Expanding Storyworld through Cyberspace:
A Study of *Harry Potter* Online Fanfiction

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Abstract:

The purpose of this project is to examine contemporary narratives in the form of fan fictions to explore the ways digital users engage with digital spaces to build a more diverse storyworld of Harry Potter by J.K Rowling. This paper focuses on a well-known fan fiction which utilizes preexisting canonical characters, Eclipse by Mijan. The conceptual frameworks employed in this research include Structuralism, Reception Theory, Fanfiction Studies and theories concerning Transmedia Storytelling. The principal conclusion of this research suggests that fan authors are critical readers who are able pinpoint the gaps left by source texts to later expand it in their own constructed narratives. Additionally, this Harry Potter fanfiction build storyworld by establishing a new plot taken from canon narratives, by establishing new setting which is still in the Harry Potter topos, by exploring minor characters' psychological depth, and also by challenging normative sexuality representation. The result also underlines that cyberspace helps readers to participate in an open culture, where fans are not limited by conventional restrictive literary production.

Key Words: online fanfiction, storyworld, transmedia storytelling, Harry Potter

Introduction

In his article *The Impact of Globalization and the New Media on the Notion of World Literature* (1999), Grabovski points out the significance of globalization and advanced technology to literary canon, highlighting the impact of those phenomena in the notion of literature in this contemporary situation. He asserts, "globalization also means the intensification of literary relations and of communication including that of artistic, i.e., literary communication and production" (p. 2). He also emphasizes that the internet and the World Wide Web gives the biggest impact on the model of literary communication – a model of communication between three most important components in literature: author, distributors and readers (consumers) (p. 4). This communication takes place in "digital space": an open space which offers "the possibility and opportunity to change, complete, modify, vary etc., a text," and a medium in which readers (consumers) of literary texts might "become its (co-)authors" (p. 5). Interestingly, in elaborating this literary communication process, Grabovski provides 'fan fiction' as a brief example, regarding it as the "the new literary genre" (p. 5).

In this digital age, fans are able to publish their new narratives on the web easily: without having to undergo formal literary production such as editing and censorship, thus remain safe from banning and the like. Despite the easy access to it, taking fanfiction for granted is surely not favorable; because fanfic is a complex product posing for the systematic process of a

text production which involves twisting and often ambivalent relationships between the canon and fans reception of it, within its own norms and disciplines (Jenkins 2007; Thomas 2007).

Review of Literature

In 2008, Tosenberger analyzes several *Potter* slash fanfictions; her study delivers a meticulous argument that *Potter's* fanfiction is a potential site of diverse sexual representations. However, her study focuses on the benefits of these queer discourses for the readers of the text. She analyzes the fanfictions to argue that "*Potter* fandom is a lively, intellectually stimulating, and tolerant interpretive community, and fans reap great rewards not only in the form of increased literacy, but also by exposure to discourses outside of culturally mandated heteronormativity" (p. 202). In other words, she still treats fan narratives as motivational, cultural and sociological instruments for young-adolescent fans who hope to enjoy a broader range of queer representations.

Indeed, treating fanfictions in that way is not necessarily incorrect; however, given the fact that (slash) fanfiction are *texts,* it would be more considerate to bracket these texts as literary/textual artifacts and therefore examine the fanfiction text for the sake of its textuality. Thomas (2011) notices, "close textual analysis is often denigrated on the basis that the identities and practices of fans cannot be abstracted from the sorts of texts they write" (p. 3). For this reason, this study intends to follow Tosenberger's path by analyzing a slash fiction. However, instead of discussing what benefits might possibly be provided by the slash fiction for readers; this research is going to do a close textual analysis and how, through this new text, a slash fiction expands the main *storyworld* which has previously been crafted in the source text.

The concept of *storyworld* is particularly important in viewing fanfiction, especially when taking fans' participatory culture into account. Connecting audience participation, fanfiction and the concept of *storyworld* together results a pretty interesting compatibility. Because in an advanced digital era, fans' participation are also growing, and consequently, the storyworld will become more diverse and more established than ever before. For this reason, this study intends to analyze one well known slash fiction in *Potter* fan community, *Eclipse* by Mijan as a case study.

