

Fan Fiction and its Sources of Inspiration in the Canon with Reference to the Harry Potter Series

Author: Lucie Cupalová

This thesis begins with a great premise for a thesis and is executed admirably. It is everything a thesis should be – original, well thought-out and well-presented.

The thesis presents the topic of fan fiction (specifically Rowling's *Harry Potter* series) and gives an excellent analysis of the phenomenon, e.g., open canon/closed canon, prequel/sequel, missing scene, alternative universe, the concepts of *more of* and *more from*, etc., etc. Of course, one could get much of such information from the Internet, *Wikipedia* say, but what Cupalová does is give illuminating examples she has collected based on the *Harry Potter* series.

Some things I *specifically* like about the thesis: 1. The connections drawn by Cupalová between fan fiction and post-modern writing. What could be more post-modern than readers writing back to the texts? The Death of the Author indeed! 2. The thesis takes a stand and is not wishy-washy (from the Introduction to the thesis: "(fan fiction is) popular and inspirational". This is fine – although Cupalová overdoes it a bit later in the thesis – crossing the line of objectivity to subjectivity.

My only, very slight, criticisms of the thesis are inter-related: 1. It is unnecessarily a tad defensive about its topic: fan fiction and its authors. There is a difference between having a strong view-point on a topic (see my praise in the above paragraph) and writing things like "The *Harry Potter* series is not flawless and it has its imperfections". Cupalová does not have to defend the existence of fan fiction or its basis as the topic of her thesis. 2. Rowling's viewpoint: this is not *necessary* (Death of the Author!) but a reader of the thesis thinks about her throughout the thesis. Cupalová writes on page thirty-three of the thesis "Once again, fan fiction proves that *Harry Potter*'s experience is not all the wizarding world has to offer and that there is much more that is worth looking into". Hmm, I am not sold on this. And perhaps it is exactly a reader like me that causes Cupalová to be defensive (although again she need not be.). Is not Rowling the (at least original) author? Does Rowling not know what she is doing? Should she not be respected? Perhaps the things *left out* are left out for a good reason (at least in her opinion). 3. More secondary literature – this is a short thesis for a Bc. degree so the use of secondary literature is more than acceptable – then again, more is always nice. 4. What is Cupalová's *exact* personal experience with fan fiction? It is mentioned on page seven of the Introduction to the thesis ("Writing about fan fiction in the *Harry Potter* universe allows for my first-hand experience as described in the thesis.") but I did not come across it in the thesis. It is not necessary to add the personal connection but if it is presented as something that will come up later – it should. Perhaps I missed it or am misreading what Cupalová meant by the sentence. But is she a writer of fan-fiction herself? 5. From the abstract: "Due to the large amount of fan fiction based on the *Harry Potter* series, it (the thesis) is focused on the *Harry Potter* fan fiction and canon". The sheer enormity of the fan fiction based on the *Harry Potter* universe could be seen as an impediment to research rather than as a boon, could it not?

Fan fiction is a topic that deserves exploration and further exploration – Cupalová could, and maybe should, continue her research for another thesis for a higher degree.

Recommended Grade: 1 (Výborně)

Mark Farrell, July 2011