

Drarry, Snarry and Snape : The Queerest of the Queer
Heteronormativity and Queer Theory in Harry Potter Slash Fan Fiction

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1. Introduction

Before Draco knew what was happening, he had breached the distance that lay between them in quick, silent strides. His hands moved up to hold Harry's startled face, and in the space of a next heartbeat he was kissing Harry, hard and full on the lips, his manner deeply passionate, hopelessly desperate. (Rhysenn)

Draco Malfoy and Harry Potter, characters from J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, are in love. They have been secretly lusting after one another, despite being enemies, throughout their school years and have finally given in to the irresistible desire they feel towards each other. In the future, they can have biological children together, since, in the magical world of wizards, anything is possible. Their relationship might even turn out to include more unnatural elements; Harry turns out to be a magical creature who only charmed Draco into sleeping with him, or Draco slips Harry a love potion which forces Harry to fall in love with him. In some cases, they are — through some magical mishap — forced to have sex in order to save the world, falling in love in the process and living happily ever after.

For a slash fan fiction writer, the only limit is your own imagination and the examples listed above are only a fraction of the situations which Draco and Harry — or, as shortened by fans, Drarry — find themselves in. Moreover, these are only the PG versions, not to even mention the x-rated porn that they engage themselves in on a regular basis in slash fan fiction. This is evident in online forums and communities in which hundreds of stories are published daily, not only based on *Harry Potter* characters but almost all popular culture products available. In fact, it is difficult to find a TV show or a book nowadays that does not have slash fan fiction written about it.

Slash fan fiction, or slash, then, is a term for fan-written stories that portray two already existing characters from literature or popular culture in a romantic and/or sexual relationship (Dhaenens, Van Bauwel, and Biltreyst 342). Slash has been around since the 1970s and *Star Trek* but its nature is now different to what is used to be, and Harry Potter slash is a good example of that change towards a more diverse direction. The first type of slash was not so much sexually explicit, but rather, explored the emotional connection between two best friends. This originated from the first slash

pairing, Captain Kirk and Mr Spock, known as Kirk/Spock, of *Star Trek* by adding the romance element to their friendship. This is where the term ‘slash’ also originated from; the slash mark between the characters’ names indicates the characters in a relationship. Since then, slash has spread into most popular culture texts, creating fan groups, or fandoms¹ mostly active on the Internet. The old-school romances copying the first slash pairings still exist, but bolder and more unconventional material surfaces every day on online forums and fan fiction archives. Even though romance built on friendship is still a popular slash genre to a certain degree, fics written today dig a lot deeper when it comes to exploring different representations of sexual desire, moving away from the fluffy romance between two best friends.

For this reason, one of the ways that helps to understand the diverse nature of slash is to categorize it and compare those categories. One way of categorizing slash is the pairings of the characters. Catherine Tosenberger suggests that the conventions and tropes that are formed in the Potter fandom rely more on the different pairings, rather than following any existing narrative (“Homosexuality” 195). Although the character of Harry Potter is frequently 'slashed' together with his best friend Ron (the *Harry Potter* version of Kirk/Spock), he is also paired up with his school rival Draco Malfoy, his teacher Severus Snape, his godfather Sirius Black, several of his classmates from Hogwarts, and even magical creatures featured in the novels. The fics portray the characters in varying scenarios depicting various degrees of explicit sex. And this is only Harry, not to mention the other characters from the books that are used as a source of inspiration for Potter slash fics. Nevertheless, all writers have the same agenda: writing about gay wizards getting it on.

In the original *Harry Potter* novels, there are no explicitly stated homosexual characters except for the post-series outed Albus Dumbledore who, in the books themselves, remains completely sexless: he is old, has no romantic entanglements in the books, nor is there any kind of explicit statement that he is gay. Moreover, the heterosexual romance flourishes as soon as the young characters hit puberty. As such, the series has been criticized for being too heterosexist in its nature (Pugh T., Wallace 23). In other words, it provides a limited worldview regarding sexuality and gender for its readers because it only depicts heterosexual romance. This is the case with most popular culture texts of Western society today. Homosexuality, or any sexual identity other than heterosexuality, is often marginalized and different, always in the opposition

¹ On the more detailed definition of fandoms and their history, see Hellekson, Busse 41-59.

to the so-called mainstream. These notions embedded in our culture are grouped together under the same heading of heteronormativity, those invisible, often homophobic rules that our society and language function by. This also manifests itself in popular and mass culture; for instance, the lack of gay characters in leading roles or the idealization of heterosexual marriage.

In slash, however, readers have taken the matter into their own hands, writing thousands of stories in which same-sex characters fall in love and have sex. The subject matter that then unites all slash, is the pairing of characters of the same sex, turning them into, as Dhaenens, Van Bauwel, and Biltreyst suggest, "queer subjects" (335). This is in light of Queer Theory, a post-structural theory challenging the biological and essentialist notions on gender and sexuality (Dhaenens, Van Bauwel, and Biltreyst 335). In other words, the characters in slash are rewritten as something other than straight; they are queered. As Queer Theory embraces everything non-straight and challenges the narrow definitions of gender and sexual desire existing in mainstream culture while questioning its often homophobic values and opinions, it is not difficult to see slash connected to some of the issues queer theorists focus on, particularly by challenging the heteronormative ideals described above. However, there are differences within slash fics in the way that this re-writing expresses such themes, a subject which is the focus of this study. Each pairing represents a slightly altered version of slash, indicating that not all slash necessarily creates queer subjects.