Findings and Discussion

My basic argument in this thesis is that fanfiction is an archontic literature, just like how Derecho suggests; because fanfiction builds the overall storyworld which is previously presented in the canon narrative. Therefore, in this chapter, I discuss the ways *Eclipse* expands the *Harry Potter* storyworld by elaborating each way found in the narrative in sub-chapters below.

1.   **Establishing New Plot**

Eclipse's plot is actually enacted by a character: Draco Malfoy. In near end of fifth-year, Lucius Malfoy is sent to Azkaban for invading the Department of Mysteries and for trying

to steal the prophecy regarding Harry and Voldemort. Draco's reaction towards his father's imprisonment is directed at Harry: "You're dead, Potter" … "You're going to pay," said Malfoy in a voice barely louder than a whisper. "I'm going to make you pay for what you've done to my father. . . ." (HP5, p. 851). This threat that Draco addresses to Harry Potter is, however, presented as an object of mockery; this could be seen from Harry's tone when replying to Draco's angry statement ("Well, I'm terrified now," said Harry sarcastically.) By delivering Harry's sarcastic tone, the source text implies that Draco's threat is nothing more than just a drop in the bucket, which will not change anything in the overall narrative. But, Draco Malfoy is really going to make Harry pay for what he has done to his father; not in *Harry Potter,* but in a new derivative story written by Mijan. This particular event in the fifth book is recontextualized in *Eclipse.* In Mijan's fic, something that Harry laughs at will eventually force him to undergo another journey.

Up to this point, *Eclipse* has already expanded *Potter* storyworld by plotting a new story based on what the source text has left off. *Eclipse* picks Draco's threat to Harry as a catalyst for him to set another plot: Draco attacks Harry and then hand him to Voldemort. Draco, in this case, could also be regarded as the "plotter inside *Eclipse's* plot."

Structurally, the main conflict of *Eclipse* is still similar to *Harry Potter,* which is the battle of good vs. evil, Harry Potter vs. Voldemort. However, what makes *Eclipse* different is that this time, Harry is not accompanied by the great Dumbledore, the genius Hermione, or his best friend Ron. Harry in this fanfic is only with Draco.

The plot is advanced by another conflict: Draco promised Harry that he will help him win over Voldemort, whereas there is no known counter curse to defeat the Dark Lord. Moreover, Voldemort always taunts Draco to go back to his side by intruding the boy's mind with painful images of his parents. This raises another conflict for Draco—he wants to save his parents and on the other hand, he has to keep his promise to Harry. Upon knowing that those images are not real, Draco then once again stays by Harry until the day that eclipse occurs. In the end, Draco solves the main problem: finding the counter curse. The Eclipse potion is an old magic used by old wizards to kill his enemy; the most important element of which is pure hatred. In this case, Voldemort's pure hatred to Harry will be the central thing of Voldemort's win. However, because of Draco's knowledge and smart tactics, he figures out that to defeat Voldemort, the opposite of hate is needed: love. At that time, the situation suggests that there is no other person near Harry who is capable of love: no one but Draco himself. This time, Draco sacrifices love to help Harry fight Voldemort, bringing the plot to its natural climax.

2.   Establishing New Settings

Eclipse was written after the release of *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* and prior to the publication of *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince.* This is important to note because *Eclipse* actually picks out one moment in the fifth book to narrate a new story which is set in sixth year of Harry's generation. In other words, this sixth-year setting constructed in *Eclipse* narrative is completely fan-fictional, and in no way bears resemblance to that of Rowling's version. This is a common case with serial production such as *Harry Potter.* While

waiting for the source text's original plot, readers are left with the unfinished storyline (or with a cliffhanger) from the latest series; hence, it makes the source text an open space that invites fans to enter and expand the text in their own creative fashion. Regarding this, Hellekson and Busse (2006) explain, "the open-source text in particular invites fan fiction as an expansion to the source universe" (p. 6). Thus, when viewed as a site of literary interactivity, *Eclipse* has already scored a point in expanding the *Harry Potter* storyworld: by creating its own version of sixth-year.

