

BUILD THE OWN WORLD OF HARRY POTTER: CREATIVITY AND INTERACTION THROUGH FANFICTION ON AO3

Wawat Rahwati, Nadiah Surya Nahari, Siti Cheryl Rasendria.

Wawat.rahwati@civitas.unas.ac.id, nadiahsuryanahari@civitas.unas.ac.id

Universitas Nasional

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Abstract

This research examines two Harry Potter fanfiction stories by AccioMjolnir and Selcouthmoony, found on the Archive of Our Own platform (AO3). The research aims to reveal how these authors express their imagination and representation of the beloved world of Harry Potter through writing fanfiction. Furthermore, the research also explores how Harry Potter fans on platform AO3 respond to these two authors' works. By using digital ethnography and textual analysis, the research found that AccioMjolnir and Selcouthmoony built a new Harry Potter world by modifying the story. This new world incorporates the concept of canon divergence, using techniques like time travel and character swaps. The presence of canon divergence in their fanfiction on Archive of Our Own shows their creativity as fans, allowing them to present the world of Harry Potter according to their own unique perspectives. Their creative approach to writing Harry Potter fanfiction on this platform has drawn the attention of other fans who actively engage by responding with positive comments, exchanging story ideas, and collaborating, ultimately fostering online interaction within the community

Keywords: *Fanfiction; Harry Potter; AO3 (Archive of Our Own); Creativity; Interaction*

A. INTRODUCTION

Harry Potter by J.K. Rowling is a phenomenal novel that has succeeded in attracting the attention of world audiences. The novel, which is categorized as a fantasy novel, tells the story of the life of a boy wizard named Harry Potter and his two friends, Hermione Granger and Ron Weasley, who are students at Hogwarts Magic School. Together with these two friends, Harry Potter shares his adventures in facing his great enemy, Lord Voldemort, a black wizard who wants eternal life. The story of the battle between Harry Potter and Lord Voldemort was written into seven series, namely *Philosopher's Stone* (1997), *Chamber of Secret* (1998), *Prisoner of Azkaban* (1999), *Goblet of Fire* (2000), *Order of the Phoenix* (2003), *Half-Blood Prince* (2005), and *Deadly Hallows* (2007). The complexity of the *Harry Potter* story with its magical school setting, in-depth character portrayal, and abundant mythology made this novel series gain worldwide attention.

Since the first novel in the *Harry Potter* series, *Philosopher's Stone*, was published in 1997, public acceptance of the novel has been very high. According to McCreary (2018), the first series sold 120 million copies and became the highest-selling novel in history. The success of this first series was followed by subsequent series. Thus, positioning the novel as world-popular literature means it is not only read by children, but also by adult readers. In fact, according to news written by Meloto (2023) all the novel series have been translated into 58 languages, including Indonesian, and

have sold more than 600 million copies worldwide. No wonder if the adaptation of this novel into a film with the same title as the series also managed to achieve enormous success and became the most-awaited film by the world audiences.

The worldwide popularity of the novel series *Harry Potter*, according to Susan (2008), is a cultural phenomenon that influences global aspects as well as being part of popular culture. The position of *Harry Potter* as a literary work of fiction significantly creates a social phenomenon that provides space for audiences who are fans of this novel to be actively involved in the wizarding world of *Harry Potter*. Fan communities known as fandom began to emerge, and they connected globally through a platform or website (Muhakimah & Nugraheni, 2023; Tohiroh, 2022) that are accessed via the internet, making it possible to interact without meeting face-to-face. Lestanti & Kusuma (2023) also said that fandom is community where fans gather to interact, share their enthusiasm, and engage in various activities, such as exchanging ideas, creating fan-made contents like website and projects, and participating in collaborative efforts.

