another, then you are among friends. If,

in short, you believe that the story is king above all else, then this story, most definitely and affectionately, is for you. Enter and join us on the ongoing journey! I hope you have a grand time.

(The Curse of the Gatekeeper 3)

This can be read as a justification for fan fiction by the writer himself.

As noted before, the gaps in a source text are usually over looked by the fan reader who is attempting to decipher a configurative meaning out of the text, while in the initial read. However, this is only put into the back of the memory from where it is revived back at a later time. The fan reader, here, has managed to control the disturbances caused due to the gaps, without even being conscious about it. This is a defense on an unconscious level. Ignoring the gaps in a text and the resultant disturbances does not give the pleasure. This would save the conscious mind from the anxiety, guilt, etc. experienced by the reader if confronted by the psychic drives. But this would leave a feeling of dissatisfaction or incompleteness. Overlooking the gaps would mean that the level of defense is low as the attention of the conscious mind is easily redirected, fast, while in the process of continuous reading. Since the gaps may act as a triggering force, it can be the basis for a “later verbal creativity” (Iser 238).

It is as though the gaps in a text are waiting to be explored, inviting the reader into it. Fans do this exploring by talking or writing about them. They develop their own speculations. This was seen between the releases of *The Half-Blood Prince* (2005) and *The Deathly Hallows* (2007), leaving fans with a lot of questions and anticipations as to how the series is going to end. Various fan-produced theories (like Dumbledore is not dead and would be back in the last book, theories related to the true loyalty of Severus Snape, and the like) were being discussed in

various websites and also a few Harry Potter podcasts (Jamison 174). Fans may also write fan fiction to express their opinions and theories. Each kind of response reached its audience with varying effects. Some welcomed it, some rejected it outright and some took a neutral stand. G. Norman Lippert's fan fiction, *The Morrigan Web* (2013), takes these fandom discussions as part of his plot. The character of Professor Revalvier, who comes to Hogwarts to teach Wizard Literature in James' fourth year, is said to have published the story of Harry Potter in the non-magical world under a pseudonym and this book was eventually a great success. However, later, Lippert brings out that Revalvier is indeed Rowling herself. The fan fiction expresses a reader's response to Rowling's books through a Muggle (non-magical) character. This character, Lucia Gruberova, reveals her disagreement to how Rowling has taken the plot and discusses how it could have been different (426-27). Perhaps, this is one of the main functions of fan fiction. It writes back to the author that something was not right and it could have been better this way. The reader is no longer a passive receiver of a text but someone who actively engages with the text, even assuming an agency over what the author has already written.

3.1.1 Seeking Assurance and Filling the Gaps: The *James Potter* series

The *James Potter* series, takes us 18 years forward from the events of Rowling's story. It is set both in Europe and America. Many elements in the *Harry Potter* books are re-cast in this fan fiction. Characters like Neville Longbottom, Oliver Wood and Cedric Diggory are taken, and also given a different background story, in an alternate time and place. The story is told from the point of view of James Potter, a very minor, non-protagonist character in the *Harry Potter* novels.

In order to pin point, the gaps that have been explored, it will be helpful to look into the points of convergences and divergences between the fan fiction and the *Harry Potter* books. The *Harry Potter* books offer many gaps for the reader to respond. The protagonist, Harry Potter, is admittedly western, white, able, rich, boy. Yet, he is an orphan, neglected and abused, an outsider to the magical community often misunderstood and accused of lying as well as attention-seeking. Despite this, he is always a friend to the poor, weak, enslaved and marginalized. On the one hand, the protagonist is shaped in the conservative traditional model of the hero in the mainstream society. On the other hand, the very same protagonist gives out the message of resistance against oppression, and inclusion in the normal society. Like Harry, many other major characters align themselves with the unvoiced, marginalized part of the society, despite conveniently being able to be part of the privileged. This invites many marginalized readers to identify with and empathize with the under-represented section. Jennifer Duggan, a researcher on children's and youth literature and media, in her 2021 article, "Transformative Readings: Harry Potter Fan Fiction, Trans/Queer Reader Response, and J. K. Rowling", links this empowerment of the marginalized with the fandom. "Young peoples' participation in fandom takes up these themes and reifies them; indeed, the emergence of the online Harry Potter fandom demonstrates the very real way young people can circumvent adult restrictions to knowledge, content and participation" (155). The series shows how the socially marginalized can battle the prejudiced by uniting with one another. The protagonist's contradictory feature creates gaps in the text which is left for the reader to elaborate on and ponder on the ideology it upholds.

The Muggle world being almost always irrelevant, the *Harry Potter* novels overtly speak for the abnormal over the normal. The magical world is given more prominence than the Muggle

world. The Dursley family which is apparently perfectly normal is contrasted with the weird wizarding world. Rowling's story begins with the assertion of this normalcy:

Mr and Mrs Dursley, of number four, Privet Drive, were proud to say that they were perfectly normal, thank you very much. They were the last people you'd expect to be involved in anything strange or mysterious, because they just didn't hold with such nonsense.

(Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone 1)

However, later, Professor McGonagall describes them to Albus Dumbledore in the exact opposite, when the latter tells her that young Harry Potter is to live with the Dursleys:

"Dumbledore – you can't. I've been watching them all day. You couldn't find two people who are less like us" (14). McGonagall's statement shows that the Dursleys' idea of normalcy is different from her idea of normalcy in the magical world. The novels overtly speak for the abnormal over the normal.

In *James Potter* series, however, there is a frequent threat of mixing of these contrasting worlds via the movement called Progressive Element. This movement apparently aims for the revelation of the magical world (whose existence is a secret in Rowling's books), and liberation of the non-magical world by giving them equality with the magical world and thereby including them in the activities of the magical world. This merging of both worlds is seen with apprehension and outright rejection by the students of Hogwarts and also the adults in the magical community. This is further explored throughout this fan fiction series, forming a major plotline of it.

Rowling has left many things unexplained in her work. This was elaborated in the *James Potter* series. Lippert has attempted to give further explanations to what Rowling had just mentioned and sometimes added more to it in his own way. For instance, the antagonists in *James Potter* series, like the Wizards United Liberation Front (W. U. L. F), Madame Delacroix, Avior Dorchascathan are all a larger version of Rowling's Voldemort and with the same ideology as his:

“It is the universal marker of those who believe magical balance requires the extermination of all non-magical species,” Hardcastle explained in his gravelly voice. “They are murderers with no remorse. The worst of all villains, for they do not kill out of anger or revenge, but for their perverted concept of purity. They do not believe that those they kill are even human.”

(*The Morrigan Web* 18)

The Yorke Academy of Finishing School (a non-magical school) and Miss Corsica, their teacher, are like a larger version of Harry Potter's Uncle Vernon, with the same ideas and disgust for anything magical. The new headmaster of Hogwarts in James' fourth year, Professor Grudje, is another form of Professor Umbridge, a tyrannical teacher who taught Harry Potter in his fifth year at Hogwarts. Also, the story of Merlin (who is just a name in Rowling's work), the story of the four founders of Hogwarts School, and the further life of some characters like Oliver Wood and Neville Longbottom are explored in depth in the *James Potter* series. Lippert has used these missing elements and his own additions to develop his own plot.

In *The Order of the Phoenix* (2005), there are frequent mentions of a very powerful weapon that the dark-wizard, Lord Voldemort, is believed to be developing:

When Harry continued to look puzzled, Sirius said, “Like a weapon. Something he didn’t have last time.”

“When he was powerful before?”

“Yes.”

“Like what kind of weapon?” said Harry. “Something worse than the Avada Kedavra -?”

“That’s enough!”(73).

However, over the course of the novel, it is revealed that there is no such weapon but Voldemort was trying to steal a glass sphere, which was a magical recording of the prophecy concerning Harry and Voldemort, hidden in the Ministry of Magic. This idea of a powerful weapon capable of destroying the whole world is adopted in *The Morrigan Web* (2013), in which the weapon, called the Morrigan Web, is used by the evil forces in the novel. Rowling’s novel has dropped the idea of the weapon incomplete as it is no longer useful for the plot. This incomplete or unwritten part is taken up by Lippert’s fan fiction. However, in the case of the Morrigan Web, the fan reader has placed this unwritten part in a different background that has more significance than that offered by the written text of Rowling. “In this way, trivial scenes suddenly take on the shape of an enduring form of life” (Iser 281).

Lippert has revolved his plot around the past of Albus Dumbledore (a major character of Rowling), but added a few elements into it. In *The Morrigan Web*, Albus Dumbledore has a nephew (Aior Dorchascathan), who grows up with the mind of an evil Dumbledore. This addition by Lippert is the central point in this fan fiction. It is this evil nephew who becomes the

villain in Lippert's story. Likewise, in *The Curse of the Gatekeeper*, the story of the four founders of Hogwarts and Merlin's story are also an addition to Rowling's plot, in which she had left them incomplete. What the fan fiction writer did is to adopt an idea introduced in the source text and develop them further so as to suit his own plot.

In *The Deathly Hallows* (2007), when Harry, Ron and Hermione discover the story of the three Hallows (The Elder Wand, The Invisibility Cloak and The Resurrection Stone), their conversations focus more on the Stone (Rowling 447). The Ring which was a Horcrux, having been already destroyed by Albus Dumbledore more than a year ago, does not become the focal point for Harry as he was more interested in accumulating the three Hallows so that he could defeat Voldemort. The Ring had borne the Resurrection Stone which had the symbol of the Deathly Hallows on it. In Lippert's *The Curse of the Gatekeeper*, the Ring gains more importance in the narrative as an object to communicate with the dead people. There is again reference to the story of Salazar Slytherin's ring which was passed on through generations, later found and destroyed by Dumbledore. In short, while Rowling's story focused more on the stone and the engraving of the Deathly Hallows symbol upon it, Lippert focuses more on the ring that carried the Stone. As Iser puts it:

...one text is potentially capable of several different realizations, and no reading can ever exhaust the full potential, for each individual reader will fill in the gaps in his own way, thereby excluding the various other possibilities; as he reads, he will make his own decision as to how the gap is to be filled. (285)

This decision is influenced by the outer reality as well as the inner psychic fantasies of the individual reader. The psychic aspects will be explored further in a later section.

There are many instances where the fan fiction diverges from Rowling's books. Discrimination based on school-house is very much prevalent in Rowling's books. Students from different houses rarely make best friends. All of Harry's close friends are from his own house, Gryffindor. Also, the Slytherin house is stereotyped as the house of the most evil and wicked wizards. *James Potter* series rewrites this aspect right from the beginning itself. James, as soon as he starts his year at Hogwarts, makes friends with Ralph Deedle, who belongs to Slytherin house, and Zane Walker, who belongs to Ravenclaw. Also, unlike the time of Harry Potter, students now can go and sit around in the common rooms of other houses.

One major difference between this fan fiction series and the *Harry Potter* series is how the concept of heroism is dealt in both. Compared to the character of Harry Potter, James Potter adopts a different kind of heroism. Where Harry almost always decides to act by himself rather than seeking help from responsible adults, James almost always calls for help. Unlike Harry Potter who ends up doing something heroic though without planning to do so, James Potter has little to do. He ends up in heroic situations, almost always without his magic wand (except in *The Crimson Thread*), does comparatively nothing in the situation and escapes eventually. Another character like Professor Jackson and Petra Morganstern completes the role of the hero. Lippert's fan fiction is about the common child who has the pressure of expectations upon him, due to the heroic aura that surrounds his father. Yet, he is not exactly a hero that one would expect but simply a normal child like every reader of *Harry Potter*. Rowling's Harry Potter is apparently normal, yet not normal in many ways. He is destined to be the traditional hero due to a prophecy made long before his birth.

Two years earlier, during his first term at Hogwarts, James had learned something about himself. He was not like his father. This was not a bad thing,

really (although for some time he had sorely believed it was). It did mean, however, that James had to find other methods to get things done. His father, as a young man, had succeeded by rushing pell-mell straight into the arms of danger, usually flanked only by his mates, Ron and Hermione. This had worked for him because he was, simply put, the child of destiny. He was Harry Potter, the Boy Who Lived.

James, on the other hand, was just a kid. His attempts to manage adventures entirely on his own had failed rather miserably.

(The Vault of the Destinies 399)

This point out one major difference between the original book and its fan fiction: the idea of heroism.

The *James Potter* series also has many points of convergences with the source text. Interestingly, while looking into the similarities or the points of convergences with the source text, one would notice that a yearning to return to the comfort of the source text is evident within the narrative of the fan fiction. The most prominent example of this yearning is the character of James Potter himself. James, the protagonist, is introduced as a person with a lot of inhibitions. There is the anxiety of influence within him because of the legacy of his father, Harry Potter. There is also this strong desire to be known and recognized on his own terms. “Besides, something in James felt that he needed to assert himself as an individual straight off, even if the thought left him feeling nervous and lonely” (*The Hall of the Elders’ Crossing* 13). There is the loss at what he would do if not connected to his father and yet there is this need for social acceptance. So as to prove his worth as an individual, James attempts to take part in the Quidditch tryouts and fails tragically. “Far from the spectacular aerobatic displays his dad had

legendarily performed, James had to be rescued from killing himself. There was no surviving this kind of failure. He'd never live it down" (*The Hall of the Elders' Crossing* 92).

Harold Bloom, in *The Anxiety of Influence* (1979), explains how poets and writers are influenced by their predecessors and how this can cause a sense of anxiety and also a need to assert their own originality. This is a psychological struggle similar to the state of Oedipus complex, where the younger writer would symbolically overthrow the established writer so as to establish their own creative identity (29). Lippert expresses this struggle and anxiety of influence when he says "it is exhausting writing stories grown in someone else's creation. Not because the ideas won't come, but because the seeds aren't mine. They belong to Ms. Rowling" (*The Curse of the Gatekeeper* 365). In case of Yudkowsky, this psychological struggle is evident in the rebellious tone of the epigraphs of his fan fiction. This rebellion, says Harold Bloom, is necessary for the new writers to carve out a place of their own in this literary space and also to overcome the burden of the influence or the desire to return to the source text (152).

Throughout the initial book of the series, there is a tendency to return to the source text, by frequent references to it. There are many instances where James himself recounts his father's adventures and defeat of Lord Voldemort, the reference to the story of Harry Potter's selection into the Quidditch team as the youngest Seeker in a century, and also the inclusion of major characters like Professor McGonagall, Neville Longbottom, and Cedric Diggory in the fan fiction. While Cedric Diggory returns as a ghost at Hogwarts, Professor McGonagall continues as the Headmistress. Neville Longbottom is now the Herbology Professor. James recounts how Neville had fought in the last year at Hogwarts and had cut off the head of Voldemort's snake, Nagini (*The Hall of the Elders' Crossing* 101). Although there are references to terms like *Mimulus Mibletonia*, the character of Neville is developed differently in the fan fiction.

Lippert has taken a character from Rowling's work and has given it a different personality now as Neville is an adult with his own share in the history of the magical world. In short, there is dependence on the security and comfort offered by the source text and also there is the urge to assert a separate identity.

The fan reader has gone through the oral and anal stages of psychosexual development, as explained in the previous chapters. Since the development is not yet complete and independence is not yet achieved, there is still the yearning to depend on the mother-figure. The desperation to hold on is evident in the initial chapters of Lippert's fan fiction. It is interesting to note that the murder of Mundungus Fletcher, the first remarkable event in the series, resonates the murder of Lily Potter in *Harry Potter*. Both Lily Potter, in Rowling's fiction, and Mundungus Fletcher, in this fan fiction, embrace death after finding themselves in inescapable, helpless situations. The idea of Lily Potter trading her fate to save her son is adopted and developed in a different way in *The Vault of the Destinies*. The Vault of the Destinies is a magical object introduced in this book. It is said to hold the fates of every human being that exist. In the novel, this Vault is attacked by evil forces, and this would negatively affect the fates of everyone, causing chaos and destruction all over the world. Lippert explores this idea of changing fates throughout the novel. This idea, around which the whole plot of the novel revolves, is drawn from the *Harry Potter* series, where Harry's mother trades her fate with that of the one-year old Harry, when Lord Voldemort attempts to murder the latter. Like Lily Potter, James also was willing to sacrifice his own life to save Petra Morganstern. This creates a magical bond between them, aiding them in saving each other throughout their adventures in the series. Petra, who develops to be the female protagonist of the fan fiction, has a similar back story as that of Harry Potter. Petra, being an orphan, lives with her maternal grandparents. Being ashamed of the fact

that her father was imprisoned in Azkaban, Petra's grandparents never spoke of her father, like Uncle Vernon and Aunt Petunia who never spoke of Harry's father because he was a wizard. Also, like Harry, growing up with an abusive grandmother and a grandfather who never stood up for her, Petra had learned early on to never ask questions. There are various other similarities with the source text throughout the fan fiction series.

The Borley's (described as a magical being that grows up into a Dementor, the guardian of the wizard prison Azkaban in *Harry Potter*) appearance in the eye doctor's clinic in *The Curse of the Gatekeeper* is similar to the sudden appearance of Dobby, the house-elf, in Harry's room in Privet Drive in *The Chamber of Secrets* (1998). As in the case of Harry, only James sees this magical creature which wreaks havoc in the place. However, unlike Harry, James does not end up in trouble. At the end of *The Curse of the Gatekeeper*, Lippert, while addressing his readers, admits that his book is "inspired by Ms. Rowling's own second work" (364). As in *The Chamber of Secrets*, the final adventures take place in the same venue. Also, like Ginny Weasley who was kidnapped by Voldemort, James' younger sister Lily Potter is kidnapped and taken to the Chamber.

In *The Curse of the Gatekeeper*, James starts experiencing a phantom lightning bolt scar, similar to that of Harry Potter's. This leaves him in a dilemma.