Eclipse also expands the storyworld of Harry Potter by showing several new physical and geographical settings. First, *Eclipse* depicts Voldemort's secret headquarter which is different from the source text. In *Harry Potter's* original text, Voldemort's headquarters are only the Malfoy Manor and the Riddle House. In *Eclipse,* it turns out that Voldemort has another headquarter. This headquarter is unplottable; even the greatest magic or the most powerful wizard will not be able to find where this place is. This only confirms how great Voldemort is as a wizard that he is able to create such a secret place for him and his followers to plan all attacks to whoever who is not on his side.

In a scene where Draco meets the Dark Lord himself in order to be tested for his loyalty, *Eclipse* is able to create a distinct setting for Voldemort which is still closely connected to Hogwarts. Although this secret place is never official in the original book, for a genius dark wizard such as Voldemort, it is highly plausible for him to create such a place. Moreover, as Hogwarts is precisely a place that he wants to destroy the most, this secret headquarter is needed. The original *Harry Potter* series might not have this setting in its narratives, but with the high possibility of Voldemort having such an unplottable office has definitely enriched the storyworld of *Harry Potter.* Through this fanfiction, it is known that along with The Malfoy Manor and the Riddle House, Voldemort also has another headquarter which is secret.

Another new setting which is derived from the source text is the forest which lies between the Dark Lord's secret office and Hogwarts. The story follows Draco and Harry's escape from the secret office to reach for Hogwarts, thus the narrative events mostly take place in this forest. As the story reaches its end, it turns out that this forest is actually a part of the Forbidden Forest, a certain forbidden place at Hogwarts. By this, *Eclipse* recontextualizes the old setting in the source narrative to expand it in a new way: that the Forbidden Forest is actually a part of the forest which connects Hogwarts to Voldemort's secret head quarter.

All these newly constructed fan-fictional settings found in *Eclipse* share affinity with the story world which is described by Klastrup and Tosca (2004). According to Klastrup and Tosca, *topos* is "the setting of the world in a specific historical period and detailed geography" and that "knowing the topos is *knowing what is to be expected from the physics of and navigation of the world."* The core topos which is set up in *Harry Potter* canon is the wizarding society in the 19th century. *Eclipse* is faithful in following this topos; it could be noticed from the way it sets the time in the sixth year of Hogwarts, the Voldemort headquarters which is set somewhere close to Hogwarts, and eventually the forest which is a part of the Forbidden Forest. All these new settings are the actual space and time that *Eclipse* expands without violating the

general space and time of *Harry Potter*. All in all, this exploration of new possible spaces and time are the way *Eclipse*, as a fanfiction, enriches the storyworld of *Harry Potter*.

3. Exploring Minor Character's Psychological Depth

Eclipse expands the *Harry Potter* storyworld by exploring a marginal character. Mijan uses two ways of Jenkins' lists in exploring the psychological depth of the said character, which are *refocalization* and *moral realignment*. The minor character explored here is Draco Malfoy.

Eclipse's modification of *Potter's* focalization constructs some new personalities of the villain character. Mijan's fic maintains the limited third-person narrative voice which is akin to the original *Harry Potter* text; however, unlike canon which is strictly fixed through Harry Potter's focalization, this fic builds its narrative through Draco's as well. Close-character focalization is a discursive element to narrate the story according to the character's perceptual and cognitive focalization regarding narrative events. This kind of focalization allows reader to identify themselves to the focalizing character (McCallum 1999, p. 30-31). Because internal focalization explores what is happening inside a character's *mind,* it allows readers to share what the character is feeling and thus understand how the character perceives his surroundings. Therefore, *Eclipse,* whose narrative is also voiced through Draco's focalization, influences readers to identify with Draco more than the source text allows: to understand Draco's thoughts and the nature of his villainous character.

In canon, Draco's character is constructed only through Harry's perspective—which is drawn from Harry's limited third-person observation. Harry might not be an objective observer; he might possibly be an unreliable narrator; thus, his judgment against his enemy Draco Malfoy might not be true. In *Harry Potter,* Draco Malfoy is a villainous, a bully, an evil, an unpleasant character. Draco's atrocious characteristic is shown throughout the books. He remains the bad character who is always against Harry throughout Hogwarts years. But on a closer inspection, this is a Draco which is restrictedly seen through Harry's focalizaton, thus through Harry's perceptional and emotional observation.