Fandom as fan culture (Jenkins, 2006, 2013) became an academic term in the early 1990s. Fandom exists as a form of participatory culture where fans are actively involved in expressing their love for literature or popular culture, such as *Harry Potter* fans. The rise of this participatory culture is certainly inseparable from the rapid development of the media industry (Smutradontri & Gadayanij, 2020), which provides space for fans to express their experiences related to what they consume. The emergence of online forums and websites as a space for interaction between fandoms presents a phenomenon referred to by Jenkins (2006) as convergence culture, a moment where fans become the center of how culture operates. One form of convergence culture is the activity of fanfiction written by fans on online platforms, such as Wattpad and Archive of Our Own (AO3).

Wattpad (Pianzola et al., 2020) is the largest online platform that emerged in 2007 as a medium for publishing various types of literature, including novels, short stories, poetry, and fanfictions. Following the success of Wattpad, in 2009, Archive of Our Own, or AO3, was launched. Unlike Wattpad, AO3 specializes as an online platform for fans to write fanfiction of Western works (Boyd, 2020), such as the series novel of *Harry Potter*. The platform created by and for fans contains around seven million works with more than three million registered users. In terms of the number of users, AO3 is smaller than Wattpad, but according to Boyd (2020), this non-commercial platform offers the best quality in protecting fans' rights. Fandom can express everything about what they love in fanfiction without worrying about copyright, so the AO3 platform has received positive recognition from the fandom community. Thus, AO3 has more advantages in the fandom community that is specifically oriented towards fanfiction.

Harry Potter fans on the AO3 platform write fanfiction, which allows them to create their own stories based on the *Harry Potter* world. They can expand on existing storylines, introduce new characters, or even change elements of the world that J.K. Rowling originally created. This research will analyze two *Harry Potter* fanfictions, *Best Shot* by AccioMjolnir and *The End is Beginning (and the Beginning is the End)* by Selcouthmoony, to explore how fans on the AO3 platform expand and reconstruct the *Harry Potter* world. By examining these works, we can gain insights into how fanfiction allows fans to participate and contribute actively to the ongoing development of the *Harry Potter* world.

There are three previous studies that have examined *Harry Potter* fanfiction. Passmore (2007) examined five *Harry Potter* fanfiction texts and found that reading

fanfiction can encourage its readers to engage critically relating to the ideology in the source texts. Sandika (2018) studied the “*Draco Trilogy*” as one of *Harry Potter* fanfiction and suggested that story and character changes can influence reader interest. Duggan (2020) analyzed *Harry Potter* fanfictions to identify demography trends in the *Harry Potter* fandom community. However, these previous studies did not explore the creativity of *Harry Potter* fans in writing fanfiction or their interactions on the AO3 platform. Therefore, research focusing on the creativity and interaction of the *Harry Potter* fandom in AO3 needs to be done to fill the gap in fanfiction research in digital literature.

B. METHOD

This research is conducted using data from two *Harry Potter* fanfictions written by fans entitled *Best Shot* by AccioMjolnir and *The End is Beginning (and the Beginning is the End)* by Selcouthmoony. In analyzing these two fanfictions, I use the digital ethnography method to observe the participation of the *Harry Potter* fandom in the AO3 online platform through fanfiction writing. Digital ethnography (Dean, 2023) has become a commonly used method along with the rise of the internet and the digital age. The digital ethnography approach (Forberg & Schilt, 2023; Lamerichs, 2018) is used to understand culture, practice, and social behavior in digital spaces, such as conducting participant observation of fans and audiences on online platforms. In applying this method, the first research step is to join and engage with the *Harry Potter* fan community on the AO3 platform online. Next, is to select two fan fictions written by fans and conduct analysis of the content texts by focusing on the plot, characters, and narrative patterns to see their creativity in describing the *Harry Potter* world based on their imagination. The last step is to conduct participatory research by observing fan interactions and reading comments of the *Harry Potter* fan community active on AO3.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

THE CREATIVITY OF FANS HARRY POTTER THROUGH FANFICTION ON AO3 PLATFORM

Archive of Our Own (AO3) is a popular online platform where many *Harry Potter* fans express their creativity by writing fanfiction. Among the countless fanfactions available, *Best Shot* by AccioMjolnir and *The End is Beginning (and the Beginning is the End)* by Selcouthmoony are notable examples of how fans expand the original story of Harry Potter by building their own world of Harry Potter. Both fanfictions were published in 2021. *Best Shot* was released in February and consists of 46 chapters, while *The End is Beginning (and the Beginning is the End)* was published in October and has 8 relatively long chapters, which are still being updated.