For a while last year, James had struggled with expectations of following in the footsteps of his famous father. Now, James knew those footsteps were far too big for him. More importantly, James had his own path to travel, and it was unique to him. It wasn't just a replay of what his father had done. He'd learned

that lesson, hadn't he? So why was he experiencing this phantom lightning bolt scar? What was it trying to tell him? And could he trust it? (154)

By his second year at Hogwarts, James has learned to be more himself rather than attempting to live up to the standards of his father. He tries hard to assert his own separate identity, which is not associated with his legendary father. Yet, there is still the dependence. There is the need for security despite the willingness to risk the same. This is true in the case of Lippert's fan fiction as well. The first book in the series frequently refers to Rowling's novels as the plot moves forward, seeking the security and the reassurances. In the second book, such references become less frequent. Like the protagonist, the series itself seems to be able to stand on its own credit. However, being a fan fiction by definition, this is not completely possible, like James. James' life is placed within the world created by Rowling. Lippert explores the incomplete parts of her story and delves deeper into the gaps. Hence, the story of the four founders of Hogwarts School and James' time-travel and battle with Salazar Slytherin. Taking cue from Rowling, Lippert depicts Salazar Slytherin as the most evil wizard to have lived in magical history. Slytherin's small army of men called 'Circle of Nine' is similar to Voldemort's Death Eaters and can be acknowledged as the prototype of them (*The Curse of the Gatekeeper* 119). He believed in and propagated the idea of the dominance of the pure-blood wizards over the non-magical world. While Rowling explains only briefly the source of Voldemort's ideology of pureblood dominance, it is explained through the character of Slytherin by Lippert. James' adventures illustrates where all the evilness in Rowling's world comes from. While filling this gap within Rowling's text, once again the narrative turns to it:

He'd heard the stories of how his father had faced off against Voldemort in very similar fashion. But as James had thought so many times before, he was not his

father. James had no chance against the sheer malevolent power of Salazar Slytherin. Worse, there was no place to run or hide. The tower was too high to escape from. James didn't even know how to Disapparate. Shakily, he reached up for his wand. (*The Curse of the Gatekeeper* 202)

This scene is similar to Harry Potter's fight with Voldemort in the graveyard in *The Goblet of Fire*. James finds himself in a position of disadvantage, knowing very well that he cannot match the powers of the evil wizard before him. Somewhere in his mind, he is reminded of his father, and this comes as a reassurance that, despite his weak position, he may be able to come out of it. He decides to rely on this comforting thought and decides to fight back.

While questioning the ideologies and filling that which is unexplained in Rowling's books, the *James Potter* series tends to return to its source. Its frequent references to the events, characters and terms specifically used in Rowling's work all indicate this tendency to continue to depend on it. Also, it follows the same pattern, while seeking reassurances, as in the *Harry Potter* books.

3.1.2 Rejecting Authority and Delving into the Gaps: *Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality*

The basic plot of Eliezer Yudkowsky's fan fiction is not unfamiliar to a *Harry Potter* fan. The 11 year old Harry Potter is destined to fight and destroy his arch enemy Lord Voldemort, with the help of his friends and a few allies. This fan fiction is set in Hogwarts School in Harry's first year and follows the adventures of the young boy who thinks more rationally and less emotionally and attempts to comprehend the magical world with his knowledge of science. Most of the incidents in this fan fiction are also re-written from a rational perspective. Although only one book, this fan fiction takes into account many incidents from all the seven books of the

Harry Potter series. In other words, Yudkowsky has taken the major events in seven books into one single, lengthy fan fiction. Despite the already known plot line, it provides the reader with an alternative story. Yudkowsky goes beyond the textual information explicitly given in the *Harry Potter* series. That which has just been slightly hinted in Rowling's books has been taken up as a major point of discussion. There are many instances where Yudkowsky largely deviates from the source texts as well.

Beginning with Harry's introduction to the Wizarding world and leading up to the final events of *The Philosopher's Stone*, where Voldemort attempts to steal the stone with Harry's aid, this fan fiction explores the various ideologies projected in Rowling's books. Also, the characters taken from *Harry Potter* are transformed such that Hogwarts itself has a different aura about it. While Rowling's Hogwarts is an almost perfect place, Yudkowsky's Hogwarts is an explicitly corrupt place with the problems of bullying, special treatment for students from noble families and the like. It also highlights the class difference in the magical world, emphasizing the power of the noble families. Certain explicit aspects like the method of administration of the school and fair treatment of students as depicted in Rowling's books are vehemently criticized within fandom. In Yudkowsky's fan fiction, the school authorities do not really take a stand against the problem of bullying and it is left to the students to deal with it themselves. Hermione Granger eventually takes it upon her shoulders, forms a group of fellow female students and begins to fight the bullies. However, she is later punished by Severus Snape, the Potions master, for this act in the fan fiction (1122). Yudkowsky brings light to how certain issues related to the students' safety and dignity are unapologetically ignored by Albus Dumbledore. Here, the fan fiction raises the unquestioning authority of goodness (manifested through the character of

Dumbledore) in Rowling's novels. Goodness may be just a myth and not the reality, as hinted in the silence of the headmaster.

The fan fiction also raises another important question. Did Harry Potter, Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger's acts in the earlier books of the series actually make any difference to the world around them as a whole? Despite resisting evilness throughout, evil continued to triumph. As each book progresses, Voldemort became more powerful, until the last book. However, the last book in the series, where Voldemort is finally defeated, does not promise an evil-free world.

Although Yudkowsky uses the characters from Rowling's work, most of them are different in nature. While Ron Weasley, one of the most important characters in Rowling's novels, is given a very minor role, the character of Hermione Granger is developed differently, who takes matters into her hands when the responsible authorities do not bother to interfere and solve the problem of bullying. She eventually becomes a representative of a female hero that is different from the Hermione Granger, who mostly relies on the teachers to deal with disciplinary issues at school, of the *Harry Potter* novels.

Again, Yudkowsky's Harry Potter teaches everyone to be the hero through his words:

“That's why I say you're not thinking responsibly, Hermione. Thinking that your job is done when you tell Professor McGonagall — that isn't heroine thinking.

Like Hannah being beat up is *okay* then, because it isn't *your fault* anymore.

Being a heroine means your job isn't finished until you've done *whatever it takes* to protect the other girls, *permanently*.” In Harry's voice was a touch of the

steel he had acquired since the day Fawkes had been on his shoulder. “You can’t think as if just following the rules means you’ve done your duty.”

(1118)

He is more like a teacher who expresses through his long speeches as well as actions. Also, at a point in the novel, he makes explicit his disagreement with the kind of Hermione Granger of Rowling’s creation: “Maybe I’ve just read too many stories where the heroes never do the sensible thing and follow the rules and tell their Professor McGonagalls, so my brain doesn’t think you’re a proper storybook hero”(1119). Rowling’s Harry Potter is not the talkative person and is not an expert in explaining things to other people or speaking out his heart; and Hermione Granger is a character who frequently runs either to the library or to the teachers when she does not know how to handle a situation. Yudkowsky’s Hermione is not a sensible and responsible Gryffindor but a Ravenclaw who is, literally, dying to be a Heroine, without much thought on the consequences of her actions. Towards the end of this fan fiction, a kind of justification for this deviation from the source text is given, by pondering upon an alternative Harry Potter (Rowling’s). The nature of Rowling’s characters is rejected as disagreeable in this fan fiction. Rowling’s work almost always equated evilness to the Slytherin House and goodness to Gryffindors. Yudkowsky includes a series of events where the characters fight bullying, a major issue in Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Interestingly, the practitioners of bullying are from the Houses of Gryffindor and Slytherin, and like-wise the victims of bullying may be from any House. This fan fiction emphasizes the idea that evilness and goodness cannot be simply compartmentalized into Slytherins and Gryffindors respectively. Yudkowsky has also attempted an explanation of Rowling’s magical world from a scientific perspective, through the interactions between Harry Potter and Draco Malfoy. Harry Potter is trying to prove to Draco

Malfoy that the long-held idea of blood-purism is quite meaningless, using the role of science in the Muggle (non-magical) world and explaining to him about issues of racism. He eventually convinces Draco Malfoy that it is the lack of proper scientific study that has misled people into believing in the superiority of their blood (393).

Likewise, Yudkowsky also explores the character of Professor Quirrell elaborately. Rowling's Quirrell, in *The Philosopher's Stone*, is an under-developed character. He is a man who can be easily scared, has a problem of stammering, is always living in pain and fear, and eventually dies being a victim of Lord Voldemort. Yudkowsky's fan fiction refuses to accept this victim-image of Quirrell. It seems to assume that Quirrell, if he is to ally with the most evil wizard of all time, too, must be evil enough. Although young Harry, who sees a mentor-figure in this Defense Against the Dark Arts Professor, is very late in recognizing, the reader gets to see the cunning, manipulative nature of the man in many instances.

Yudkowsky, at various instances, also disagrees with Rowling's narrative style. The young Harry Potter ponders on how books usually lack various points of view and tend to focus on only the protagonist's point of view. He opines that taking the enemy's plans and action out of the sight of the reader is unsatisfying. "But in real life the enemy would think that they were the main character, and they would also be clever, and think things through in advance, even if you didn't see them do it" (1451).

Through the portrayal of a manipulative Quirrell, failed Albus Dumbledore and other Hogwarts teachers, a rational-thinking young Harry Potter, a revolutionary Hermione Granger, an almost non-existent Ron Weasley and a transformed Draco Malfoy, and frequent criticism upon Rowling's narrative styles, Yudkowsky is rejecting the authorial intent in his reading. Yudkowsky's challenging of the authority of the author over a text is explicit in the way the

epigraphs are designed in the initial chapters of this fan fiction. Unlike the *James Potter* series, this fan fiction has a more aggressive tone in its narrative, questioning and almost always rejecting what Rowling has depicted in her books.

The points of convergences and divergences noticed above also leads us to the question of how far is Yudkowsky's fan fiction dependent on the source text. While Lippert's fan fiction expresses this dependence majorly through its protagonist, setting and similarity to the events, Yudkowsky's dependence is evident in the epigraphs in the initial chapters. The fan fiction writer calls upon J. K. Rowling in almost every epigraph but has an aggressive, taunting manner of addressing the author of his source text. In chapter 5 of the fan fiction, the epigraph goes thus: "J. K. Rowling is staring at you. Can you feel her eyes on you? She's reading your mind using her Rowling Rays" (37). Later, in chapter 11, it goes, "Hail the Dark Lord Rowling" (137). And in chapter 19, the epigraph is "Blood for the blood god! Skulls for J. K. Rowling!" (281). Out of the 122 chapters of the fan fiction, the initial 30 chapters begin with such taunting, challenging references to Rowling. Unlike Lippert who has a much more peaceful, accepting attitude, Yudkowsky's dependence on the source text is aggressive in its nature. Priority is shifted to that which has remained latent in the original books.

Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality re-assesses certain portrayals in the source text, deconstructs clichéd images of adults as the protectors of young children, and inscribed certain new female experience (as in Hermione's case). Yudkowsky is, in short, like a fan reader who explores a pre-existing text, subverts many of its ideologies and becomes a voice that is capable of shifting other authorial voices to the periphery. The fan fiction writer has committed himself to the text, expanded it as well as resisted it. With the alternative interpretation of the Harry Potter story, the writer is opening up more innovative and intriguing possibilities.

3.1.3 The Negotiated Position of the Fan Fiction Writers

The ideologies propagated through a text are important for any reader. On most occasions, the immediate responses of a reader are to the ideologies. They represent the most frequently articulated response of the readers. The response of a reader of Rowling's novels can either be to the explicit ideology (which is a progressive one) or the implicit ideology (which is a conservative one), or it can be to both. The reader can ponder on what is missing in it and may even add more to it with his or her imagination.

Stuart Hall, in "Encoding/Decoding"(2005), held that the audience of any media are not mere passive readers but are active and involve themselves in the production of multiple meanings. They interpret texts based on the context as well as the culture in which they are involved. This is called the encoding-decoding process, according to Hall (117). The sender encodes the meaning based on his ideologies and related perspectives; and the receiver decodes a meaning, which may or may not necessarily be the same as that sent by the sender. This is because the socio-economic as well as the cultural context of the audience influences the decoding process. Decoding is of three types: the dominant-hegemonic position (where both sender and receiver share the same point of view in terms of cultural order), the negotiated position (the reader only partially accepts the message sent out and resists those which does not conform to their personal preferences and experiences), and the oppositional position (the reader completely rejects the meaning sent) (125-127). A reader can take any of these positions.

If the reader accepts the given text without any or with very low resistance, it means that both the creator and the reader share the same point of view. This dominant-hegemonic position is not applicable to fan fiction, as they arise from the resistance on the reader's part. In case of

fan fiction, the fan reader would take a negotiated position while decoding the meaning of the text. The disagreements and points of dissatisfaction are where the reader would differ from the meaning perpetuated through the source text. However, many elements of the source text are also accepted and adopted by the fan writer in his fan fiction. Hence, the negotiated position of fan fiction. This is explicit in Yudkowsky's fan fiction. The conversation between Harry Potter and Hermione Granger, in the final pages of this fan fiction, is more like the writer's explanation as to why this fan fiction was necessary to write. There were many points of disagreements with Rowling's work, in terms of character development and the conventional pattern of events. While the fan fiction Harry Potter does not want to imagine himself as Gryffindor boy, who is best at Quidditch and is best friends with Ron Weasley, he also does not want to be forced into a way of life that is portrayed very commonly in literatures:

After a while, Hermione spoke. "*Do* you suppose we'll fall in love with each other later on?"

"I don't know any better than you do, Hermione. But why does it have to be about that? Seriously, why does it always have to be about that? Maybe when we're older we'll fall in love, and maybe we won't. Maybe we'll stay in love, and maybe we won't."

Harry turned his head slightly; the Sun was hot on his cheek and he wasn't wearing sunscreen. "No matter how it goes, we shouldn't try to force our lives into a pattern. I think when people try to *force* patterns onto this sort of thing, that's when they end up unhappy."

(1791)

The conventional way of the male and female protagonist characters falling in love with each other and ending up married is another point of disagreement in this fan fiction. It seems that the character is voicing the writer's own thoughts of the dissatisfaction felt when certain patterns are forced upon people by social norms. It need not always be so. The final pages of the *Harry Potter* novels reflect the conventional social and literary norms, where all the main characters have married their school mates, where heterosexuality becomes the only preferred way for a happy married life and also where there is a clear boundary between good and evil. Yudkowsky has a very unconventional way of writing a fiction, frequently challenging Rowling (through the epigraphs) and the lack of rationality in her work. Unlike Lippert's fan fiction, which conforms more closely to Rowling's work, Yudkowsky's fan fiction has a rebellious note in it, opposing many ideologies in the source text. As seen in the above quoting, it does not prefer the happily-married ending, and also, more importantly, many characters fall into the spectrum of both good and evil. Professor Dumbledore, Severus Snape, Draco Malfoy and Professor Quirrell all remain morally ambiguous for a major part of the fiction. However, despite all the oppositions, the fan fiction's dependency on the source text is also obvious. Hence, it may be stated that Yudkowsky's fan fiction has a negotiated position that is closer to the oppositional position. The *James Potter* series, on the other hand, does not take a strong oppositional position as compared to that of *Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality*. While bringing in his own additions to the magical world of Rowling, Lippert does not challenge the dominant ideologies in them. Rather, he has used a similar structure for his story and used canon elements for the further development of his own plot. Lippert's position, therefore, with the source text, while surely is negotiated, is more lenient towards the dominant-hegemonic position.

Stuart Hall's theory, however, is only a way of understanding the communication process between a text and the reader. It helps us understand how texts are received and how meanings are created by the fan reader. There are many other factors like age, gender and beliefs that decide whether the active audience performs the dominant, negotiated or oppositional reading of the text. The writer's position within the fan community and their relationship with other members of the community all can influence the writing of the fan fiction. When it comes to writing, besides the role of such socio-cultural factors, the influence and pressure of the psychic fantasies to be expressed cannot be ignored. It can be only defended and transformed in some way that they become acceptable to the reading audience and the conscious mind of the writer himself.

3.2 The Unconscious Fantasies and the Psychosexual Progression of the Fan Reader: the *James Potter* series

The influence of the psychic fantasies within the fan reader cannot be ignored while writing. As Freud and Holland have established, the deep desires would look for ways to be released and the ego would continue to strive to maintain the balance so that the conscious mind is free of guilt and anxiety. However, it is important that the fantasies be expressed in some way for the healthy progression of the fan reader. Hence, it is worth looking into the further psychosexual development from anal stage and also pinpointing the central fantasies that are reflected in the fan fiction writings.

3.2.1 Re-living the Fantasy of the Union of Binary Opposites

In chapter I of the thesis, it is explained how DEFTing is important while in the process of reading the source text. Norman Holland's model depicts how meaning is transformed such that the central fantasy is not revealed and yet is dealt in a healthy way so that the reader is at ease. The pattern deciphered from the *Harry Potter* books involves the build-up of a certain tension, which is subsequently followed by the introduction of a formal barrier within the text. This barrier serves to restore a sense of safety or comfort for the reader. The tension developed from the text is mostly when there are chances of mingling of two binary opposite concepts, like the mingling of evilness and purity or the mingling of love and hate. The possibility of such a union can create tension within the reader. Holland draws from Freud and explains that this is because it would revoke a similar childhood experience within the psyche, a union of his or her parents which the child perceives as violent and sadistic at some level. Here, the ego intervenes to prevent the reader from the resultant anxiety and fear. The intervention is done using barriers, some distractions or, in other words, defensive mechanisms (105).