This fanfiction reiterates Draco's vileness, however along with that characteristic; he is shown as a character that is smart, tactical, ambitious, committed, and self-sacrificing. In the beginning of the fic, the narrative voice directs readers to Draco's vicious attack to Harry—he plunges a blade which has been smeared with a Freezing Potion into Harry's shoulder: the Freezing Potion is a potion brew which is designed by him that he earns top marks because of it, proving that he is a smart student. Through Draco's focalization, *Eclipse* depicts his affection for his Father and Mother; that he would do whatever (no matter how 'evil' it may look to others) for the sake of his parents. This side of Draco is not seen in the source text; because from Harry's point of view, Draco is no more than a spoiled rotten boy who depend his life solely on his father and hides behind the shield of his pureblood name. Although this story does not ignore this side of Draco, *Eclipse* constructs a series of new personalities which seem to have been

made invisible because of Harry's pure hatred towards the latter in canon. In the end, it is Draco's smart skills and his self-sacrifice that helps Harry defeat Voldemort.

Draco's cruel, distressing, heartless personal traits are what disturb Harry and friends the most; thus whenever Draco is present in the original *Harry Potter* series, he is portrayed as a mere intimidation. In this fic, however, Draco is portrayed as a round character with complicated history. Through a flashback to events when he was a kid, Draco contemplates the importance of power. The story explains that Draco was once punished in his own house; he was chained to the dungeon wall of the manor for his own mistake. Lucius Malfoy is not a sympathetic father; Draco learns from his father that "emotion [is] for the weak." Draco grows up in a family where power is something divine; to be powerful means to set emotion aside, to be tough. Having power to control other people is noble: "as a Malfoy, he had spend his entire life trying to earn respect, prestige, and most importantly, power"; hence his intimidatory behavior against Harry's friends could be seen as the result of his family's fetish about power and being powerful over 'weak' people. To Harry in the original narrative, all those nasty things that Draco does is evil; however, for Draco as shown in *Eclipse*, that is what a virtuous man does.

This is the part when the *moral alignment* occurs; Jenkins argues that this kind of rewriting is "perhaps the most extreme form of refocalization" (p. 168). Draco, the villain in the source text, has become the protagonist in this story; Draco's bad characteristics which are depicted in the original text are inverted in *Eclipse* through the explanation of his background as a Malfoy kid. Thus, the binary of good and bad is therefore aligned, placing Draco as a canonically misunderstood character.

Eclipse has expanded the storyworld of *Harry Potter* by depicting the other side, the background, the back story of Draco Malfoy. *Eclipse's* Draco gets reasons to be evil because he has his father's conscience not to be an emotionally-driven person; this Draco also has a sympathetic history of his own; he also has the concealed side of him which will never be revealed on the source text. Indeed, at some point of *Potter's* canon narrative, Draco does undergo a certain character development the way he does in *Eclipse*—from a vile character to a character that Harry sympathizes—however; canon never actually expose as much the depth of Draco's personal thoughts as *Eclipse*. All in all, by alternating focalization, *Eclipse* construct Draco in a new light through the open access to Draco's personal thoughts and emotions.

4. Challenging Normative Sexuality and the Birth of a New Hero

Eclipse utilizes the new settings and the newly constructed Draco Malfoy to enhance the storyworld of *Harry Potter* in regards with the notion of sexuality; in depicting this issue, *Eclipse,* at the same time, also challenges the normative sexuality in the source text. *Eclipse* presents a narrative which challenges *Potter's* in several ways.

Firstly, it challenges canon's representation of the hero's dominant, heroic masculinity by showcasing a sexually queer and a rather passive hero—two qualities which do not fit the hegemonic masculinity. Further, unlike *Potter, Eclipse's* plot does not centralize the narrative

solely on Harry's heroic quest but also expands it to the hero's 'romance' plot, therefore strengthening the image of Harry as an unconventionally masculine hero. Similar to the rewriting of Draco's character, *Eclipse,* too, expands *Potter* storyworld by offering diverse sexualities; this fanfiction delivers an image of a queer, non-normative hero who does not stand out as an alpha-male, solitary hero. In doing so, *Eclipse* also highlights the latent dominant ideology regarding gender and sexuality in the source text.