Understanding the original canon of J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* is crucial before analyzing these fanfictions, as they frequently expand upon or reimagine elements from her work. The original canon tells the adventures of a young wizard named Harry Potter, who discovers his magical abilities and attends Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. In the story, Harry must confront his enemy, The Dark Lord Voldemort, a powerful dark wizard seeking immortality and dominance of the wizarding world.

Harry's friends, Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger, are also essential characters who involved and helped Harry against his enemy. Ron from the wizarding family and Hermione, a brilliant witch, become both friends and romantic partners. Another important character is Draco Malfoy, a rival from a wealthy wizarding family who serves as an antagonist, often hostile toward Harry and his companions. Draco Malfoy comes from a rich family and is known as the sleeve of Voldemort. Based on J.K. Rowling's original Harry Potter series, fans then created fanfiction stories and reimagined Harry Potter's world on their own. Fans are often inspired by their favorite characters, so these fan-written stories deviate from canon storyline, as in fanfiction by AccioMjolnir and Selcotmoony.

In the story *Best Shot*, Hermione Granger initially has a romantic relationship with Ron Weasley, following the canon. However, a future version of Hermione returns to warn her about Draco Malfoy, who becomes her future husband. Young Hermione discovers that Draco is a double agent helping Hogwarts. Although she is initially with Ron, Hermione ultimately chooses Draco, completing her future self's mission and revealing that Draco has loved her since their fourth year at Hogwarts.

Based on the story *Best Shot* by AccioMjolnir, we discover that this fanfiction has a new plotline and alters character development, diverging from the original canonic storyline. This is shown by the presence of time travel and two versions of Hermione. In the *Best Shot*, the old version of Hermione, who is 45 years old, reveals to her younger self that her husband, Draco Malfoy, was recently killed in an accident. Despite attempting several efforts to save him, she failed. She concludes that the only way to save him is to go back to the past and adjust the chain of events that started in her younger years at Hogwarts. She believes that a crucial change there will prevent the tragic outcome.

“So, let me give you the short version. I'm you. I'm forty-five years old. A week ago, my husband was killed in an accident. I've tried short-term adjustment already and nothing works, he has died every time. I've determined I have to keep the sequence of events from ever beginning in the first place to be sure, and I'm almost certain the key is changing this year at Hogwarts.” (AccioMjolnir, 2021, page 4).

From the quotation above, the concept of time travel allows the existence of two versions of Hermione: first, “older Hermione who comes from the future and second, Hermione herself who lives in present time. Their presence highlights internal and external conflicts as the older Hermione seeks to change the future driven by love for Draco Malfoy, while the young Hermione is unaware of her destiny. The exploration of love in *Best Shot* drives the plot as Hermione navigates her romantic relationship with Ron and at the same time, her mission to save Draco. As this work is categorized as an alternate universe, the dynamic of Hermione and Draco shifts from nemesis to romance, creating a narrative that is distinct from the canon.

As *Best Shot* explores the romance of Hermione and Draco Malfoy, there are many tender moments between them. One of the moments is when Hermione learned that Draco's feelings for Hermione began in their fourth year at Hogwarts, specifically at the Yule Ball, where Draco described Hermione as “breathtaking.” The intimacy between them shows a romantic bond in this alternate universe. The quotation below highlights how intimate Hermione and Draco are:

“Since fourth year? Hermione asked, and he (Malfoy) huffed a happy little laugh. “Since fourth year,” he said. He kissed her under the ear. “The Yule Ball. You were breathtaking.” (AccioMjolnir, 2021, page 57).