Holland takes the example of *Romeo and Juliet* to illustrate how such barriers give the readers time and space to deal with the fear and anxiety. The barrier or the defense can be anything like a joke, a speech or a different kind of character development that can distract the reader. Holland opines that the characters are sometimes the tools to manage our needs and feelings (277-278). Readers may identify with one character on the conscious level and may identify with another character on the unconscious level. Certain drives are satisfied through the characters. The reader, at the same time, may introject the defenses acted out by the character (279). It would be helpful to look at how the DEFTing process is reflected in the select fan fiction and how are the central fantasies dealt by the fan fiction writer. Both fan fictions, the

James Potter series and *Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality*, deal with the theme of good versus evil.

The plot of *The Hall of the Elders' Crossing* (2007) revolves around the resurrection of Merlinus Ambrosius, an ancient wizard who is said to have vanished from the magical world, centuries ago. James and his friends, having come to know the plot of some evil witches and wizards to bring back Merlin, assumes that Merlin too must be equally evil. Although failed in the attempt to thwart the return of Merlin, there is relief for the wizarding world when the ancient wizard turns out to be a good man. The first book of Lippert's fan fiction series establishes its major theme, the clash between the evil and the good and the triumph of one over the other.

The second book in this fan fiction series, *The Curse of the Gatekeeper* (2008), is about the eminent descending of an extremely evil magical force, called the Gatekeeper. The Gatekeeper, who is said to be coming from the world of the dead, can wreak havoc upon the human world and destroy everything. However, it requires a human host for this purpose. Throughout his second year at Hogwarts, James and his friends are attempting to thwart the descending of the Gatekeeper. To James' surprise and shock, he finds out that the supposed human host is Petra Morganstern, his friend and love interest (324). James struggles to stop Petra, whom he admires for her good-nature and kind heart, from falling into the trap of Voldemort and Gatekeeper. This was necessary for the safety and well-being of the larger wizarding world. As for James, like the primal scene fantasy, this was also a union that should not happen, a union that is completely unacceptable due to its potential for violence.

The *Harry Potter* books give glimpses into the psychic desires of the union of the binary opposites, but this union does not materialize in the series. If at all there is a union (like the

Horcrux within Harry Potter), it is presented to the reader only after the defenses are well set up by the text. The *James Potter* series ponders on this fantasy. What happens if there is such a union and the defenses to prevent the union are unknown? The fan fiction assigns this task to its protagonist.

In *The Curse of the Gatekeeper*, it is revealed that a shred of Voldemort's soul resides within Petra due to a betraying, vicious act by Lucius Malfoy. The good and evil both exist together within one person here. However, the fiction focuses on how Petra deals with this knowledge of the existence of the most evil power within her. Throughout the series, Petra slowly learns to control and channelize her magical energy such that Voldemort is not able to possess her sane mind. This is not an easy task as the voice of Voldemort within her is persistent. "You cannot choose the light while I choose the dark!", it tells her (*The Vault of the Destinies* 90). Both the evil and the good are united within one body, and the fiction now would deal with this dangerous union and its consequences. This union is given a convincing reason through the story of Lucius Malfoy who tricked Petra's mother to take a cursed knife (which had Voldemort's blood upon it) to her pregnant womb, thereby cursing the unborn child with a shred of Voldemort's soul. It is this that causes the voice within Petra, trying to take her over to the evil side. Rather than being just the male protagonist of this fiction, James also becomes the fan fiction writer's defense mechanism, the tool to prevent the consequences from happening. As always, there are plausible explanations given by the text so that the unconscious desires are not evident.

As in the case of Harry Potter and Lord Voldemort at the end of each of Rowling's books, the prospect of Petra's submission to the wishes of Voldemort's soul and eventually the Gatekeeper would evoke anxiety within the reader. This is expressed by Lippert himself at the

end of the book: “What of Petra, whose struggle between her own goodness and the last shred of the Dark Lord so closely mirrors the struggle we all have in our hearts? Will James ever be able to face Petra if she allows darkness to rule her?” (365). The anxiety and fear are also reflected in the immediate response of James as well as his friends who do not spare a second to stop this from happening. A repetition of the same fantasy of the union of binary opposites, resulting in a similar kind of anxiety and fear, is evident here.

Like Harry in *The Chamber of Secrets*, James finds himself alone when it is time to confront the real villain, despite having his friends to help at the beginning. James finds out that Petra has put Lily, his younger sister who was kidnapped, under the Imperius Curse so that she could control Lily completely and is about to murder her. James knew that once Petra forces Lily to drown herself in the lake within the Chamber of Secrets, Petra would go over to the side of Voldemort and this would result in the descending of the Gatekeeper. He had to stop this. Unfortunately, having lost his wand in the run to reach the Chamber faster, he finds himself in a disadvantaged position. He could not stop the union with magic. Here, James himself becomes the barrier or defense to stop the unacceptable union of binary opposites:

“This isn’t real!” James screamed desperately, struggling to his feet. “It’s all coming from that voice! What is it?”

“There is no voice,” Petra sang lightly, rocking her head back and forth. “There is no voice other than the voice of my dead father. You see, I have brought his things here, where they await him. His shoes and hat, his coat. Even his Cloak of Invisibility, which I’ve used myself these many visits. He’ll be so happy to see them again, don’t you think?”

James shook his head fervently. “That’s my father’s Cloak, Petra! You’re being deceived!” (334)

Despite being wand less and helpless, James manages to reveal the truth of Voldemort’s deception to Petra, so she backs off from joining the evil force and being a human host to the Gatekeeper. Hence, the attempted union is thwarted successfully. There is relief for the reader as well as the characters within the magical world.

James Potter’s attraction to Petra Morganstern appeals to the level of desire. Holland also points out how characters can act out as a defense against the drives that the fiction has stirred up, using the case of Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet* (*Dynamics* 277). Similarly, in the *James Potter* series, Petra frequently cuts down the love that is so important to James. She cites her age, her relationship with Judith and her mysterious past as an excuse to ward him off. When she does respond to his love, James is more than aware that it will not last forever and is just for the moment. James always finds himself in a position where he cannot completely love nor can he hate this character. His love for Petra can instil anxiety within the readers because of the existence of Judith on the other side. Every time James tries to console Petra for her impending fate, Petra tells James that she will have to leave this world in order to save it from complete destruction. She is aware that only this will weaken Judith who is determined to destroy the whole magical and non-magical world. “[Judith] watches and [Judith] waits. Soon I must go to her. It is the only way” (*The Vault of the Destinies* 195). Petra’s words indicate at the inevitability of the union of binary opposites. Like Harry in his fifth year, Petra finds herself in the urge to unite, although she may not like it. This, she admits, is beyond her control.

On the night of Christmas in *The Vault of the Destinies*, James has a dream, details of which he doesn't remember. However, after waking up, he realizes that Petra and Morgan are just two sides of the same coin and his job is not to save Petra from legal actions (Petra was accused of the attack on the Vault by the American court and was under surveillance). He realizes that his mission is to stop Petra from going over to the dark side, a determination that comes from his mind while asleep.

James still cared for Petra-- a great deal, in fact-- but he also grudgingly understood why people feared her. Not because she was evil, but because so many dark forces had coalesced around her, seeking to corrupt her, to gain a foothold on her powers. And Petra had, unfortunately, shown that she could be manipulated. Judith, The Lady of the Lake, had succeeded in that endeavour, using Petra to virtually destroy the vow of secrecy. By doing so, Petra had shown that she wasn't completely incorruptible. (*The Morrigan Web* 114)

Since the second book of the fan fiction series, Petra has to fight the evil side within her (the last shred of Voldemort's soul) and also Judith (again, an evil side that was erected unwittingly from her own magic). Petra is inherently good, but, as James is well aware, can be easily manipulated by the evil forces around her. Petra's fight is also James' fight. Although he believed in Petra's goodness, he was also scared that the evil might overcome the goodness, or worse, Petra might willingly go over to the other side at some point. This fear of the union of the good and the evil is reflected in James' thoughts. He realizes that he himself is the barrier to stand between Petra and Judith.

In the later books of the series, Petra seems to accept the contrasting voices within her. While James is adamant that the evil parts, Judith and Voldemort, must not win over the goodness of Petra, she begs him to not interfere (*The Morrigan Web* 451). She wants him to stay out of this and let things happen on its own accord. By his final year, James learns the hard way that his union with Petra is neither possible nor acceptable. It will only result in more chaos and destruction. To put things back to normal in the chaotic wizarding world, Petra plans to replace the stolen Crimson Thread in its native place within the Vault of the Destinies by banishing herself from this world. She would then no longer be part of James' world. Since this is necessary for saving the wizarding world and the non-magical world, James agrees to help Petra in her mission.

Besides using the protagonist as the barrier, the text itself has certain defense mechanisms incorporated within its form. At various instances in *The Vault of the Destinies*, James has visions of Petra and Judith indicating at their union. Interestingly, the events before the visions are light ones that tend to relax the mind of the reader. For instance, James and Ralph's miserable failed attempts at joining the Zombie House and their eventual ending up into the most unwanted Bigfoot House are elaborated quite comically preceding the vision of Petra/Morgan responding to the call of Judith in a Black Castle. This vision leaves James quite disturbed. However, the vision is immediately followed by the attack on the Vault of the Destinies, an ancient powerful magical object that records everything in the world, the past, present and future (195-197). The Vault is kept and protected in the Alma Aleron Hall of Historical Archives. The pattern followed is thus: events that relax the mind (James and Ralph's attempts for the Zombie house membership) is immediately followed by giving glimpses into the unconscious desires (the vision involving Petra and Judith) and then there is some kind of

distraction (the attack on the Vault). Such distractions are necessary to save the mind from feelings of anxiety and guilt.

Lippert's fan fiction takes the psychic fantasy that is only glimpsed in Rowling's books a step ahead. It explores the consequences when the psychic desire of union of binary opposites is gratified. Hence, Petra has a shred of Voldemort's soul within her. Also, both Petra and Judith have the same source of power. When James visits Zane's home for the holidays, Mr Walker, Zane's father, tells him the story of 'Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde'. He describes it as a story where neither the hero nor the villain can physically fight one another (*The Vault of the Destinies* 294). This story somehow leaves James uncomfortable knowing that the good and the bad cannot confront each other nor can they exist together. This is an implication to the fantasy of the union of binary opposites, leaving the young boy with an uncomfortable feeling. Another interesting instance where the good and evil come from the same source is the character in *The Morrigan Web*, Avior Dorchascathan. Avior Dorchascathan, the teacher from Drumstrang School, is Albus Dumbledore's nephew. In his diary that James finds in his office, he describes how the older Dumbledore had used Avior, who was then an infant, as a way to store away all his evil memories. The infant contained both the evil part of Albus and its own inherent goodness at the same time while growing up. "[Avior] resented this. And simultaneously embraced this" (493); and he calls himself as the "evil Dumbledore" in his later years because he was "all of [Albus'] faults, but without any of his virtues" (495). Unlike Petra who too has evil elements within her, Avior turns out to be an evil wizard who wants to see destruction through the event of Morrigan Web. The union of evil and good cannot be accepted and hence must be stopped or undone. The story progresses for the same purpose. The fantasy of the union of binary opposites is re-lived in this fan fiction, with the aid of elements from Rowling's books.

3.2.2 The Thirdspace, Unconscious Realms and Fantasies

Having explained the similarity in the pattern of psychic desire and barrier in both the *Harry Potter* series and the *James Potter* series, it is worthwhile to look into the settings chosen by this fan fiction. The settings, or spaces, in fantasy fictions are usually binary and oppositional in its theme. As is illustrated in Rowling's books, the magical world is contrasted to the non-magical world right from the initial chapter of the series. This dualistic nature of the settings in fantasy fiction also fulfils the purpose of being a material space as well as a mental space. Recently, the concept of Thirdspace is often explored in studies related to popular culture. It often looks into the "subversive, transgressive and inane territories" (Olsen 2016). This was briefly mentioned in chapter I of the thesis. Similarly, the *James Potter* series also takes settings that resonates the unconscious realms for its final adventures. As in the case of the *Harry Potter* books, the indications to the unconscious mind come repeatedly.

The first book in the series, *The Hall of the Elders' Crossing* (2007), begins with a prologue in which three characters, Mr. Grey, Mr. Saffron and Mr. Pink (who is revealed to be Mundungus Fletcher from *Harry Potter*), are on a mission to steal some treasure from within a deep cavern. The entrance to this particular cavern under the Atlantic Ocean is said to be through the Department of Mysteries of the Ministry of Magic. They find themselves in a "large, dark space" (7). As said before, the Department of Mysteries itself is indicative of the unconscious mind. Lippert's fan fiction begins with indications towards a deeper delving into the unconscious realms. It also ends with a similar setting. Grotto Keep, the place where the event of the Hall of the Elders' Crossing happens and thus witnesses the return of the ancient wizard Merlinus Ambrosius, is a deep mysterious place that is revealed only by stimulation (here, moonlight). Evil forces and good forces clash in the Grotto Keep.

For Edward Soja, the spatial theorist, space cannot be completely separated from the physical aspects and the psychological aspects. In *Postmodern Geographies* (1989), he refers to “Thirdspace” as a space that incorporates both material reality and imagination (120). It is a space on which individuals operate on and also by which individuals are operated upon. Soja explains this by pointing out how children, although they make use of everyday things in their play, are very well aware that the things are real and yet makes them part of their unreal imaginary world. It is simultaneously real and imagined, for the child. Likewise, the settings like the Grotto Keep seem so surreal in its description. Yet, they are real for the protagonist, as they have the potential to affect him in some way and he is very well aware of his existence in this space. Anthony Pavlik, in an essay “Being There: The Spatiality of ‘Other World’ Fantasy Fiction” (2023), explains how the worlds in fantasy becomes the Thirdspace as explained by Soja. Pavlik observes that the magic portals (like the brick wall entrance to Diagon Alley in *Harry Potter*) commonly seen in fantasy fiction can be understood as a space that are between the real and unreal and also as a space that indicate that the Thirdspace is an “area of movement”. This means that the portal makes sure that the Thirdspace can be occupied and acted upon by the protagonist.

While travelling to America on a ship in *The Vault of the Destinies*, James and his companions are attacked by a violent thunderstorm in which Petra is thrown over the rail of the ship. James, desperate to save Petra, magically produces a silver cord that connects his hand to Petra’s. Harry Potter later explains to James that he had somehow, in his desperation, evoked a very old magic. Like Harry Potter’s mother, Lily, who had died to save her son thereby casting an old magic of protection over the one year old boy, James had been willing to die in place of Petra. “My mother made a trade”, explains Harry (108). Harry Potter’s mother, evoking the old

magic, had stopped the clash of the evil and the good, Voldemort and Harry. In case of James, the silver cord formed due to the evoking of the old magic, helps him to be connected with Petra over the years, allowing him to magically travel to Petra, and sometimes help her with her missions to defeat Judith. The cord, besides being a tool to help Petra in her fight with Judith, also becomes a means to travel to the unconscious realms.

In other words, similar to Harry Potter's scar which has a connection to Lord Voldemort, the silver cord becomes a portal for James that takes him to the world where Petra exists. Every time James travels to Petra via the magical silver cord, he is transported to dark, mysterious places. "There is no disorienting sense of speed and no jolt ... the world simply clicked off like a light, and in its place was darkness" (*The Crimson Thread* 195). For James, it is more like falling asleep and drifting into a dream. At various instances in the fan fiction, James has to literally fall asleep in order to be transported to where Petra exists. This, again, is an indication of the unconscious realm, similar to Harry Potter's dream visions in *The Order of the Phoenix*. This space is both real and unreal for James. As Pavlik explains, "for protagonists, the environment of the Thirdspace is not a replication of the real, nor is it in itself a physical, objective phenomenon; it is, however, authentic, constructed space in which to act..."

In *The Morrigan Web*, James and his friends, while returning after a trip to Hogsmeade, finds the dead body of Worlicks, an escaped prisoner of Azkaban. Before the shock washes away, James witnesses the sudden scary appearance of AviorDorchascathan (who had a striking resemblance to Albus Dumbledore) over Dumbledore's tomb. James runs back to Hogsmeade to send a message to his father, Harry Potter. Exhausted from the run and the terrible ordeal he had just gone through; James gets lost in the woods while returning to Hogwarts. Strangely now, James finds himself somehow transported to another place. He meets none other than Petra

beside the lake of her grandparents' farm house. They sit together and talk peacefully (447-451). James, being mentally too stressed, wanted relief so desperately that he immediately finds solace in a place where he is secure and comforted and in the presence of someone he loved and cared. When one becomes extremely tired, a sleep becomes necessary to relax the mind and take you to the unconscious thoughts and desires. Anthony Pavlik observes that the child protagonists in fantasy fictions, when they are introduced to the 'other world', which may be safe or dangerous, do not usually display a sense of being out of place. In other words, there is no anxiety of being separated from the familiar normal world. For Harry Potter, the introduction to the Wizarding World through Diagon Alley was, in fact, physical, geographical and cultural displacements. Such displacements would normally bring in an overwhelming sense of loss. "Child protagonists, removed from the everyday, ought to feel this sense of loss more intensely and yet the sense of culture shock is generally not present." There may be exclamations of surprise. But they accept the new place as normal. Not surprisingly, when James wakes up, he finds himself in his bed in the Gryffindor common room. He has no memory of returning to Hogwarts after the debacle in the woods. He has simply accepted his travels through the silver cord as part of his life.