In exploring Harry Potter's archetypal heroic journey, *Eclipse* challenges canon *Potter's* narrative which represents a hegemonic, traditional heroic masculinity. Paraphrasing R.W Connell's notion of 'hegemonic masculinity', Heilman and Donaldson (2009) explain that "hegemonic masculinity is straight, strong, domineering, oppress not only women, but also the many men excluded from it" (p. 155). Although not flawlessly, *Potter's* Harry indeed fits to this category of hegemonic masculine man. Harry is straight: throughout the complete narrative from book one to book seven, he has never once engaged in any queer sexual relationship with member of his same sex. In the end, he marries Ginny Weasley—a girl whom many boys in Hogwarts find attractive; Campbell asserts that the marriage in the end of the narrative fulfills "the hero's total mastery of life; for the woman is life, the hero its knower and master" ([1949] 2004, p. 100).

Harry is also strong; he plays Quiditch with an excellent skill that seems to be achieved effortlessly, as though he was born naturally to be a seeker; he fights the dragons; he is a man of physical action, no matter how many times the plot drives him to face Death in every encounter with Voldemort, he always survives and continues living. Physical injuries have never seemed to bother him, even when his face is covered with blood, or when his bone breaks after playing Quiditch, he does not shed a tear. Harry is also domineering, in a sense that no other characters can be on the same level as he is. In the end, it is Harry and him only who must face and really banish Voldemort; there is not any other male character who is capable of this task. Other powerful male character's death is necessary to the plot because as Pugh and Wallace (2006) contend, "[Harry's] masculinity must be unchallenged by any character other than his ultimate nemesis, Voldemort" (p. 272). In the end, Harry performs the task successfully; Voldemort dies in his hand, thus reinforcing the heroic narrative's demand of a hero whose masculinity is most dominant.

However, those canon's normatively masculine depictions of Harry's heroic quest cannot be found in *Eclipse.* Mijan's plot challenges those canonical representations of masculinity by presenting an image of Harry in complete contrast with the source text version. The first thing which makes *Eclipse* very different from *Potter* is that Harry is not the straight hero whom readers are already familiar with in *Potter*. In *Eclipse,* Harry is clueless about his same-sex attraction; this tendency actually signifies that homosexuality, or anything other than heterosexuality at all, has never on his mind before. In the end of *Eclipse's* plot, Harry does not establish a relationship with Ginny nor with a woman at all.

Pugh and Wallace (2006) argues that "to achieve his heroic status, Harry must be free of any taint of sexual queerness", which is well represented in *Potter.* On the contrary, in

Eclipse, Harry performs sexual queerness while is still able to achieve the heroic throne; *Eclipse* manages to endorse a new model of a hero, by subverting conventional narrative demand of a straight hero—a required sexual identity for the hegemonic masculinity. *Eclipse's* presentation of a queer hero could also be read as the fanfic's critical intervention in the source text's ideology of heteronormative heroism. This portrayal of Harry ending up with a character of his same sex demonstrates that the fanfiction contests canon representation of conventional heteronormative hero which is governed by patriarchal norms policing not only sexual preference but also masculinity.

Eclipse's Harry is also portrayed differently from *Potter's* Harry. Unlike *Potter* which depicts Harry as an active hero, *Eclipse's* Harry is more of a passive one. His passivity could be underlined in one narrative event in the forest, where he is unknowingly wedged into the ground beneath him which he previously plants his foot on, leaving him completely powerless and it takes another character (Draco) to take him out of the ground and to save him. This scene is narrated from Draco's point of view, putting Harry under scrutiny rather than having him as the one who focalizes like in the source text; this signifies that Harry, the hero is passive from the narrative point of view. *Potter's* Harry is never scared. However, in *Eclipse* he is powerless, victimized, and scared. Draco, on the other hand, is on top of the ground worrying about the hero and trying to find a way to save him. Draco then transfigures a tree branch to a long rope to save Harry.