In *Best Shot*, from the beginning until the end of the story, it highlights Hermione and Draco Malfoy’s romance. It is assumed the author may have an intention of shipping the two characters; therefore, it is possible to build a narrative about them in fanfiction based on the author’s imagination and creativity. Sometimes it is the fandom that helps the author create an alternate universe about characters they ship; in this case it is Hermione and Draco Malfoy. Fanfiction allows characters to be reimaged into a romantic relationship and creates emotional complexity, while in the canon it is impossible to create such things. The shift is in contrast and sharp with the original narrative. The quoted moment when Draco admits his feelings for Hermione at the Yule Ball during their fourth year, symbolizes the reworking of their connection, transforming hostility into affection. This alternate universe explores hidden possibilities, using vulnerability to build a bond that canon never allowed to happen, fueling readers’ fascination with “Dramione” (a shipping name for Draco and Hermione).

Best Shot also gives the readers an open interpretation of Draco Malfoy’s act. During the second war, Draco is known as the loyal follower of Lord Voldemort. On the other side, Hermione is aware Draco is helping her and her friends Harry Potter and Ron Weasley. Both Draco and Hermione communicate through a coin, and if possible, they arrange a meeting. The quotation below shows how Draco helped the trio:

“They’re going to target Weasley.”

“What?”

“In the battle. They’ve decided killing as many Weasleys as they can is the best way to demoralize Potter. they’ve even prioritized them. Ginny, then Ron, then the parents, then the twins. Anyone else is —“ (AccioMjolnir, 2021, page 44).

Draco’s status as double agent introduces moral ambiguity, showing that his loyalty is beyond simplistic good-versus-evil binaries. The secret meetings and information exchanges between Draco and Hermione deepen the tension of the alternate universe narrative. The portrayal of Draco as a covert informant serving both sides reflects how fanfiction reshapes canon narratives to allow for deeper character development. The attempt at fix-it text by the author gives the readers a more redemptive and emotionally satisfying trajectory of Draco Malfoy’s character. In the context of fanfiction, this type of narrative gives fans control over unresolved or less satisfying canon events.

Meanwhile, in *The End is Beginning (and the Beginning is the End)* story focuses on Draco Malfoy, who wakes up in the past at the age of eleven and decides to change his life after realizing the tragic fate of his family, who were loyal to the Dark Lord. On his first day at Hogwarts, the Sorting Hat places Draco Malfoy in Gryffindor, unlike in the canon where he is sorted into Slytherin. The story focuses on Draco’s changing attitude and his friendship with Harry Potter, Hermione Granger, and Ron Weasley as he strives to alter his destiny.

When Draco Malfoy wakes up as an 11-year-old, he realizes he could change his life. Draco’s guilt and hope fuel the plot in the story. As Draco tries to do better, he also

hopes he can lead the Malfoys down a different path of life and to be free from the deceitful Lord Voldemort. Seen from the quotation below from *The End is Beginning (and the Beginning is the End)*, Draco sees an opportunity in what the loop time or the time travel brings out to him.

“If this is just so happens to be this (Draco’s) second chance, then he will use it well and not repeat the mistakes of the foolish young boy that he once was. (Selcouthmoony, 2021, page 10)

In the canon, Draco is portrayed as an antagonist who acts morally the opposite from Hermione, Harry, and Ron, and oftentimes he obstructs the trio’s missions. Meanwhile, this alternate universe - *The End is Beginning (and the Beginning is the End)* – explores Draco’s potential for change and to correct past mistakes. The time travel gives Draco a second chance, and the narrative develops into redemption and character growth. Draco’s self-realization of the opportunity to change the Malfoys’ and his own fate is the main point in this alternate universe. His decision to choose good after realizing he is thrown back to his 11-year-old self creates a strong theme of character development. Draco becomes a protagonist who embraces goodness and does self-reflection on his past self. This adds a new layer to his character, who in canon is portrayed as a dark moral example.