The final scenes in *The Vault of the Destinies* include the World Between the Worlds. It again indicated the unconscious realm with the descriptions given in the text which include "empty space", "misty distance" and "steely grey ocean stretched off toward the horizon" (469). Ralph describes this strange place as "...it's here just because something *has* to be, but it's not meant to be seen by anyone" (470). Once they are in a place that eerily resonates the unconscious mind, what follows is a fight between Petra and Judith (482). In other words, there is a clash between the good and the evil. As in the case of Mr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, binary opposites, like good and evil, are not capable of co-existence. They will cancel out each other.

As Harry Potter explains to his son, they will continue to struggle with each until one wins over the other (*The Vault of the Destinies* 329). When Petra does not succumb to her powers, Judith manipulates Petra into revealing the magical world to the non-magical world. Petra, in order to save Harry Potter and the other Aurors from the terrorist group called WULF, is forced to use her magical powers to reveal the magical world before the non-magical world. From here on, chaos ensues. The final events in *The Vault of the Destinies* are similar to the final events in both *The Goblet of Fire* and *The Half-Blood Prince*, where Harry had to go through unknown mysterious places like the Graveyard or the Cave, respectively, and fight either Voldemort or the Death Eaters.

It is worth noting that, although the spaces in the final adventures (the World Between The Worlds, Grotto Keep and the like) all have some physical aspects to it (like being connected to the magic school), the spaces beyond the portal are all somehow not connected, or rather seems distanced, from the physical space. This suggests the characterization of Soja's Thirdspace. Once beyond the portal, James, Petra and other protagonists travel into spaces spread beyond and into dark, unknown depths. These are spaces more expansive than was first seen through the other side of the portal. They are spaces that are created away from the eyes of a judging or controlling society, in other words. It is free to project the interior mind. Free from the intervention of the super ego, this space has the potential to give the protagonist more power and ability. For Harry Potter, despite almost always being in disadvantaged positions, he performs his best magic in the final scenes of each book. In case of *James Potter*, Petra becomes the protagonists in such spaces. James' role mostly confines to assisting her.

As in the case of the *Harry Potter* books, the narrative of Lippert's fan fiction takes us into spaces similar to unconscious realm, explores certain unacceptable psychic desires, which

are then immediately followed by some distractions. In all these cases, there is no union of binary opposites but chaos ensues since evil powers (Voldemort and Judith) are leashed out to the world. However, in both the source texts and the fan fiction, there are reassurances that the problems can be dealt with. On his return trip from America in *The Vault of the Destinies*, James reminds himself, “At least they were still all together. That counted for a lot, if not everything” (501). *The Morrigan Web* also ends with the same tone of reassurance despite a lot of uncertainties. Judith is only banished and not completely destroyed, the Crimson Thread is not yet put back in its proper place within the Vault of Destinies, and there is surety of more chaos and destruction within the wizarding world. Yet, the novel ends with the words, “For now, all was well” (737). The fan fiction follows the same pattern followed in Rowling’s book: unconscious desires are explored and then defended by the text itself. It may be assumed that the reader would go through similar experience at the unconscious emotional level too.

Lippert delves into the gaps and unconscious elements within Rowling’s text. He takes a chance at the psychic desire but does not encourage or promote it. His narrative seems to assert that one cannot live without the destruction of the other. Such a union is not acceptable to the society around as well as the conscious mind, which would experience negative feelings like guilt, fear or anxiety. In a nutshell, despite its various disagreements and divergences, the *James Potter* series follows the same pattern of the *Harry Potter* books, where the unconscious desires are explored in the Thirdspace and are also protected from disturbing the conscious mind by projecting a meaning acceptable to the intellectual mind.

3.2.3 From Phallic to Latent: The Further Progression of the Fan Reader

It is already noted that the fan reader passes through the oral stage while in the pre-venture. In the venture phase, the fan reader is in the anal stage and has some control over the things happening around. This is the stage when they assume agency over the source text. Detecting the stage of psychosexual development is important to understand the transformation and the response of the fan reader that is expressed in the fan fiction.

In the initial books of the series, James is so desperate to get rid of the influence of his father. There is anxiety of influence within him. His miserable attempt to join the Quidditch team in his first year is an explicit manifestation of this. The pressure to follow the path of his father and the disappointment of not being able to live up to those standards is high within him. The anxiety of influence is also reflected in the words of Lippert as well when he expresses his concerns regarding writing a fan fiction based on Rowling's books. Yet, throughout the narrative of the *James Potter* series, the deep yearn to remain close to the maternal source text is evident, as was explained in an earlier section:

As I sit here, two months before the official release of *James Potter and the Curse of the Gatekeeper*, I wonder how this story will be received ... Will people hate the story, since it is so unlike *James Potter and the Hall of the Elders' Crossing* in many ways? Or will they be asking, when it is finished, "What happens next? Will there be a book three?" (365).

Lippert is worried that his books may not be well received despite the fact that he has a good idea as to how the story must progress. He is concerned of it being the continuation of "someone else's creation" (365). Yet, he is aware that he has to continue to depend on Rowling's work for

his own story to progress. Lippert further says, “It scares me a little bit, but I think I can do it, I think I *will* do it” (365). The fan fiction writer is certain that he must do this despite his various inhibitions. There is a free will to assert his own identity and independence as a writer of fiction. The writer’s anxiety regarding the reception of his fan fiction is similar to the anxiety the protagonist experiences when he anticipates his own reception within the Hogwarts’ school. Like the fan fiction itself, James was aware that he would be judged within the shadow of his legendary father. In both the fan fiction writer and the protagonist, a mixture of the need for independent identity and yearn to be still associated with the source texts is apparent.

Despite being constantly under and wanting to be out of the radar of his father’s legacy, James maintains a close relation with his father, Harry Potter. What is interesting in the fan fiction series is that Ginny Weasley, James’ mother, is more or less a minor character, who has only very few scenes throughout the five books. It is with his father that James communicates most of his worries and thoughts. Ginny, despite being an International Quidditch player, is depicted only as performing her motherly roles. Also, James does not approach his mother for emotional needs either. Since his father is the Head of the Auror Department, James finds it more suitable to communicate his concerns regarding the magical world’s safety with his father. He is more dependent on his father, and aspires to be like him. And hence, he, along with his friends, joins the program called “Junior Aurors in Training” offered by Hogwarts in his seventh year (*The Crimson Thread* 111). Undeniably, James identifies more with his father and joins in what his father is doing.

According to Sigmund Freud, identification with the father-figure is a characteristic found in the phallic stage of psychosexual development. A young boy, who experiences unconsciously the conflict of Oedipus complex (the irrational desire to unite with the mother),

would naturally identify with the father, knowing that he will not be able to get rid of the more powerful father figure. The identification with father is, according to Freud, a response to the irrational fear, known as the castration anxiety, of the more powerful father, who is capable of depriving the child of his power. Castration anxiety is a fear of being devoid of power and control which may be expressed metaphorically (*Interpretation* 115).

Magic wands can be symbolic of the phallus as they represent power, control, energy and action. The protagonist's castration anxiety can be traced by looking into the relationship with his magic wand. James, in the initial four books, arrives at the final scenes where he has to fight the antagonists, without a wand. He has either forgotten to carry it with him or has deliberately left it behind. Losing or forgetting of wand can be read as a symbolic representation of castration anxiety. In all these cases, James has to depend on other adult figures to fight for him. As in *The Hall of the Elders' Crossing* and *The Curse of the Gatekeeper*, in *The Vault of the Destinies* too, James finds himself wand less in the final scenes when he has to fight the evil villains in the story. He has dropped his wand elsewhere and has walked into the warfront armless. This time, he decides to depend on the powers of Petra.

He cursed himself silently, but reminded himself that he was walking alongside one of the most powerful people in the magical world. If Petra proved unable to confront whatever was to come, then his wand surely would not be of any help anyway. (472-473).

If it was his forgetfulness in the early books, James assumes an agency over the possession of his wand in the final two books. Unlike the earlier times where James always drops or forgets to carry his wand with him into the final scenes, towards the end of *The Morrigan Web*, James

deliberately keeps his wand away from him and even persuades others to do the same. This was to prevent the disaster of Morrigan Web, a phenomenon capable of mass murdering wizards and witches who held a wand in their hands when the Morrigan Web, the weapon, was unleashed. This was a deliberate decision on his part (613). In the fifth book in which James is much more matured and reassured in his own self, James does carry his wand till the last moment. However, he never really fights Judith. As always, it is Petra who fights her, with some assistance from James. Petra, using James' magic and his guidance, manages to reduce Judith in her magical power and tie her up with Odin Vann as his prisoner (*The Morrigan Web* 579). Later, it is mentioned that Merlin was able to track down Judith and banish her from this world (597).

The anger, frustration or dissatisfaction experienced by a fan reader is expressed in various ways using intellect and through sublimation. The guilt and anxiety aroused is condensed and the ego is satisfied. Applying intellectual meaning would help one to gratify their desires and also master the fantasy content. In short, every intellectual response has some emotional connections. The intellectual meanings are the disguises used to evade the restrictions of censorship imposed by the super ego. James Potter, as noted earlier, is not a man of action. He always side-steps and some other character like Petra Morganstern saves him. This can imply that, for James, the idea of submission to womanly powers is more attractive (which is not seen in Rowling's Harry Potter, despite having strong women characters as support for Harry throughout his hero-journey). In other words, James frequently regresses from the phallic position and let others take the action. "What in his psyche might cause such preferences are far too variable for a literary theory to generalize about ..." (Holland 188).

The phallic stage is followed by the latency stage, where the libido remains hidden and no further development takes place as there are not any sexual motivations present. Here,

impulses are repressed and usually sublimated into other day-to-day activities like hobbies and school work. In the epilogue of *The Crimson Thread*, which is set 19 years later, James is an older bachelor who is about to be appointed as the Headmaster of Hogwarts School.

“I know,” James answered with a sigh. “It’s not that. Really. I just...” He shook his head faintly. “It’s not that I’m not looking. Or that I’m disinterested. I go out sometimes. And who knows: maybe someday someone will come along ... But, for now... I’m happy. My life is... uncomplicated. I’m content.” (*The Crimson Thread* 612)

James has grown up into a man who is peaceful with himself and has no expressed sexual desires. This reflects the latent stage of psychosexual development.

As said before, within the narrative of Lippert’s fan fiction, the protagonist’s mother has only a minor role. But the narrative frequently returns to the mother-like source text. The protagonist is more depended on the father, Harry Potter. James’ identification with Harry Potter can be read as a defense mechanism, while the conscious mind is striving to suppress the urge to reunite with the mother-figure. Briefly put, the *James Potter* series reflects characteristics of Oedipus complex through the nature of James’ relationship with his father, the absence of Ginny Weasley and the frequent references to Rowling’s books. The absence of his wand in dire situations may be symbolic representation of castration anxiety experienced by James. Also, this reflects the phallic psychosexual stage. Towards the end of the fan fiction series, it is noticeable that the protagonist has travelled past the phallic stage and is currently in the latent stage, where he is content with himself. Having gone through the oral and anal stages, the writing of this fan

fiction reflects the further development of the fan reader through phallic stage and into the latent stage.

3.3 The Unconscious Fantasies and the Psychosexual Progression of the Fan Reader: *Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality*

Like the *James Potter* series, the projected theme in Yudkowsky's fan fiction is also that of good versus evil. There is clash between the good elements and the bad elements. Characters like Hermione Granger and Albus Dumbledore stand for the good and characters like Professor Quirrell stand for the evil. Interestingly, the protagonist of this fan fiction is in a gray position. Harry Potter, in this fan fiction, is neither completely evil, nor is he a completely good person. He easily relates with the evil characters in the story, scorns at the good characters and yet mostly has good intentions although he is arrogant and overly ambitious for his age:

“Hermione, you've told me a lot of times that I look down too much on other people. But if I expected too much of them — if I expected people to get things right — I really would hate them, then. Idealism aside, Hogwarts students don't actually know enough cognitive science to take responsibility for how their own minds work. It's not their fault they're crazy.” (1284)

In short, the protagonist of this fan fiction is not at all like Rowling's Harry Potter, although sharing the same name and circumstances, and is also not like Lippert's protagonist. Having said this, it is also significant to point out that *Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality* is much different in its tone and attitude towards the source texts. Though the story line looks into the fight between Harry and Voldemort and how latter is defeated at the hands of Harry, the central fantasy is depicted in a different way in this fan fiction. This is because of the alteration in the

character of the protagonist. Harry Potter himself does not qualify perfectly into the category of good; and hence, a threat of the union of the good with the evil cannot be specifically pinpointed. For Yudkowsky, the union of the binary opposites is a projected theme in his fan fiction, rather than a covert unconscious fantasy. However, the central fantasy of the union with mother-figure can be detected by looking into the progress in psychosexual development of the fan reader.

3.3.1 The Oral Fixation, the Phallic Stage and the Latent Stage

While the *James Potter* series may be passed off as a sequel fan fiction to Rowling's books, *Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality* declares itself to be an AU (Alternate Universe fan fiction): "Petunia married a biochemist, and Harry grew up reading science and science fiction. Then came the Hogwarts letter, and a world of intriguing new possibilities to exploit. And new friends, like Hermione Granger, and Professor McGonagall, and Professor Quirrell..." (1). Determined to take away this fan fiction as far as possible from the canon, many elements, like the friendship between Harry and Ron and the enmity between Draco Malfoy and Harry, are turned upside down. Harry, after meeting him at Platform Nine and Three-Quarters, interprets Ron to be stupid and not worthy of his friendship. But he finds Malfoy interesting and wishes to befriend him at once. Albus Dumbledore does not appear to be wise but is somehow insane and eccentric in this fan fiction. Also, Professor Quirrell is an ultra-competent narcissistic person who disregards textbooks and the laws of the magical world.

A major character transformation is seen in the protagonist itself. Unlike Rowling's Harry Potter, Yudkowsky's Harry Potter is not abused or starved. He is well treated and always provided the best. However, the young boy feels that he is not respected enough. His father, Michel Verres, an Oxford University Professor, almost always dismisses his ideas (13). He

craves for the recognition of his father, leading him to read science books and science fictions, like the Oxford Professor. Besides being not satisfied with his adopted parents, Harry is mostly dismissive of his genetic parents also:

“My parents are alive and well, and they always refused to talk about how my genetic parents died. From which I infer that it wasn’t good.”

“An admirable loyalty,” said Professor McGonagall. Her voice went low.

“Though it hurts a little to hear you say it like that. Lily and James were friends of mine.”

Harry looked away, suddenly ashamed. “I’m sorry,” he said in a small voice. “But I have a Mum and Dad. And I know that I’d just make myself unhappy by comparing that reality to... something perfect that I built up in my imagination.”

(26-27)

Besides the obvious dismissal of his parents, Harry also looks up at anything around him with a touch of scepticism. He does not take anything for granted. When he receives his acceptance letter from Hogwarts, he does not immediately believe that a wizarding world could exist unknown to him. Unlike Rowling’s Harry Potter who jumps at the first opportunity to escape from the Dursleys, this Harry Potter writes a letter back to Hogwarts seeking proof that magic really exists. As a result, Professor McGonagall arrives at his residence and demonstrates her own magical skills by transforming herself into a cat. It is only after witnessing the evidence that Harry believes of the existence of the wizarding world. Once within the wizarding world, he continues to be sceptic. He attempts to understand this world through the lens of science and rationality. He tries to calculate the worth of wizarding money to that of normal currency. He

tries to understand the concepts of class differences based on blood-purism and proves it to be absurd by referring to the theories of genetics (353-360). In short, Harry Potter does not seem to trust anything or anyone around him. He is sceptical of people around him and also the overall environment around him. Neither does he trust his parents nor does he believe Hogwarts to be a safe place. Yudkowsky gives Hogwarts a darker atmosphere, addressing the issue of bullying in around 20 chapters of the fan fiction. Students, mostly unnamed, are victims of bullying and the adults are ignorant and indifferent.

Sigmund Freud, while describing the stages of psychosexual development, explains how there can be fixations in some cases. Freud is of the opinion that one must fulfil the needs of a particular stage before passing on to the next stage. If not, fixations can occur, where the individual will continue to, unconsciously, crave for the unfulfilled needs; and this will be reflected in adult life as well. Freud explains that if fixation occurs, the individual tends to focus on those elements which gives pleasure in that particular fixated stage. Oral fixation, which occurs due to conflicts in the oral stage, can cause negative behaviours associated with mouth, like nail-biting, thumb-sucking, and even being overly talkative and manipulative and having trust issues. The infant has not been able to resolve the emotional conflicts and this leads to oral fixation. There can be fixations in other stages also (*Interpretation* 169).

The protagonist of Yudkowsky's fan fiction manifests characteristics of a person with oral fixation. Having lost his genetic mother at the age of one year, he is deprived of the care and comfort, both physical and psychological, that an infant is in need of in the oral stage of development. Although he is immediately adopted by Petunia and Michel Verres, Harry is not able to strike a close comfortable relationship with them. This is reflected in his disapproval of his parents' attitude. In case of Harry, there are high chances that the oral stage is not completed

as it should be. The oral stage is also the period when the infant would develop trust and learn whom to trust and whom to mistrust. Freud and, later, Erik Erikson in *Childhood and Society* (1950), opine that if the oral stage is not completed in the right way, the infant may have trust issues and would have difficulty in depending on others and accepting the environment around as safe. Yudkowsky does not portray Hogwarts as a safe space. It is a darker space. The fact that the fan fiction dedicates around 20 chapters alone to address the issue of bullying is indicative of the lack of reassurance and safety in this space.