In *Potter,* Harry has never been once seen as powerless as he is in *Eclipse;* canon narrative logic never seemed to allow him be weak therefore Harry, more often than not, always has a way to stand on his own feet and survives by his own. Perhaps, Harry would have been sent something magical which seemed to be destined for him in order to get him out there all by himself—like the Gryffindor sword when he is in battle with Voldemort (HP2), or Fawkes the Phoenix to help him fight the Basilisk (HP2), or his mother's love inside his wand when he is in the Stonehenge fighting Voldemort (HP4), or even a possession of Dumbledore's Elder Wand which helps him win over Voldemort in the final battle (HP7).

The fighting scene with Voldemort in the near end of *Eclipse* also underlines Harry's unconventional heroic masculinity. In this fic, Voldemort's way of trying to kill Harry is by the means of an old potion called Soul Eclipse; this is brewed with Harry's blood and Voldemort has to drink it exactly when Eclipse occurs. By drinking this potion, Voldemort, even from an unknown distance, is able to take over Harry's 'life force', and thus leaves Harry's body in the weakest state that Harry is shown crying like "a floodgate bursting" and that "Harry [has] collapsed forward into Draco's arms, sobbing uncontrollably, gasping, shaking" (Mijan). *Eclipse's* depiction of Harry crying uncontrollably actually subverts canon portrayal of Harry who lives up to the 'boys don't cry' myth (HP4, HP3, HP4). In hegemonic masculinity ideal, tears are more associated with women and emotion is a sign of weakness. Buchbinder's (1998) extrapolation of masculinity is that "[it] is defined negatively in modern Western culture in two ways, once by sex and once by sexuality: the masculine is *not* female, and it is *not* homosexual"

(p. 124). So far, *Eclipse* has shown a hero who defies both these definitions of masculinity, therefore projecting a new model of masculinity different from that of canon.

Unlike *Potter's* Harry who initiates the fight and faces Voldemort so confidently and powerfully in the climax, *Eclipse's* version of Harry has to be initiated (rather than initiates), is weak, is dying, and is waiting for a prince to save him. By the end of the battle, the fanfic presents an image of a passive Harry being kissed by Draco in order to save him; this Harry actually reminds readers of a passive fairy tale heroine, Sleeping Beauty who needs to be woken up by a kiss or The Matrix's passive Neo, who is woken by a woman's kiss, Trinity. Once again, rather than showing Harry as a man of action, *Eclipse* showcases Harry who is *acted upon*. This Harry, who cannot be defined in regards with hegemonic masculinity, inverts canon's representation of domineering male hero, offering a new model of masculinity.

Additionally, *Eclipse's* narrative does not plot Harry and Draco to undergo a quest of attaining acceptance of their non-normative romantic relationship; in fact, their romance is not even defined in the discourse of right/wrong in Hogwarts. In contrast with *Potter* which omits Dumbledore's homosexuality from the text, *Eclipse* presents the hero's sexuality positively as Harry's win over Voldemort is because of Draco's willingness to love Harry, to treasure his heroic status. This non-normative love is thus focal in preserving the thematic aspect of canon and to *Eclipse's* plot itself.

Conclusion

In an era where internet and technology play such a significant role, literary canon, too, undergoes certain changes. Moreover, the role of internet in facilitating readers a participatory space has also influenced the way literature is perceived. With such an open media, every kind of reader response is made available in such an easy way. One of the forms of reader response is fanfiction. Even if fanfic is not 'canonical' in any sense, it nevertheless signifies the fluidity of *Potter* world. This fluid text could, by any chance, be expanded to be more established than before: in which characters are very likely to undergo events which are not in the plot. Because a story world is dynamic, the chance of it being expanded and being polished to be more established is very high. Thus, rather than regarding it as an opposing text or a 'lower level' text to the source text, I argue that Derecho's definition of fanfiction is more suitable. *Eclipse* is an archontic literature, a storyworld builder, in which its narrative helps adds possible characterization and new settings that later benefits the storyworld to be larger and more varied than what J.K Rowling has created.

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