The shift of Draco Malfoy characterizations from the canon work and in *The End is Beginning (and the Beginning is the End)* is contrast. In canon work, Draco would never hang out with the trio: Hermione, Harry Potter, and Ron Weasley. However, the fanfiction allows Draco to behave differently, such as defending Hermione and Ron, which in canon work is impossible to happen. It is bizarre to read a work that reimagines Draco Malfoy as the trio’s friend. The quotation below seems to be built by the author’s fanfiction as validation for readers who find it bizarre to read the transformations of Draco Malfoy.

“Well..uh for starters, she was the one who had come up to taunt me, Potter and Weasley. She started to call weasley and I blood traitors, and call Hermione Granger a mudblood several times.. which you know, Granger is my uh.. friend.” The words felt strange to come out of his own mouth. Making it sound like he was trying to defend her was ever bizarre, because he used to be the one who called Granger a mudblood, even wishing her dead in second year when Slytherin’s monster was lurking around the school attacking defenseless muggleborns. Draco didn’t truly her dead, no. Twelve year old him just doesn’t know what he’s talking about, he didn’t really mean it (Selcouthmoony, 2021, page 51).

In the quote, Draco himself states a discomfort of defending Hermione and Ron. It reveals the tension between his past and current selves. His past self would use the slur “mudblood” against Hermione; it is in contrast with his new self, who would defend Hermione from students who use the slur against her. This illustrates his internal transformation, which highlights the idea that characters can change when placed in different or new contexts. Draco’s portrayal of befriendng the trio suggests that “good” and “evil” are more fluid than in canon work. With Draco defending Hermione, it symbolizes a rejection of his past self, identity reconstruction, redemption, and a

second chance. These are themes in fanfiction to fulfill the readers' desire for more complex characters that the canon work left unresolved.

Both *Best Shot* and *The End is Beginning (and the Beginning is the End)* are using canon divergence to create fanfiction by reimagining the original narrative and altering plots and/or characters. According to Ery (2020), canon divergences are diverging from the main story because one or more elements are changed in order to create other alternatives from the original canon. In the story *Best Shot*, Hermione and Ron's canon relationship shifts conversely due to time travel and Hermione's future connection with Draco Malfoy. Meanwhile, in *The End is Beginning (and the Beginning is the End)*, Draco's transformation house at Hogwarts, from Slytherin to Gryffindor, introduces a contrast to the canon, which is exploring the theme of redemption. As Malfoy in Gryffindor and his new friendship with Harry, Hermione, and Ron display how the author of fanfiction builds distinct stories to provide characters with second chances. Draco's internal conflict between his new and past selves and his new friends gives more development to his character, allowing readers to imagine Draco's fate in the future. The two stories that are discussed above make use of canon divergence to fix perceived gaps or limitations in the canon work, specifically in Draco's character development. These explorations also reveal fan culture's desire to give certain characters, in this case Draco, a chance to be developed.

Representation of Participation Culture: Interaction Fandom through Fanfiction

I focused on conducting the participatory research by observing the interactions of fans who actively responded to the two fanfictions from AccioMjolnir and Selcouthmony. On the Archive of Our Own (AO3), fans can share and archive their writing fanfiction as well as interact and communicate with other fans by using Feature, which is provided by AO3. There are some of them that fans can use to interact among them: kudos, comments, bookmarks, and tags.