Other characteristics of oral fixation include the inability to maintain relationships, and also having a manipulative and over-talkative personality. Yudkowsky's Harry Potter does not develop warm friendships at Hogwarts in his initial months and always subjects Hogwarts and magic to his scientific experiments. His friendship with Draco Malfoy and Hermione Granger is mostly about conducting long experiments on various concepts in the magical world. He does not shy away from asking questions and always has a lot to opionate about. His explanations on scientific theories are quite lengthy that it takes most part of the chapters. He knows to manipulate other characters to bring him into his side of the story. Hence, Draco admits to the absurdity of the concept of pure-blood superiority (350). He even manages to manipulate Professor McGonagall into succumbing to his wishes when they visit Diagon Alley together:

...Or better yet, I'll make the deal a little sweeter for you, okay? Just let me buy-"

"Mr. Potter! You think you can bribe me?"

"What? No! Not like that! I'm saying, Hogwarts can keep some of the books I bring, if you think that any of them would make good additions to the library.

I'm going to be getting them cheap, and I just want to have them around somewhere or other. It's okay to bribe people with books, right? That's a -"

"Family tradition."

"Yes, exactly."

Professor McGonagall's body seemed to slump, the shoulders lowering within her black robes. "I cannot deny the sense of your words, though I much wish I could. I will allow you to withdraw an additional hundred Galleons, Mr. Potter." She sighed again. "I know that I shall regret this, and I am doing it anyway." (35)

Although the protagonist has elements of oral fixation, it can be assumed that he has progressed to the next stages of psychosexual development while maintaining the said fixation.

The previous chapters of this thesis demonstrated how the fan reader moves from the oral stage to the anal stage. Unlike Lippert's fan fiction, however, Yudkowsky's fan fiction depicts the transformation with a glitch, the oral fixation. Norman Holland, in *Dynamics*, while discussing the oral stage, mentions that the second half of the oral stage is a sadistic part. This is because, during this stage, the infant has the wish to incorporate both the desired contents and the feared contents of the mother's body into itself. Thus the second half is described as "...an aggressive return to the original at-oneness" (37). This explains the negotiated position that is lenient towards the oppositional position adopted by Yudkowsky's fan fiction. Also, in the latter half of oral stage, the infant may even see the mouth as a threat. Mouth, which is usually associated with the sense of dependency, also indicates at the means to pleasure. The child's act

of putting things into mouth (incorporation) means making things part of himself and ensuring that they will always be with him. But it can also be a threat in the sense that

the child may imagine that he empties the mother's body by devouring out of it various threatening objects ... in adult life, this defensive eating could become the attempt to create a cushioning, defensive wall of fat between oneself and the rest of the world ... (38).

This once again leads us to the epigraphs of the initial chapters. The epigraphs are directly addressed to J. K. Rowling and the *Harry Potter* books. One may not fail to notice that the words used are mostly sarcastic and aggressive. For instance, the chapter 3 begins thus: "If J. K. Rowling asks you about this story, you know nothing" (25). For chapter 19, the epigraph says, "Blood for the blood god! Skulls for J. K. Rowling!" (281). Devouring as a way to incorporate and ensure the things will remain with him is more evident in the epigraph to chapter 22: "The key to strategy is not to choose a path to J. K. Rowling, but to choose so that *all* paths lead to J. K. Rowling" (340). The taunt and sarcasm in the words seems now more like a veil created by the writer.

The above discussion leads to the question of whether the fan reader, with the occurrence of oral fixation, can smoothly progress up the ladder of psychosexual development. It was illustrated that the fan reader would pass through the anal stage in the venture phase. The phallic stage succeeds the anal stage. It now becomes necessary to look into whether *Harry Potter and Methods of Rationality*, like the *James Potter* series, reflect the phallic stage and how is it affected by the presence of oral fixation.

The phallic stage, as evident in the analysis of Lippert's fan fiction, is characterized by the elements of oedipal complex, castration anxiety and also the act of identification with the opposite sex parent as a defense mechanism. For Yudkowsky's Harry Potter, mother figures (like Lily Potter and Petunia) are almost absent. This was seen similarly in James Potter's case also. This stage is also marked by the fear of losing autonomy and power. Holland explains that phallic fantasies usually indicate the act of prying into things in a helpless way, like there is not any better option (43). Harry Potter does not seem much interested in what his mother, be it Petunia or Lily, is like. He is more obsessed with the theories of rationality and scientific methods, always seeking the validation of Michel Verres, his father. This identification with the father-figure can be read as a defense mechanism to the fantasies of the phallic stage. Like James Potter, Harry attempts to behave as much like his father as possible. Once introduced into the magical world, Harry does not drop his associations with his father, and continues to interpret the magical world as his father would have done, through rationality.

However, in the magical world, Michel Verres is no longer present, and thus Harry shifts his focus of identification to another character, Professor Quirrell. It is interesting to note Harry's first response to Professor Quirrell, when his father, Michel Verres, is still existent in his world, is one of doubt and anxiety:

"I had the strangest feeling that I knew him..." Harry rubbed his forehead.

"And that I shouldn't ought to shake his hand." Like meeting someone who had been a friend, once, before something went drastically wrong... that wasn't really it at all, but Harry couldn't find words. (26)

This was his first brief meeting with the Professor in the Leaky Cauldron. Later, when Harry begins his year at Hogwarts, he gets to know Quirrell more closely. And he immediately strikes a chord with the Defense Professor. Quirrell has an anti-academic approach to teaching, something that attracts Harry Potter's attention:

“You are here to learn how to defend yourselves against the Dark Arts. Which means, let us be very clear on this, defending yourselves against Dark Wizards. People with wands who want to hurt you and who will likely succeed in doing so unless you hurt them first! There is no defence without offence! There is no defence without fighting! This reality is deemed too harsh for eleven-year-olds by the fat, overpaid, Auror-guarded politicians who mandated your curriculum. To the abyss with those fools! You are here for the subject that has been taught at Hogwarts for eight hundred years! Welcome to your first year of Battle Magic!”

Harry started applauding. He couldn't help himself; it was too inspiring. (209)

Both Harry and Quirrell have the thirst for power, a common thing that immediately connects them. Harry's enthusiastic response in the above quote indicates his immediate identification with Quirrell. Identification with the aggressor is also a defense mechanism. Besides this, Harry's obsessive attempts at rationalization are again seen as a defense mechanism; he is in a constant search of an intellectual reason for something illogical.

Reading together the facts that the protagonist immediately identifies with Professor Quirrell and also Michel Verres and the text taunts Rowling's works through the epigraphs, this may be assumed to be indicative of the phallic stage and its defensive mechanism. According to

Freud, the boy, in the phallic stage, realizes that he cannot possess his mother, but identification with the father-figure is a pathway to mother (117).

As noted, the identification with the father figure is again a response to the irrational fear caused due to castration anxiety. Harry's castration anxiety is manifested in his reluctance to use his wand when there is a problem. Right from his initial weeks at Hogwarts, Harry is aware of the problem of bullying. When it is time to fight back the bullies, he, unlike Rowling's Harry Potter, depends on the time-turner given to him by Professor McGonagall. The Invisibility Cloak and the Time-Turner become his weapons. He uses them to save Hermione from the bullies. When Mad-Eye Moody challenges him to a duel at Dumbledore's office, he uses the Time-Turner and Invisibility Cloak to go back in time, ask Professor Flitwick a defensive spell and then returns to fight Moody (1336). He also uses them when Quirrell takes him to Azkaban on a mission to release Bellatrix Black, so that Dumbledore does not suspect him to be involved in the crime. Harry rarely uses his wand to fight when in dire situations. When Quirrell introduces Battle Magic and divides the students into groups, instead of looking for magic spells to defeat his opponents in the duel, Harry goes in search of magic potions that can be made from the trees and plants in the Forbidden Forest. At a point in the Battle, Harry falls off from the top of a tower; but instead of using his wand magic, he had already drunk a potion that saves him from the fall:

There was a brief moment when Harry's stomach tried to leap up into his throat, and his body tried desperately to orient itself in the absence of any possible way to do so.

There was a brief moment when Harry could feel the Feather-Falling Potion kicking in, starting to slow him, a sort of lurching, cushioning feeling (641).

In short, the wand-less magic and objects like the Invisibility Cloak, Time-turner and potions become the solutions to almost every problem in this fan fiction. All the while, Harry Potter is close to Quirrell, who is later revealed to be Voldemort himself. He identifies with the Defense Professor, agreeing with many of his ideas and thoughts, especially on power and death. However, he is not a dark character as Voldemort:

“Tell me, Harry,” said [Dumbledore], “will you become a monster?”

“No,” said the boy, an iron certainty in his voice.

“Why not?” said the old wizard.

The young boy stood very straight, his chin raised high and proud, and said:

“There is no justice in the laws of Nature, Headmaster, no term for fairness in the equations of motion. The universe is neither evil, nor good, it simply does not care. The stars don’t care, or the Sun, or the sky. But they don’t have to!

We care! There is light in the world, and it is us!” (624)

Despite his admiration for Quirrell, after the illegal break into Azkaban to bring out Bellatrix Black, Harry is wary of his professor. Unlike earlier instances, he sees red flags and he puts his guards up. Thereafter, he does not crave for Quirrell’s recognition much. Harry’s initial admiration for the Defense Professor, who is clearly on the dark side, can cause uneasiness for the readers as well. This is a clear instance of the merging of the binary opposites of the good and the evil. Despite showing signs of being a grey character, Harry eventually proves to be

more lenient towards the good side, while assisting in the fight against bullying, attempts to save Hermione from death, and his distancing from Professor Quirrell. The fantasy of the union of binary opposites is explored through the protagonist itself, and after a few major incidents, the plot of this fan fiction seems to assert that such a union is not acceptable. Hence, Harry ceases to relate himself with Quirrell thereafter. This in itself is a defense mechanism adopted by the narrative of the text, which seems to choose between one among the two binary opposites.

The magical world in this fan fiction is much more indulged in violence and cold cruelty than that in Rowling's work. The young Harry Potter finds Professor Quirrell as an almost father figure initially. However, each meeting with Quirrell only leaves Harry more puzzled and the reader unsettled, as the former starts to reveal the shades of Lord Voldemort:

"Time is wasting," said Professor Quirrell. "Ask your questions, if you have them."

Why, Professor Quirrell, why, why must you be this way, why make yourself the monster, why Lord Voldemort, I know you might not want the same things I do, but I can't imagine what you want that makes this the best way to get it...

That was what Harry's brain wanted to know.

What Harry *needed* to know was... some way out of what was going to happen next.

But the Defense Professor had said that he wouldn't talk about his future plans. It was strange enough that the Defense Professor was willing to talk about *anything* that had to contradict one of his Rules...

"I'm thinking," Harry said aloud.

(1603-1604)

Resistance comes from within the protagonist itself. He realizes that he himself has to be the tool to stop the victory of the evil wizard. His relationship with the mysterious Professor Quirrell is

mixed, one of admiration, fear and uncertainty. Once or twice in the novel, Harry is about to reveal to Quirrell his discovery in Transfiguration, which Dumbledore had made him to swear secrecy to. However, this is stopped from happening in the form of some distraction. This can be seen as a barrier put by the writer of the text that stops the innocence from mingling with the evil. There are hints throughout the fan fiction of the mysterious evil side of Quirrell.

Going by Holland's theory of DEFTing, Harry's admiration for his professor can stir up fear and anxiety within the readers as it is an instance of this mingling of innocence and evil, the binary opposites. Towards the end of this fan fiction, Quirrell manipulates Harry into joining him in his quest for the Philosopher's Stone from below the trapdoor, where it was protected by Dumbledore. After Quirrell, who is now revealed to be Lord Voldemort himself, procures the Stone, he takes Harry to a mysterious place. To stop Harry from fighting back, he had taken his Time-Turner and magic wand. The narrative that follows these events is a mirror to Harry's thoughts:

We don't actually have our wand, said Ravenclaw.

We might get it back at some point, thought the last voice.

But even then, Harry thought, and the grey hopelessness returned, the resonance is something the Dark Lord knows about. He's already thought of everything I can do with that, he already has a response prepared. That was my mistake from the beginning. I didn't respect the Dark Lord's intelligence, I didn't think that maybe he knew everything I knew and could see everything I saw and had already taken it into account.

Then, said the last voice, conditional on our winning, we must have hit him with something he doesn't know about.

(1663)

By this point in the fan fiction, the protagonist no longer identifies with Quirrell, nor does he crave for recognition from this character. He has realized the true colours of the Professor, who had been an almost father-figure for him earlier. The state of being wandless as a result of the intimidating power of Quirrell can be read as an explicit manifestation of the castration complex and the fear of losing autonomy. However, the above quote also shows that the protagonist is not ready to succumb to the intimidation. This readiness to fight back with another weapon and the conscious effort to stop seeking recognition from Quirrell marks the point of growth from the phallic stage to the next level, the latent stage.

As promised, Voldemort prepares to revive Hermione Granger after his own resurrection. It is at this instance that Harry demands his wand back. Voldemort, however, does not return Harry his wand.

“You do not [need it].” High the voice and cruel. “You learned to sustain a Transfiguration by touch alone, without further use of the wand. You can likewise break your own Transfiguration wandlessly, by commanding your sustaining magic to drain away. Do so now.” (1668).

Regaining autonomy is not an easy process for the protagonist. Later, it becomes necessary that Harry perform a spell to complete the ritual of Hermione's revival. He is finally handed over his wand (1672). Here after, Harry stealthily performs his magic, using his wand so as to defeat his

nemesis. Harry uses his novel partial-transfiguration technique and his wand magic together to finally beat Voldemort (1698).

When Harry return to Hogwarts after the final defeat of Voldemort, he is much more mature and values his friendship with Hermione Granger. He is better at maintaining relationships and looks up at Dumbledore (and other parent-like adult figures) with more respect and acceptance. Also, like James Potter, Harry, more balanced and relaxed, is now involved in the affairs of the school and the maintenance of peace in the larger wizarding world. In other words, he is a character whose impulses are sublimated into more day-to-day activities, a characteristic of the latent stage of psychosexual development. Also, it seems that Harry is learning to overcome the problems of oral fixation as well. As in the case of the *James Potter* series, the majority of this fan fiction also depicts the phallic stage and only the final few chapters are dedicated to the latent stage.

It is worth noting that the pattern of progress has a lot of similarities with that pattern seen in the *James Potter* series. What is common is that, both the fan fiction manifests the yearning to be united with the mother-like source text, although Yudkowsky has an aggressive tone of rejection while Lippert's tone is more pleasant and accommodating. The presence of oral fixation, in case of Yudkowsky, may be a reason for the difference in tone between the two fan fictions. The fantasy of the union of binary opposites is also manifested in this fan fiction, where the union was hinted in the scenes between Harry Potter and Professor Quirrell/Voldemort. However, despite the oral fixation, the protagonist manages to progress through the phallic stage and into the latent stage.

It is mentioned that both *Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality* and the *James Potter* series majorly reflects the phallic stage. The latent phase is depicted only in the final few pages of the fan fiction. Plausible explanations for the obsessive interest of the narrative on one particular stage are the frustration experienced by the fan reader and also the overindulgence of the fan reader in the mother-like source text. It has been established that the *Harry Potter* books have satisfied the psychic needs of the fan reader in an acceptable manner. Yet, the frustration and overindulgence occur because the fan reader is reluctant to leave behind the benefits enjoyed in the initial stages. As said before, this is what Freud called fixation, where the person finds it difficult to move on to the next stage. Despite the fixation, the fan fiction does acknowledge the next stage of psychosexual development in the end.

In light of this theory, we may infer that, by the time one has transformed from a state of fan reader to a state of fan fiction writer, one must have transitioned from the oral stage to the latent stage of development. “Thus, when we move from pre-genital – oral, anal, phallic – fantasies to the oedipal level, we make an important transition both in life and in letters: from solitary or one-to-one relation with others to the complicated triangles and quadrilaterals of adult relationships” (*Dynamics* 46). Holland asserts that the oedipal stage is an outgrowth of the previous phases. As in the case of the select fan fiction, the fan reader, when transformed into a fan fiction writer, has moved beyond the phallic stage into the latent stage. In the above quote, the phrase, “transition both in life and in letters”, leads us to the conclusion that this is a transition or transformation that occurs at the personal level for the fan reader as an individual, and also a maturation that is manifested in his or her writings. Here, the transformation is of the individual as well as the text, in other words.

The question that arises now is what would happen to the mother-child bond created between the fan reader and the source text once the former progresses from the oral and anal stages into the phallic and latent stages. The influence of the psychic impulses cannot be ignored in the writing process also. While the unconscious fantasy of binary opposites is explored, the writer has resorted to defence mechanisms so that the conscious mind is free of guilt and anxiety. In the effort to cover up the psychic desires, how would the nature of the relationship with the transitional object, the *Harry Potter* books, change?

3.4 Maintaining Contact with the Transitional Object

It was demonstrated, in chapter I, that there is a kind of mother-child relationship between the source text and fan reader. Fan fiction is the expression of the will to return to the mother-like source text. The wish to reunite with the nurturing environment is expressed in various ways, at times even as dangerous. The *James Potter* series and *Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality* returns to Rowling's magical world but portrays a much more evil and dangerous world. While Yudkowsky sets his story in the same time period as that of the *Harry Potter* series, Lippert's fan fiction is set 19 years later. Both the magical worlds are much more advanced in terms of magical skills and scientific progress. Along with these advancements, the negative sides of the magical worlds are also highlighted. Yudkowsky's epigraphs and Lippert's "Note to Reader" at the end of his fiction all reveal that there is a deep desire to return and stay connected to the mother-like source text. In an earlier section of this chapter, it was illustrated how the fan fiction tends to return to and seek reassurance from the *Harry Potter* books through frequent references to the characters and events in it. As Norman Holland would have put it, the attempt to return is pleasurable in its own way.

Lippert's fan fiction is placed within the space of Rowling's novels and at the same time aims to be free from it. Like Professor Franklin says about the American flying cars, this fan fiction and its frequent references to the *Harry Potter* novels "is indeed a great convenience and a touch of comfort" (*The Hall of the Elders' Crossing* 109). Comfort and security are what one would look for in the transitional object. The Hogwarts setting itself becomes a space of familiarity and comfort for the fan reader and also the fan fiction writer. This is also reflected in both the fan fiction, where the protagonists find safety within the same setting.

Similar to Harry Potter's first trip to the Forbidden Forest in *The Philosopher's Stone*, James' first trip to the forest turns out to be mysterious and adventurous. The pattern followed is the same: the students divide into groups so as to search for something, have a scary experience, and are then saved by a centaur (as in the case of Harry) or a tree spirit (as in the case of James). Both are then warned of Voldemort and dangerous events in the future. Later in the fan fiction, James steals Harry Potter's Invisibility Cloak and Marauder's Map, in anticipation of the adventure he would have to go through. Now, "he felt much more equipped to tackle whatever adventures were sure to come" (*The Hall of the Elders' Crossing* 215). In all these instances, the narrative of the fan fiction turns to the same tactics used in the source texts. There is a dependency upon the source text for solutions to the problems. The *Harry Potter* books have succeeded in letting the fan reader believe that problems can be solved and thus safety is assured. The reader here is reassured and also better prepared, having already tackled similar problems through the source text.

Finding security and comfort in the same space as in the source text is again seen in the concluding chapters of both the fan fiction. In *Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality*, toward the end, Voldemort had threatened the young Harry Potter to destroy Hogwarts School

and kill the students if the boy does not obey and succumb to him. But with his skills in transfiguration, Harry manages to save Hogwarts, Hermione Granger and the other students. The final chapters of this fan fiction describe a magical world which is peaceful and comforting:

Upon a roof floored in square stony tiles, the brilliant morning Sun blazes down upon two not-really-children-anymore, both in blue-fringed black robes, facing each other across crossed wands Far beneath them are visible the green hills, and the lake ... The sky is nearly unclouded, but for faint tinges of orange-white where wisps of moisture reflect the sunlight. A light breeze carries the crisp chill of dawn, and the dampness of morning; but the huge blazing golden globe is now risen high above the horizon, and its incandescence casts warmth on everything it touches. (1792)

Similarly, in the *James Potter* series, the final act is one of a major war (like that in Rowling's books) that threatens to destroy Hogwarts and the whole magical world. Throughout the series, the magical world is frequently threatened by outside forces. However, the epilogue of this fan fiction demonstrates a magical world that is safe and peaceful. Lippert echoes the same soothing mood as in the end of the *Harry Potter* novels, where Harry wishes to return to his bed in the Gryffindor tower:

[James] considered going upstairs to the boys' dormitory and finding an old student bed to sleep in. It was a ridiculous thought, of course. It made him smile. His trunk was already stowed in the formal guest quarters adjacent to the headmaster's suite, just waiting for him to move across the hall tomorrow and start his new life. He would not look back. Not when there was so very much to look forward to. Thus, he decided to go to the guest quarters after all. He was confident that he would

sleep exceptionally well, and awaken ready for whatever new adventures awaited him, this time from the other side of that ancient, foreboding headmaster's desk, with the Sorting Hat snoozing on its shelf behind him. Perhaps he would even get a phoenix. On that note, he climbed through the portrait hole, leaving the portrait of the Fat Lady, snoring daintily in her frame, to swing gently shut behind him.

(The Crimson Thread 613).

Here, the connection with the transitional object is restored and secured. For the fan reader, who now writes the fan fiction, a restoring of the connection is quite comforting as it was once a safe space for them, and now they can continue to explore their deep inner conflicts without being threatened.

The contact with the transitional object is maintained throughout the fan fiction and secured in the end. Hogwarts School and the related characters like Albus Dumbledore are important for the protagonists of both the select fan fiction. While Hogwarts eventually becomes a second home for Lippert's James Potter and Yudkowsky's Harry Potter, Albus Dumbledore becomes mentor and saviour in the respective fan fiction. Though Yudkowsky's Harry Potter's relationship with Dumbledore is one of scepticism and frequent disapproval, with Dumbledore's attempt and sacrifice to save him from Voldemort in the final scenes of the fiction, the young boy's perspective of the old headmaster and his styles changes:

...You're acting like you think Dumbledore was unaware of those facts, or just ignoring them, when he made his decision. It's true that sometimes stupid people, like me, make decisions that crazy. But not Dumbledore. He was *not* mad." Harry swallowed, forcing a sudden moisture away from his eyes. "I think... I'm beginning to realize... Dumbledore was the only sane person, in all

of this, all along. The *only* one who was doing the right things for anything like the right reasons...”(1738).

Lippert brings back the old headmaster, although for a very short period of time and in the form of an imprint from the past in *The Morrigan Web*. This represents the preservation of the transitional experience (which is a life-long one, as Winnicott points out) and the interplay with the unconscious alongside the engagement with reality.

The above explanation based on Winnicott’s theory also gives us an idea as to why at all write a fiction based on an already existing fiction. The frequent contact with the transitional object is important for the development of a writer. Writing based on an object which has comforted you at an unconscious level helps to overcome the inner fears and anxieties and to attain a level of emotional satisfaction. Fan fiction, by using the events, characters and settings of the source text, are, in fact, securing this contact more firmly. This might be a reason for the huge popularity for fan fiction.

3.5 Reunion with the Mother-like Source Text: The Central Fantasy

Once the contact with the transitional object is established, it is an easy path to reunite with the mother figure. Eliezer Yudkowsky begins many of the initial chapters in *Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality* with an epigraph, or rather comments, addressed to J. K. Rowling. The first few chapters mention that this fan fiction and the readers are being watched by Rowling. Later, in chapter 7, he says that J. K. Rowling has approved of fan-fictions:

Whoa. A spokesman for Rowling’s literary agent said that Rowling is okay with the existence of fan-fiction as long as no one charges for it and everyone’s clear that the original copyrights belong to her? That’s really cool of her. So thank you, JKR, and thine is the kingdom! (73).

And, in chapter 14, the epigraph is “*Melenkurionabathal. Duroc minas mill J. K. Rowling*” (179). These words, said to be from an unknown language, are taken from Stephen R. Donaldson’s fantasy series *The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant, the Unbeliever* (1977). In Donaldson’s story, the chanting of these words invokes powerful magic to the protagonist. These words are a blessing calling upon the beneficial magical force of Earth power. Yudkowsky’s comments directly addressed to Rowling, although in a taunting manner, expresses this pleasure in returning to the source text and also in re-shaping (or, distorting) it in his own ways, thereby, satisfying the writer’s needs. However, such a lapsing into the nurturing environment can be dangerous and can even unsettle the reader. Analyzing Joseph Conrad’s *The Secret Agent* in *Dynamics*, Norman Holland says, “The novel, though it builds on a wish to lapse into an engulfing, nurturing environment, builds against the wish. It presents that environment as dangerous and dirty” (259). The same can be true for Yudkowsky’s fan fiction also. Hence, the coldly cruel magical world and the constant poke through the epigraphs are rendered. Also, as noted earlier, this fan fiction takes a negotiated position lenient to the oppositional position. In short, the aggression, taunt and negotiated positions are all ways to be united with the mother-like source text.

Lippert, on the other hand, even takes a step further and brings in J. K. Rowling herself as Professor Revalvier in *The Curse of the Gatekeeper*. In *The Morrigan Web*, it is mentioned that Revalvier is Rowling herself:

“But even when I thought all of this was just a story, I never believed Dumbledore would come back. Not the way my friends thought he would. J. K. Row-- er!” She caught herself and smiled guiltily at James. “Er, I mean Professor Revalvier... she would never pull any cheap trick like that, bringing

back a character we all thought had really died. Even if the readers really wanted it. It would seem... cheap, somehow. But do you want to know what *I* always thought?" This last she asked in a hushed voice, caught between embarrassment and excitement. Her dark eyes glimmered in the twilight. "I always thought Dumbledore would come back as a *ghost*."

(426-27)

In Lippert's fan fiction, James Potter's fifth and sixth years at Hogwarts does not exist, or it is not elaborated at all. The writer reduces these years into a few sentences. By *The Morrigan Web* and *The Crimson Thread*, the frequencies of the references to Rowling's books have significantly reduced. Lippert's books have established an identity of their own, that is still connected to the source text but is capable of independent existence.

By the final book in the series, James has gained a reputation of his own that is not involved with the legend of his father. Rather than being attached to his father, he is now much more confident in his own self. "Secretly, James was rather content with that. He had long since shrugged off the shroud of living under his father's legendary shadow. But still, not having any such shadow to live under for his seventh year was remarkable freeing" (*The Crimson Thread* 70). This final book is set majorly in Hogwarts School itself. The above quote leads to the impression that this fan fiction is now free from the tendency to depend on the source text, yet has established a comfortable connection with it. There is the sense of security restored, being in the comfortable transitional space.

The final chapters of *The Crimson Thread* wind up the whole fan fiction series. James wakes up at the Hogwarts' Hospital Wing, after his final adventure, into a normal chaos-free

world. He had witnessed the banishment of Judith and Odin Vann and also the death of Petra Morganstern. The world that he wakes up into, however, has not known the chaos or destruction described till that in the previous two books. It is explained that everything that occurred was in a different timeline and hence a different reality, which only James seems to have witnessed. James wakes up as if from a horrible dream, and Madam Curio assures him that he is safe (589). Later Headmaster Merlin tells him about an alternative reality:

“Indeed,” the headmaster nodded. “It did not happen. After a night of much fretting, of midnight vigils and frantic crowds, of millions watching the skies and oceans, of families huddled in terror, and entire villages marching en masse to confront imagined harbingers of doom... the darkness faded, and the sun came up, and the birds sang their happy songs. Life, with the perfect blitheness of ancient habit, simply went on. As of this morning, the population of the world has metaphorically blinked with surprise, shuffled its feet in mingled embarrassment and relief, laughed a little at itself, and with a bemused shrug, gone back about its normal business.” (593).

Merlin’s explanations come as a relief to both the protagonists as well as the readers. After exploring in depth, the consequences of the unacceptable union of binary opposites from various perspectives, the narrative gives a convenient explanation through Merlin’s words, that all of that was more or less a bad dream and not something that really happened. All of it was nightmares, unproven predictions and prophecies, or rather things that happened in the unknown dark place only. Dreams were being mixed with reality and things go into a manic level that the protagonist is forced to act upon it (594). Merlin further explains that what James experienced was a reality that almost happened but somehow did not. Petra Morganstern is removed early enough from the

reality of this world that James now inhibits, so that the destruction caused by the attack on the Vault of the Destinies did not really happen as it was depicted in *The Vault of the Destinies*. It was a reality that everyone dreamed of and could have happened, but was avoided because it had a lot of unacceptable elements.

In brief, the protagonist as well as readers has returned from the exploration of the unconscious realm, and now the reign is with the conscious part of mind, the ego and super-ego. Having passed through the oral, anal, phallic and latent stages, the fan reader, who has developed into a fan fiction writer, has now learned to master the psychic impulses and bring a balance between the needs of the id and the super-ego. This balance and satisfaction are attained with the help of certain defence mechanisms, and the conscious part is satisfied.

By giving a version of the normal Hogwarts, as explained by Merlin in the last chapters of *The Crimson Thread*, Lippert makes sure that they are back to the familiar, comfortable secure space. The relation with the transitional object is re-established. There is growth in terms of psychosexual development and also there is reunion with the mother-figure in an acceptable manner.

For the fan reader who has decided to venture into the gaps, the fiction that he or she develops from within these gaps is a transformed one. The psychic anxieties are addressed now, the psychic fantasy is explored and it is transformed into an acceptable form, thereby evicting out the negative emotion. The fan reader experiences this fantasy and also supplies it with his or her own subjectivities. As noted earlier, the central fantasy of a fan reader is the reunion with the mother-figure. In this case, the fan reader secures its relation with the protective transitional space by developing a story based on the source text. In other words, the reunion with the

mother-figure is achieved through the fan fiction, basing it on the characters, events and settings of the *Harry Potter* novels. Although, both Yudkowsky and Lippert have put in their own subjective identities in their works, their respective fan fiction finds comfort and assurance by returning to the same space they find in the *Harry Potter* books.

CONCLUSION

This research began with the curious question of how a fan reader assumes agency over someone else's literary text and turns into a fan fiction writer. The thesis began with the assumption that the fan reader goes through a particular process so as to develop into a writer. This metamorphosis of the fan reader to a fan fiction writer has been traced with the aid of psychoanalytic reader response theories. The metamorphosis can be broken down into three phases, the pre-venture phase, the venture phase and the post-venture phase.

The in-depth study of the three phases helped to understand how a fan reader, who is emotionally invested in the source text at a higher degree, responds to the text and how the psyche has a role in the meanings deciphered by the fan reader. The pre-venture phase is one of active imagination which is coupled with intellectual curiosity. There is also the willingness to explore new things and experiences. It is also indicative of the productivity, psychological resilience and ego strength within the fan reader. The urge to attain certain unconscious psychic desires pushes the fan reader into venturing the gaps in the source text to explore them more. It is from within the gaps that he or she develops more meanings to the source text and eventually the fan fiction itself. This, the venture phase, is a stage of reflection, where they choose what to write and what not to write. The ego and the super-ego play a major role in this stage, constantly reminding them what is acceptable and what is not acceptable in the society, and also helping in the transformation of the unacceptable into an acceptable form. The writer may retrieve details from memory as well. The ideas generated during this stage may become original if the writer tries to go beyond what comes to the mind first. This pondering over the idea is encouraged so as to combine ideas that are not usually combined, and thereby bring in originality to the newly conceiving text. The fan reader may even realize that this venture is important to evict out the

negative feelings of anxiety and distress and attain emotional satisfaction. In the post-venture phase, the fan reader has looked for alternative possibilities in the gaps so that a new meaning is developed which is acceptable both for his or her psyche as well as the ego and super ego parts of the mind. This is also important for the fan fiction to be accepted by the community around the developing fan fiction writer. While in the post-venture phase, the central fantasy of reunion with the mother-figure is again transformed in such a way that it does not cause any distress to the writer or reader. Instead, both readers and writers are comfortable and accept it. The transformed fantasy is finally expressed in a verbal form. Parallel to the transition from the pre-venture to the post-venture phase, this research also brought into light the progression of the fan reader from the oral stage to the latent stage of psychosexual development. Thus, this study leads to the conclusion that the metamorphosis of the fan reader into a fan fiction writer is a three-phase process which is accompanied by the progression in the psychosexual development.

When a reader responds to a text in the initial reading, while in the pre-venture phase, he or she tends to ignore the gaps within the text. Wolfgang Iser and Norman Holland both have emphasized on the importance of these unwritten parts, called gaps, of the source text in influencing the response of the reader. Analyzing the role of the gaps in the pre-venture phase, it became evident that the gaps in the *Harry Potter* books are mostly of two kinds; one, where certain elements are deliberately dropped incomplete due to the demand of the plot (as in the case of a secret weapon to be stolen by Voldemort) and two, where the unconscious desires are covered up in these gaps (where the fantasy of the union of binary opposites is glimpsed and immediately concealed through some distractions). While one kind catches the attention of the conscious, intellectual part of the readers' mind, the other kind appeals to the unconscious part of the mind. The gaps, therefore, are spaces within the text where the unconscious fantasy is

hidden. They are also spaces with a lot of possibilities for exploration. The fan reader may enjoy the security and comfort offered by the text. Yet, it is within the gaps that the fan reader risks this very security and comfort. While some gaps are ignored because they do not align to the overall plot of the fiction, some other gaps (those that appeal to unconscious desires) are initially ignored because they tend to cause distress and anxiety to the conscious mind. However, while filling one gap chosen consciously by the fan reader, the other gaps that appeal to the unconscious desires are filled knowingly or unknowingly.

This takes us to the next research question raised at the beginning of this thesis. Why has the fan reader chosen a particular gap from the source text to fill? Analyzing the *Harry Potter* books and the fan fiction, the *James Potter* series and *Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality*, it was concluded that there are some common psychic fantasies working within all the texts. The unconscious fantasy of the union of binary opposites is glimpsed a number of times in the *Harry Potter* books. The union of the unacceptable binary opposites is taken up as a major theme in Lippert's fan fiction. However, when it comes to *Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality*, elements of such a union are not easy to trace owing to the fact that Yudkowsky's protagonist himself is a grey character. What is more evident in both the select fan fiction is the desire to reunite with the mother-like source text, although both express this in different tones. What both fan fiction manifest is the yearn to be back in the psychological space of comfort and security offered by the *Harry Potter* books, that the fan reader has experienced while being in the oral stage of psychosexual development then. On the conscious level, the fan writer may choose those gaps which appeal to their overt socio-cultural perspectives and also keeping in mind the expectations of their own readers. But on the unconscious level, the gaps that have more possibility of gratifying the psychic needs will be explored more. Of course, the writer, now

being in the anal stage of psychosexual development, can choose to back off and explore another gap at any point of time. This occurs while in the venture phase. The venture phase, unlike the other two phases for which the select primary texts are available for reference, is much more abstract. The developments in this phase cannot be exactly pinpointed, as they occur mostly within the mind of a person. Assumptions, which are backed up by theories in psychoanalysis and reader response, may be resorted to. Despite all the psychological reasons, the role of the source text in guiding the fan reader to persuade a particular gap(s) cannot be disregarded. Do they restrict or promote the reader in their creative writing?