Kudos is a simple feature similar to the like button. With this feature, fans can give kudos as a form of appreciation for the stories they like without having to comment. With the kudos, fans can interact passively to let the author know that they enjoyed the story. In the 'Best Shot,' there were 4,368 kudos, while in "The End is the Beginning (and the Beginning is the End) story, the kudos received were only 444 because the author was not as active as 'The Best' author in updating the story. Besides giving kudos, fans can also leave their comment in the below fanfiction they have read. They often use the comment feature to praise and discuss the plotline, characters, or other elements of fanfiction. Most of the comments left on both Best Shot and The End is Beginning (and the Beginning is the End) are complementary, and here are some examples of discussions between fans and the author of *the End is Beginning* as quoted below.

pclauink on Chapter 2:

Fri 29 Oct 2021 04:49AM

Can't wait for the new golden foursome? I think Draco and Hermione could be good friends! Maybe he can teach them about the pureblood culture and custom Selcouthmony on Chapter 2

Fri 29 Oct 2021 03:24 PM

Yeah they will! I love me some Draco and Hermione friendship. Maybe Hermione could teach him about muggle culture as well.

Espoire on Chapter 2

Fri 29 Oct 2021 10:08 AM

Thank you for publishing this time travel story! I really love how you started and I can't wait to see their friendship and how your story will unfold !

Even though they do not know each other, they enthusiastically expressed their opinions and appreciation regarding the storyline of fanfiction they read. The comments from readers can be directly responded to by the author, thus creating a dialog between readers and the author, who are both Harry Potter fans. In the AO3, they not only give kudos and leave comments, but they can also save the favorable fanfiction story by using the bookmark feature. The bookmark feature is also able to be set publicly, so other users can view the story that has been bookmarked. By adding a bookmark, other readers can identify why this story was liked. It is often for stories that are considered good to be shared by readers through other social media, such as TikTok, as a form of support and recommendation for fanfiction that they like. This can be seen in the comment quote below.

Trickhope

Sun 28 Mar 2021 12:03AM

This was So cute! Saw it recommended on TikTok and I'm so glad I went and found It. Absolutely love it.

AccioMjolnir

Sun 28 Mar 2021 12:07AM

Oh wait what!!! you saw it whatsey whoseey? I'm so thrilled people love this fic so much! Thank you for reading and commenting !

Trickhope

Mon 29 Mar 2021 04: 02 PM

Yeah, @drama 4Dramione posted about it :-)

With these features provided on AO3, fans are able to communicate and engage actively with one another, thus fostering what is called a culture of participation within the Harry Potter fandom. The participation between fans encourages them to reinterpret canon stories, explore alternative timelines, or create entirely original narratives, allowing them to express their creativity and connect with the others who share their passion. As a result, online platform like Archive of Our Own (AO3) provide Harry Potter enthusiasts with an interactive space to interconnect like-minded individuals, built friendship, and contribute actively to community to bring a sense of togetherness among them in celebrating their love to Harry Potter.

D. CONCLUSION

After analyzing the content of two Harry Potter fanfictions, Best Shot and The End is Beginning (and the Beginning is the End), and observing fan interactions on Archive of Our Own (AO3), we can conclude that both stories use cannon divergence to create fanfiction by reimagining the original narrative and altering plots and characters. In Best Shot, Hermione and Ron's canonical relationship evolves differently due to time travel and Hermione's future connection with Draco Malfoy. Meanwhile, in The End is Beginning (and the Beginning is the End), Draco's position change from Slytherin to Gryffindor introduces a contrast to the canon. Malfoy's new friendship with Harry,

Hermione, and Ron shows how the fanfiction author develops distinct stories from the original canon. Draco's internal conflict between his new and past selves, along with his new friendships, adds to his character, allowing readers to envision his future. The two stories discuss above using canon divergence to address perceived gaps or limitations in the original canon, particularly regarding Draco's characters development. These contrasts also highlight the fan's desire to give a good character for Draco, which contrast with the canon.

Interaction between fans in AO3 by using the features provided in it, such as kudos and comments, foster a culture of participation among Harry Potter fans. They can express their creativity and connect with like-mind people. Therefore, the existence of an online platform like AO3 become a space for Harry Potter fans to build friendship and share different experiences in expressing their love for Harry Potter, so that a sense of togetherness grows among them.

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