Reader response theories shifted the focus from the author as the producer of meanings to the analysis of the cathartic experience that a reader undergoes while in the process of reading. Readings of the essays of Roland Barthes, Wolfgang Iser and Stanley Fish reveal that the fan fiction are the creative results of the meanings produced by the reader. In Barthes' essay, "Death of the Author" (1967), it is said that, as far as the reader is concerned, the role of the author in defining the meaning of the text is a hindrance. If the author is involved, it restricts the freedom of the reader to explore the various possibilities that the text offers. Thus, Barthes welcomes the idea of the removal of the author's role in developing the meanings.

For fan fiction, the "death" of the author never takes place. The prominent position that is traditionally attributed to the author of the source text is displaced. Despite this, the author remains important to the understanding of the text. It is seen that when an author creates a text, he/she will have certain intentions (or meanings) in his/her mind within which the author has constructed the narrative of the text. The narrative is itself a result of the desires of the psyche of the author to produce certain meanings. The conscious and unconscious desires, as Freudians would put it, has influenced the text that is being created by the author. So, meanings of a text

exist within a particular context, which the author has narrated. For Barthes, the concept of the death of the Author was liberation, as far as the reader is concerned. But the Author is not completely thrown out of the text, and continues to exert its influence over the text. As a result of this exertion of its authority, although from a peripheral position, the reader can neither reject the author's text, nor can accept the author's text entirely. This is explicit in the case of fan fiction. They take forward the ideas of the author from the source text, and, at the same time, invest it with their own ideas. If Lippert has developed an American version of Rowling's magical world in his fan fiction, the work also frequently returns to the magical world as depicted by Rowling. This proves the fan fiction's dependency on the author of source text as well the exertion of the influence of the source text. Fan fiction, as noted earlier while analyzing them in the light of Stanley Fish's essay, are bound to the source text, the canon. This binding restricts them to a great extent in exploring the myriad possibilities of the text.

It is also evident from the analyses that the source text also contributes to the promotion of creativity and the imagination of fan readers. The role of the gaps cannot be less emphasized here. As showcased, the gaps in the text can trigger the curiosity and imagination of the reader. The text can distract and even manipulate the reader to certain interpretations. However, the text or the reader cannot be fully dissociated from the socio-political and cultural contexts inherent in them.

Analyzing the *Harry Potter* books and the select fan fiction in the light of the theories put forward by Donald Winnicott, Sigmund Freud and Norman Holland also brought out another major function of the source text. The text functions as a transitional object for the fan reader and, therefore, offers to be the mother-figure in the oral stage of the fan readers' psychosexual

development. This mother-child relationship between the text and the fan reader is important in the promotion of the creativity of fan reader.

Fan fictions have the potential to destabilize the idea of a single representation of a text. This destabilizing also gives fan writers and readers an opportunity to recognize other possibilities of the text as well as one's own uncertain psychic desires, rather than simply categorizing themselves into one single identity or meaning. Unlike other readers, fans may recognize these categorizations and its restrictions better, and they also dare to explore the potential of the categories further. They understand and also come to terms with their own as well as other non-conforming identities. The relationship between a text and its readers changes into a dynamic one with fan fiction. Fan fiction writers also exhibited a relationship that was beneficial for both the reader as well as the text. They build upon and transform the source text. Each fan fiction contributed to the meaning of the text and various interpretations based on it. In other words, a new perspective was being added to a text, which had in its turn contributed a new perspective (or meaning) to the reader. This is like an evolutionary process that ensures dynamicity that is driven by the tension between the influence of the source text and the innovation through fan writing. As the reader-response theorists would put it, the authority of the original text and its author over the meaning and interpretations was completely shaken, and fan fiction succeeded in transferring this authority over to the reader (who may then become an amateur writer). In short, despite the restrictions caused due to the fan fiction's inevitable dependence on it, the source text does assist the fan reader to develop into an empowered state and climb up the ladder in psychosexual development. However, the pressure to express the psychic desires too has a major role in building up the creativity of the fan reader further. As seen in the venture phase, the psyche would strive to make its presence known and it is the job of

the ego to negotiate between the psychic desires and the demands of the super ego through various defense mechanisms.

Freud, in “Creative Writers and Day Dreaming” (1908), says that the writer creates a world of his own or rearranges the things of his world in various ways that he finds amusing. It would be wrong to think that he does not take this world seriously. On the contrary, he takes his play very seriously and he expands large amounts of emotion on it. This is explicit in the select fan fiction of the *Harry Potter* novels. G. Norman Lippert, in the *James Potter* series, brought in his own ideas and imagination and came up with a plot, which is similar to the canon in structure and at the same time quite different from it. The American version of the magical world is an idea of his own, and he has rearranged many of Rowling’s ideas in his own way (as in the case of the ClutchCudgel sports, a few characters in the original series, Alma Aleron School, and the like). Lippert continues to stick to the canon, throughout his American version. The creative writer, according to Freud, does the same as the child at play. He creates a world of phantasy which he takes seriously – that is, which he invests with large amounts of emotion – while separating it sharply from reality. Thus, what Freud said about creative writers is quite applicable to the concept of fan fiction too.

Freud further says that the child who is at play is very well capable of distinguishing the reality from his imagined world. However, the child “likes to link his imagined objects and situations to the tangible and visible things in the real world. This linking is all that differentiates the child’s ‘play’ from ‘phantasying’”. (421). Towards the end of Eliezer Yudkowsky’s *Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality*, Harry and Hermione talks about an alternative Harry Potter boy:

“I’ve been thinking,” Harry said, his own voice going soft, “about the alternate Harry Potter, the person I might have been if Voldemort hadn’t attacked my parents.” *If Tom Riddle hadn’t tried to copy himself onto me.* “That other Harry Potter wouldn’t have been as smart, I guess. He probably wouldn’t have studied much Muggle science, even if his mother was a Muggleborn. But that other Harry Potter would’ve had... the capacity for warmth, that he inherited from James Potter and Lily Evans, he would’ve cared about other people and tried to save his friends, I know that would have been true, because that’s something that Lord Voldemort never did, you see...”

...

“I can just imagine it,” Hermione said. “Harry James Potter, Sorted into Gryffindor, aspiring Quidditch player -”

(1790)

This description in Yudkowsky’s work is pointed directly towards Rowling’s Harry Potter. This fan fiction clearly distinguished itself from the source text. The above quoted conversation in this fan fiction can be seen as a linking to the source text and at the same time a rejection of the source text in search of an alternative, like a child’s play.

When a gap in a text is explored by a fan reader for its alternate possibilities, what he or she has are the potential fantasies offered by the source text and the various defensive strategies that transform the fantasy into an intellectual, acceptable meaning. Besides these, there are the fan reader’s own fantasies and defensive strategies. Also, the anxieties and fears related to the conscious as well as unconscious needs are brought in. In other words, the outcome of the

exploration of the gaps is contributed from both the source text and the fan reader. On the conscious level, the fan reader would give intellectual meanings to the text. On the unconscious level, as Holland says, “we introject the text and feel its nuclear fantasy as though it were our own unconscious fantasy – yet we are not aware of it as such” (*Dynamics* 180). The fantasy and the intellectual meanings deciphered are connected. The intellectual meaning is a transformed form (with the help of the ego) of the “unacceptable fantasy content” (181). This transformation of the central fantasy into intellectual meaning reduces the fear, anxiety and guilt experienced by the reader, and also allows the expression of and the pleasure from the fantasy.

As in the case of a fan reader in the pre-venture phase, it is the very curiosity and the need for emotional satisfaction that makes the fan reader write a fan fiction. The need for pleasure, and perhaps double pleasure (as seen while filling the gap), is the motivating factor behind the demand for aesthetic and intellectual meaning from a text. The play with ideas and words is an additional source of pleasure; and the inner needs are gratified in some disguised form as seen earlier. The reader is able to “solve the riddle of emotions and sexuality by purely intellectual means” (Holland 171). The reader is always in *need* of meaning. The disbelief in the text is willingly suspended because of this need. Holland explains that “we do so because we need the various strategies built into a work of art to handle for us the competing demands of id, ego, and super-ego” (179).

As portrayed in the analyses of the primary texts in this research, every time a barrier is put up by the text, there is relief within the reader. They use the barriers within the text to manage their own inner fears and sense of loss. They project emotions of love and hate onto the characters within the fan fiction. It is worth noting that there is a repetition of the same kind of emotions from the *Harry Potter* books, within the reader while reading the fan fiction as well. In

other words, the select fan fiction also express the same emotions introjected from the *Harry Potter* books. Our pre-existing emotions are projected out through the fan fiction. When these feelings are again expressed through fan fiction, there is increase in pleasure also. Also, similar kind of defenses is seen in the select fan fiction. The ending of each book is set in deep, mysterious places. There are also reassurances in the form of Albus Dumbledore and other adult figures. The psychic fantasy of the dangerous union of good and evil is again repeated and explored in depth in this fan fiction. To summarize, the fan fiction is a familiar handling of an already familiar fantasy.

The question is what motivates the fan reader into the assumption of agency over the source texts and its reinterpretation. The role of the psyche, the unconscious desires or fantasies, in pressurizing the fan reader into a response are discussed. Merely evoking a response and writing those down in a creative manner are two different aspects. Writing, of course, requires more effort, determination and a stronger motivation. Studies on the psychological aspects of creative writing have emphasized how the very act of writing something creative is beneficial for the writer. For instance, Adele Kohanyi, in the study “The more I write, the better I write” (2009), observes that inculcating a positive mood in the participants, before and while writing, helps to relax their minds and to regard the environment as safe. This prompts them to explore more. Also, a positive mood helped the participants to generate more creative ideas. In the case of the *Harry Potter* novels, positive mood is inculcated through its hopeful tone and frequent reassurances at the end of each book of the series. These are needed for the emotionally-dependent fan reader to move forward with the text. The unconscious mind would be equipped to endure and enjoy whatever happens in relation to the character that the reader has identified with. Whenever someone’s mind loses confidence in any circumstance, it is important that he or she is

made to feel positive in the mind in order to move forward and succeed (which is the ultimate desire of the psyche). Kohanyi also elaborates in the above-mentioned article about studies which were done to analyze the creative response of the writers who have been inculcated with negative moods. These writers do not generate many ideas, compared to the positive mood participants. But negative mood participants tended to reject the conventional approaches and solutions in their writings. Yudkowsky's fan fiction rejects the conventional endings of the *Harry Potter* novels. Kohanyi asserts that despite the difference in the ideas generated, the act of writing improved the overall mood of the participants. "Positive emotions were intensified and negative emotions blunted, regardless of the type of the writing task" (45). One may note that the *Harry Potter* novels have an overall positive mood in it, and yet the negative aspects (like death, destruction, evilness, and trauma) are not avoidable. Fans respond to both the positive and negative aspects in varying ways, as evident in both the select fan fiction.

The psychic fantasy is transformed into meanings that are acceptable to the ego and superego, through means of the words, form and the use of language. The pleasure that the fan fiction writer would now experience is the feeling of being independent of and yet connected to the mother-like source text. The fan fiction writer has a fantasy that is his or her own, which is managed and controlled by his or her own associations, which allows the fan fiction writer to put in his or her own individuality in this new fiction, and is permitted to be expressed. Also, more importantly, there is gratification of the psychic desires. The ultimate pleasure that a reader seeks is the feeling of fantasies being managed and controlled so that they are acceptable to the conscious ego. Each fan fiction embeds a fantasy which is transformed into a moral or intellectual meaning. The fantasy contents and our own subjective associations are mastered by now. The fan reader, by transforming into a fan fiction writer, has achieved an identity which is

separate from the mother-figure, yet connected to it at a comfortable level, and also has found a relief in mastering the fantasy.

As the writing of the fan fiction progresses, the demand on the technical skill of the writers also increases. The writers, with their own psychic desires and ego to satisfy, also become aware of the external reality which also includes the *Harry Potter* fandom and fan fiction communities:

I wonder how this story will be received. Will people be angry about what happens with Arthur Weasley? Will people hate the story, since it is so unlike *James Potter and the Hall of the Elders' Crossing* in many ways? Or will they be asking, when it is finished, "What happens next? Will there be a book three?"

(*The Curse of the Gatekeeper* 365).

As Lippert rightly points out, imagination, sense of wonder and fascination towards the source text alone does not help in the progress of writing. Being realistically engaged with the text is equally important for it to be accepted by the readers. This disenchantment is optimal in the development of the fan fiction writer. The epigraphs of *Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality*, which address both its readers as well as J. K. Rowling, are an apt instance of this. The epigraphs, which at times taunts Rowling or at times expresses the fan fiction writer's own thoughts, gives the fiction the characteristics of a meta fiction, constantly reminding the readers that it is a work created by a writer although claiming to have no authority over it. Likewise, Lippert's 'Note to the Readers' at the end of his fan fiction also express how the fan fiction is a creation of his, along with the frustrations and curiosities of a fan fiction writer. Adopting the

tone of a meta-fiction for their works help the writers to check the readers from being deeply involved in their text and also to distance themselves from their own text. One would notice that the writers as well as readers are again experiencing the cycle of enchantment and disenchantment with the fiction, like when he or she experienced in the initial phase of reading the source text. This partial enchantment and disenchantment is important for the psychosexual development of the fan fiction writer who, now being in the phallic stage would want to stay connected to the source text and, at the same time, would want to assert their own separate self.

The connection with the mother-like source text is restored, thereby, gratifying the psychic desire. Adele Kohanyi, in her study, notes that writing has the expected cathartic effect on the budding writers. They improve in their ability to check themselves from being emotionally involved in their writings. Also, writing helps them to master their emotional reactions. They are able to understand their own thoughts and emotions and gain insights about themselves. The process of writing and its editing enables one to feel better about themselves, “especially for those who write for an audience” (49). Thus, the eventual act of writing a fan fiction lets the fan readers experience a healthy progression from a state of dependency on the source text, through multiple cycles of enchantment and disenchantment with the source text as well as their own text, to a state of partial or complete independence, so that a rich phase of creative authorship is open for them.

As Freud has noted earlier, there has not been a proper explanation regarding the process of creative writing. Even in psychology, creativity and creative writing has been a mysterious part of human mind. Marie Forgeard and others in a 2009 article, “The Psychology of Creative Writing”, explains that an interdisciplinary approach to understand this complex endeavour is required. The popular belief that literary texts are the result of a mysterious, magical, lightning-

like inspiration that the poet or writer suddenly achieves have led to the notions of purely original thinking in creative writing. Forgeard points out that research have “evidenced that all humans use creative thinking process all the time in their daily lives, and thus shows that these processes are not as enigmatic as they seem” (13). In short, fans are using the skills that they already use in their daily lives and the transformative fan dares to take a step forward by applying it in their writings. Fan fiction have also broken down another myth about creative writing, that creative thinking is qualitatively on a higher degree and, hence, it is not for the ordinary people. Also, they are not the consequences of the writers’ solitary work. As clear in the various epigraphs of *Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality*, there is frequent interaction between the writer, the fan community of the source text as well as the fan fiction community. The myth that writers work alone, isolating themselves from the people around is also shaken when it comes to the fan fiction genre. It is necessary, here, for the writer to interact with the outside culture to develop their writings.

Over the twentieth century, there have been many theories with little to no empirical evidence, yet many anecdotal narratives, based on which the process of creative writing is attempted to understand. Due to this uncertainty, there are many myths about creative writing. In “Writing as a Collaborative Act” (2009), R. Keith Sawyer dismisses these myths asserting that creative writing is essentially a collaborative activity. A literary work does not emerge in the author’s mind, fully formed, in a sudden flash of insight. These myths related to creative writing can be deconstructed by tracing the creative process behind fan fiction. Fan fictions, usually written by the members and for the members of a particular fan fiction community, are the result of group work rather than an individual’s lone work. The writer of the fan fiction takes into account the tastes, needs and demands of the reading community, while writing the fan fiction.

Here, the individual creativity of the writer is not ignored or diminished in value. But the frequent interaction with the fan fiction readers before and after the publication of each chapter of the fan fiction in the online platforms lets the writer know of their expectations. The writer, here, will have to rely on the readers so as to determine what would be acceptable in that particular social circle. In other words, in case of fan fiction, there is a collective generation of ideas, as the fan community is consciously and actively involved in it. This is what Sawyer calls the “distributed cognition” (169). It is a process in which more than one person contributes ideas which are selectively integrated to produce a collective work:

Most of our... creatively generated texts are too large and complex to be generated by a single individual; they require a team or an entire network of distributed individuals, with a division of labor and a careful integration of many specialized creative works (169).

Writing in collaboration is not a new concept among literary circles. This has been a practice since medieval times. In the 1920s, C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien at the Oxford University had collaborated in their writings since both shared a common taste for myth and fantasy, two closely related genres that were not usually taken seriously by other literary scholars. There were discussions among them and critical suggestions were considered while they wrote. This eventually led to *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy by Tolkien and *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C. S. Lewis (Sawyer 173-174). Today, both these works are hailed as one of the most creative in the children’s literature and fantasy genres.

No discussion on the process of creativity would be complete without looking into the social interactions and the collaborative acts that precede and follow the act of writing. If

creative writing was just the outcome of the moment of insight, it would not require extensive editing before its publication, which is not the case. It is important that writers be immersed in the domain of literature in order to produce a particular literary work. It is not only the push from the psyche that inspires such writings. Sawyer illustrates this with the example of Coleridge's *Kubla Khan: Or, a Vision in a Dream*. Despite the poet's claim that the poem was inspired from a dream he had had, scholars have procured enough evidence within Coleridge's own notes to prove that the story was created for public consumption. "During the Romantic period, the general public expected poets to write in this fashion, so perhaps it was not surprising that a writer would create public version of events that conformed to the public's expectations" (174). Coleridge had read about Kubla Khan and also early drafts of the preface were discovered. Similarly, fan fiction writers must be familiar with the canon texts, understand it in depth and also must be familiar with the spirit of the fan community surrounding the canon text. This element of familiarity and accumulation of enough knowledge are obvious in Lippert and Yudkowsky's fan fiction.

The knowledge retrieved from one's memory serves as a stepping stone to the development of a new idea. However, dependence on the existing memory and knowledge has the tendency to limit originality in one's writing. Hence, Thomas B. Ward, in his article "Creative Cognition in Science Fiction and Fantasy Writing" (2009), suggests bringing in alignable differences in your writing. In his words, "an alignable difference is a difference based on an underlying commonality..." (199). There are certain shared properties so that the reader can easily relate to the novel idea, yet it has an identity of its own. Ward holds that the reliability on known concepts can make the novel idea more believable. He takes the instance of Quidditch, the wizarding sport in *Harry Potter*, as an example. Rowling, having already set the magical

world in *The Philosopher's Stone* (1997), introduces Quidditch in the book as a sport that shares the characteristics of both basketball and soccer. There are two teams of players competing for the possession of a ball (the Quaffle) and they must propel the ball through hoops which are guarded by the keeper in order to score points. However, there are also major differences from basketball and soccer, like the introduction of a Seeker who is supposed to catch the fast-flying small ball called the "Snitch", which marks the end of the game. Also, the players are all flying on brooms. Within the magical world, the sport of Quidditch makes sense to the readers. As Ward says, "by putting the needed pieces in place throughout the book, [Rowling] guided readers down a path that made this exotic athletic activity perfectly reasonable" (202).

A similar approach was used by Lippert in his fan fiction too. Clutchcudgel, the American wizarding sport, is devised based on Quidditch and is presented to the fan community who would find it reasonable in a similar magical world. However, while use of magic is not allowed in Quidditch, it is allowed in Clutchcudgel. Both Rowling and Lippert have devised the elements in their fictions in a similar pattern. Both depended on certain concepts that are familiar to the readers, which they know to be true and, therefore, will be accepted without resistance. In order to bring in something novel that is both believable and original, the writers have to subtly guide the readers so that they gain enough understanding. Hence, the magical world, where flying on brooms is a common means of travelling, and the characters' (especially Harry Potter's) adeptness at flying is already detailed in the earlier chapters before Quidditch is introduced to the readers. Likewise, Lippert also introduces the American magical world and its similarities as well as differences from the British magical world before introducing Clutchcudgel. This approach for introducing novel ideas would help to hold the reader's attention and gain their acceptance. Now the writer may merge unrelated and unfamiliar concepts without distracting the

reader. As Ward explains, merging of unrelated concepts opens up more possibilities and such merging can bring about whole stories, which may otherwise remain dormant (205).

Both Sawyer and Ward have looked into the conscious works involved in the production phase of writing, where the writers evaluate and refine their ideas. Despite the large amount of conscious editing and analysis, the importance of the constant dialogue a writer would have with the unconscious mind must also be emphasized. It is important and inevitable that one listens to the psyche, to generate ideas from various perspectives. The process of creative writing also includes the writer's ability to choose what ideas to include and what not to include. The production of a creative text is hard work, having to balance the constant dialogue between the conscious mind and the unconscious mind, to keep track of sparks of insights pushed forward from the unconscious mind and to analyze, rework and integrate them in the literary work in a socially acceptable manner.

Such myths, where the writer is viewed as a blessed, uniquely gifted individual, are false and misleading. All kinds of creativity, including fan fiction, are hard work over a long period of time. Sawyer is of the opinion that it is the influence of these kinds of myths that caused the neglect of certain creative writings that do not fall under the 'high art' definition. Fan fiction and fan fiction writings have been the victims of such myths. Studies on the process of creative writing show that the theories so developed account for all kinds of creative products rather than the mainstream literatures alone (which are usually accepted by the literary circles easily). What is required, in other words, is not a theory that asserts the mythical view of the creative writing process but a theory that incorporates both the psychological aspects and the social collaborative nature of creative writing which can be attributed to all genres of literature.

When it comes to fan fiction and fan fiction communities, the personal act of creative writing shifts into a participatory culture which engages a large number of people on a digital space. With the Internet and the various digital platforms, the nature of the texts has also changed, rapidly. Fan fiction and other fan activities continue to renegotiate the relationship between readers, the text and its author. The relationship between author, reader and text has changed in the world of Internet which promotes a participatory cultural practice, where there is more accessibility to online communities due to increased number of digital tools. The social media platforms are used to collectively construct meanings that are intentionally independent of the author's intent as well as authority.

Although officially existing for nearly a century, fan fiction became easily accessible only with the internet and technology. It is a genre that responds fast to the shifting trends in technology and culture. It does so more quickly than any conventional works of art. However, the fact that fan fiction takes its birth from the commercially benefitting literary works, with its scope for massive distribution and creation of fan communities (which eventually leads to fan fiction communities), must not be disregarded. There is a close association between the commercially beneficial works and the fan fiction. The fan communities and the resultant fan fiction communities are quick in using the internet as a creative space. They share their ideas, difference of opinions and weird thoughts freely on this platform. Despite a large number of people involved in this, fan fiction continues to be a shadowy genre. The commercially beneficial works or the print publications are enjoyed, celebrated, questioned, challenged and even transformed by the fans and fan communities. The transformation may be for very personal reasons as well.

A literary text is not just the words on its pages. The reason behind the success of a story like *Harry Potter* is not just the character or the plotline, but it is the responses of the readers that made it a huge success. Even after more than a decade of the publication of the last book in the series, *The Deathly Hallows* (2007), fans continue to add more to the story through their fan fiction. Each fan fiction is, in a way, a reader's response to J. K. Rowling's work. They are stories based on the *Harry Potter* series and more additions reflective of their different perspectives. It also shows how the readers have assimilated the world of the series in their own ways.

Fan fictions have multiple functions in contemporary literature. They may simply provide entertainment to the readers; they can be an analysis or a criticism of the source text. Fan fictions can be original in their own way and, at the same time, can be derivative to a large extent. For Henry Jenkins, the author of *Textual Poachers* (1992), fan fictions are "a way of the culture repairing the damage done in a system where contemporary myths are owned by corporations instead of owned by the folk" (23). Over the years, fans have been described from being mere 'poachers' of a text and later described as activists aiming to bring about changes in the mainstream literatures. Beyond being active producers of fan texts, fans also become part of social and political movements. Fandom becomes a space to explore their gender and sexual identities, too. Fan fictions provide its readers and writers to ponder upon issues of identity and empowerment, and, hence, the act of writing a fan fiction is a performative one:

Fans have chosen these media products from a total range of available texts precisely because they seem to hold special potential as vehicles for expressing the fans' pre-existing social commitments and cultural interests; there is already some degree of compatibility between the ideological construction of the text

and the ideological commitment of the fans and therefore, some degree of affinity will exist between the meanings fans produce and those which might be located through a critical analysis of the original story. (Jenkins 30)

One may argue that, while fans seemingly resist certain representations in the mainstream literatures, they, at the same time, consume and promote that very literature which they aim to resist or reject. There is a curious co-existence of the two contradictory sides within fan cultures. This makes fandom and its activities more complex as well as valuable. As Bertha Chin and Lori Morimoto points out in a 2013 article, “Towards a Theory of Transcultural Fandom”, “we embrace them, not as uncritical reproduction, but as an essential means of comprehending their complexity and implications for the ways we understand both the ... circulation and consumption of media, as well as fans’ multivalent relationship to it” (98).

There is a complex, contradictory and cooperative relationship of differences and similarities between a fan and the source text. As mentioned before, accumulation of knowledge regarding the source is very much important for the fans’ empowerment. This knowledge is used in order to participate in the text as well as to rewrite it in different ways. The conventions organized by the various fandoms also become a market place for buying and selling fandom-related products and also it becomes a cultural space for the circulation of the knowledge and building a community of their own. John Fiske parallels this fan culture with that of the capitalist society, the similarity lying in the fact that both has accumulation and investment of knowledge. Hence, he called it the “shadow economy of fan culture” (44). Fiske also points out that the difference between the two cultures is socio-economic. Fan cultures adapt the tastes, needs and demands of all the sections of the society, unlike the capitalist culture which is not usually all-inclusive. Fans choose some commodities of the capitalist culture to be included, and may reject

some. For the mainstream literary culture, fans are an additional market space to sell off their products in large quantities and, at the same time, valuable feedbacks at no expenditure resulting in more business. Thus, fan texts and fan communities perform multiple functions- they serve the economic interest of the mainstream literary works and also serve the cultural interests of the fandom.

Experimental writing is a common feature in fan fiction genre, encouraged by the fan fiction communities, who share the common tastes. It may also so happen that the tastes shared by the mass media are not satisfying to a particular group, who eventually form their own fan fiction community favouring their particular tastes. The presence of their favourite characters may draw other readers to this fan fiction and persuade them to embrace the stories that focus on alternative sexualities or gender. There are fan fictions which portray the character of Harry Potter as a girl, and viewing Rowling's story from a girl's perspective. Fan fictions are not driven by any commercial benefits, but by the love of some fans for the elements in a text and the urge to experiment over it. Anne Jamison acknowledges the involvement of commercial culture in fan fiction:

Driven by the engagement with commercial culture but free from that culture's market constraints, fan-fiction can experiment with the popular – with no need for backers, no need to sell the products before its been realized, and with the luxury of an audience that is already eager to see its works (*Fic* 36).

Hence, online fan fiction consistently produces experimental topics and forms for dedicated audience/readers, who are eager to embrace the different perspectives on their favourite characters. These fan readers are simply hungry for more. They easily relate to the characters

portrayed in fan fiction. The fan fiction writers do not aim for profit or fame. The writers are not subject to any pressures from the market demand or publishers. This means that the writer is free to write in the direction of his mind.

The choice to not reveal your personal identity allows writers to do something that they have never done before without the fear of judgment from the society around. Fan fiction websites provide a great platform for amateur writers to prune their writing and creative skills. When Katie Forsythe, a popular Holmes/Watson fan writer, was asked why she chose to write under the pseudonym “wordstrings”, in an interview with Anne Jamison, she says: “... I wanted a nice quiet little [LiveJournal] where I could post utterly mad BBC *Sherlock* fic and no one would see it. In all seriousness, that was the plan” (77). The encouraging factor is that the fan fiction communities mostly act as a supportive network for these writers. They are ready to read this new dimension, having been already the fans of the characters in the source texts. Forsythe says so in her interview:

my stories tend to bring out a lot of feelings and people tend to want to express them to me directly ... people were sharing with me all sorts of aspects of their own experiences with mental health problems, addiction and abuse and here I was trying to write the crazies out of my head for myself (79).

She later admits that writing fan fiction was a means to vent out her own angst and frustrations and she did get a good support from her readers (80). Such a platform is not possible in a commercial enterprise. Unlike the publishing houses, fan fiction and fan fiction communities provide much scope for collaborations, dissent and even resistance. In a nutshell, fan fiction genre consumes the mainstream literary genres for its own development as a stepping stone, but

at the same time promotes those very literatures. There is a multi-benefitting relationship between the mainstream literatures and the fan fiction genre. It contributes positively to the global literary market and helps in the blurring of the line between mainstream literatures and peripheral literatures. Yet, fan fiction is yet to be recognized in its full worthiness among literary circles.

Fan fiction readers, however, can turn into critical readers of their own favourite fan fiction. Hence, there are fan fictions of other fan fictions. Fan fiction writers are almost always judged from all sides, within the fandom community and outside it. There is a constant pressure to improve the quality of their work. There are also many reasons as to why some choose to be part of a fandom (as a consumer, a producer, or both): the sense of community and belonging, the subculture that mutually supports one another, the power of the reader to change the existing mainstream narrative and the immediate feedback as well as encouragement that they get from the community are a few of them. Despite all these, one cannot deny that the primary purpose of reading or writing fan fiction is personal pleasure, a pleasure that comes from the fulfilling of certain desires and satisfaction of some curiosities. In other words, fan fiction writing is more about personal preferences, influenced from the fans' intense imaginative and critical reading.

To put it succinctly, this thesis, tracing the metamorphosis of the fan reader into a fan fiction writer, is valuable in contributing to the breaking of the stereotypes and myths associated with the act of creative writing. It promotes an interdisciplinary approach by combining the psychological aspects and the literary aspects involved in creative writing to understand the mechanism behind it. The thesis further proposes that the process behind the production of any mainstream literatures and non-mainstream literatures (like fan fiction) is not much different.

(Both mainstream and non-mainstream literatures are mutually beneficial.) The thesis also calls for a theory of creative writing that can be assigned to all genres of literature.

For the initial phases, the pre-venture and venture, the subject of analysis in this research is the fan reader (as an individual with the id, ego and super-ego). However, when it comes to the post-venture phase, the subjects of analysis taken are the products by the fan writer, rather than the fan reader. This has helped us to gain insights into how the reader would interact with the text and also gave a perception of both the readers and writers' psyche. The research, which began from the readers' perspective, has traversed back to the writer. The thesis agrees that the meanings generated by the fan readers from the source text are used by the fan fiction writers as raw materials for developing their own fiction. Initiating from the psychic mechanisms of the fan reader, this research has led us to the psychic mechanism of the writer. In other words, it looked at the metamorphosis of the fan reader into a state of fan fiction writer, thereby justifying the title of the thesis.

Recommendations

It is a fact that no research is complete and closed. Every research has limitations and will pose more questions as well. Such questions may have the potential for further research in this area as well. To know the further scope of the research, it is important to look into the delimitations and limitations of the study as they are inherently linked to each other. The subject chosen for this study, fan fiction, is a genre that is mostly ignored in mainstream literary circles. The reasons behind this, including the amateur writing skills of the writers, stereotyping by the mainstream media and also the legal issues like the copyright laws protecting the rights of the author and publishers of the source texts have already been discussed. The research, in a sense, has highlighted the positive aspects and potential of fan fiction and fan communities in fostering creativity and writing skills. This may contribute into the rethinking of the legal issues that restrict the publication and recognition of fan fiction. There may be a growing need to adapt copyright laws to support and protect the rights of fan creators while still respecting the intellectual property rights of the authors of the source texts. Also, this research gives us insight into the emerging field of digital literatures and its possibilities. For instance, the non-linear nature of hypertext fiction is quite intriguing. The reader chooses particular links according to which the fiction would progress. Can the links be equated to the gaps explored by the fan reader? Can a similar process be traced in the evolution of a hypertext fiction? These are questions worth pondering.

For the convenience of analysis, the researcher has emphasized on the high quality and professional writing style of the fan fiction writers while selecting the fan fiction for study. The select fan fictions are such that they belong to almost the same cultural backgrounds and class identity. However, the socio-cultural influence in writing, reading and interpretations are

important. Social hierarchies can exist between and within fan communities and this can affect the products of each community. How does the difference in class identity or cultural or political differences affect the transformation of the fan reader into fan fiction writer? Will their psychological development be any different? Further researches on fan fiction thus may be done by choosing texts from different time periods or cultural backgrounds so as to attain a comprehensive view.

Coming to the limitations, the research, while tracing the transformation from reader to writer, has focused exclusively on the fantasy genre. Given its quality of being unrealistic and its higher possibility for escapism, the fantasy genre sets itself apart from the other more realistic genres in literature. This acknowledgement leads to the question as to whether the process of transformation proposed in this thesis can be applied to other literary genres. How similar would be the process and how different would it be? Also, can the central fantasy of the reunion with the mother-figure be exclusive to fantasy genre? Would it be possible to detect another central fantasy in another literary genre? Since the primary texts selected for this study is limited, this may impact the potential for generalizability of the metamorphosis process traced in this study. This also raises the question of whether a similar process can be traced in non-fictional narratives, like history for instance. Applying psychoanalytic reader response theory to non-fictional narratives may be less effective as they may not provide much material for a psychoanalytic interpretation, compared to fantasy narratives. In other words, this may require other analytic approaches along with psychoanalysis. While bringing in a psychoanalytic approach to the study, this research has brought out the psychological impact of a text upon its readers and also explored the unconscious motives of the characters within the select texts. Applying psychoanalytic theories requires careful consideration of the cultural and historical

contexts as well. How would this change the result of the study, once the media of the subject of study change, from text to visual arts, or even an AI generated story?

The select fan fictions for this research are all written by male writers. Freud's psychoanalytic theories have been quite helpful in understanding the male psychology. However, this leads us to wonder how the process of transformation is different if it is a female reader and writer. Would elements of Oedipus complex and oral fixations as spotted in the case of the select fan fiction in this research be recognized for female writers and fan fiction? Again, would a different psychic desire and central fantasy be manifested in fan fiction by female writers? Will the progression in psychosexual development be different in this case?

The thesis posits that the fan reader progresses through the oral and anal stages of psychosexual development before the act of writing the fan fiction. The progress from phallic stage onwards is manifested in the post-venture phase. In this research, the oral and anal stages have been detected because the fan fictions are based on a particular source text, which is already acknowledged. However, for other literary texts, the source is almost always never acknowledged. In such cases, how would the stage of psychosexual development be detected? Could it be assumed that the writer might have already passed through the oral and anal stages before writing a literary text? This will require a psychoanalytic reading of literary texts that do not claim to be based on another text. Also, how can the psychological aspects of the writer or reader of a non-fictional work be comprehended?

The fan fiction texts adopted for this study manifest the progression through phallic stage to the latent stage. They do not go beyond the latent stage. Are all literary texts manifesting up to the latent stage alone? Are there texts that take us beyond and clearly demonstrate the genital

stage of psychosexual development? Also, the focus of analysis in this research has been mainly the protagonist of each novel. Will other characters within the novel exhibit a similar progression from phallic to latent stage? The questions raised here provide scope for future researches.

Hopefully, this thesis would be a base and reference for them.

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