Because the fics (mostly) rewrite straight characters² as homosexuals, the academic debate whether slash somehow queers the characters, or the canon texts, has been addressed by several scholars (Dhaenens, Van Bauwel, and Biltreyst, Katyal, Thrupkaew, Tosenberger among others). Most scholars have treated the slash phenomenon as a unified concept in regards to its possible queerness, rather than addressing the question of how distinctive types differ in terms of heteronormative ideals; whether they conform to and copy those ideals or include elements that transgress them.

So far, the general approach in scholarship on slash that draws parallels between slash and ideas from Queer Theory and uses these ideas to examine slash, has been that slash either is a queer phenomenon, bending conventional rules on sexuality and gender, or it is not, serving only the purpose of allowing heterosexual women to create their fantasy relationship in which men are sensitive and giving, examining it as a

² On the debate of slashing canonically gay characters, see S. Pugh 98-102.

criticism of masculinity and patriarchy. Nevertheless, the issue of slash being solely queer or non-queer is not the only way the topic is approached by academics. It has been suggested that slash writers have specific queer practices in their writings in the way that some slash narratives resist and reject heteronormative assumptions more so than others, by being more sexually graphic, more violent and less canon-compliant than most other stories (Reid 4). What this means in practice is that fics that are more shocking when it comes to the subject matter, whether it be sex, violence or the overall approach of the fic to the source text, are in minority when it comes to popularity; thus making them queerer because they resist the mainstream slash.

However, even this division based on the degree of sexual explicitness, violence, or how closely the fic follows the source text, seems an unsatisfactory basis for answering the question of what specific forms of slash are queerer than others. This is especially the case in Potter slash because there are several fics that are kinky, hard-edged and violent; but at the same time romantic. There are also romantic and traditional themed stories featuring established relationships and family life that then also include gender swapping or male pregnancy. Furthermore, it is difficult to describe what is canon compliant and what is not, without going into details of a specific fic.

Therefore, examining the specific pairings as well as the slash genres and how they appear together if contrasted with heteronormative ideals might shed light on the different forms of same-sex desire and the possible queerness of the different types of slash. When determining if a specific Potter slash pairing has queer elements in it, one must take into account the different representations of same-sex desire and the ways and degrees the specific pairings treat gender and sexuality. Thus, despite the fact that all slash, one way or another, addresses themes concerning homosexual desire and same-sex relationships, this study suggests that for a slash pairing to be queer, it is not simply about pairing male or female characters together; it is more about how they are paired and how the characters are represented in the different pairings.

As the size of this study is not large enough to cover all the different versions of the different pairings, it is more sensible to focus on the most popular ones since there has not been earlier scholarship to do this before. This study focuses on three different types of pairings in Potter slash which all differ in the way they slash characters together. Firstly, the genre of buddy slash is examined by looking at the pairing of Harry/Ron in the context of traditional romance and idealization of heteronormativity. Secondly the enemy slash pairing of Harry/Draco is considered in

terms of both transgressing and idealizing gender stereotypes and mixing non-queer and queer slash. The third pairing included in this study is Harry/Snape, the power slash pairing as a representation of the more diverse and non-normative material. The last section of the study will look into two distinct types of slash, Plot What Plot fics and rare pairings, both examples of the problematic categorization of slash.

All of these pairings share similarities, however, buddy slash, as it appears in the Harry/Ron pairing, is less queer than enemy or power slash in its treatment of gender and sexuality and the way it exhibits heteronormative ideals; whereas enemy slash, in the pairing of Harry/Draco, mixes both queer and more traditional themed slash. Finally, power slash, the Harry/Snape-pairing in turn, represents an example of the most subversive slash pairing in the moment of writing and therefore could be considered to have the queerest elements out of the three. These assumptions are based on examples used from several fics chosen from the Harry Potter fandom.

In relation to this, one of the difficulties in analyzing slash pairings is the general vagueness of slash as it exists on the Internet. This is because the development of slash, even within one pairing, is unpredictable due to the high number of fics that are published daily and makes it challenging to examine a specific pairing as an entity. Tosenberger argues that a lot of fan fiction is so tied to its own specific community context that it is “difficult or impossible to really understand it without also being embedded in that context” (“Gender and Fan Studies”). When one is approaching such undefined material, there is a danger of making unreliable generalizations.

Nevertheless, there are certain similarities that can be detected in a particular pairing. To describe a pairing such as Harry/Snape, for example, the only way to actually know it, is to read slash written about the pairing, and make oneself familiar in meta-discussions and analyses of the pairing that exist in archives, forums and fan sites. Anne Kustritz states that from fan fiction emerges fanon that is a sort of “accidental and purposeful homogeneity found in slash stories”. It can be anything from “psychic bonds” to a specific feeling that “the fan community agrees a character was feeling during a specific scene” (381). This so-called “metatext” (Kustritz 382) is what this study uses as a basis for drawing conclusions based on the examples from fics. These recurring elements and repetitive patterns are used to determine some of the most basic features found in Potter slash. That is why examining the pairings, rather than only the genres or themes, seemed a sensible starting point to approach Potter slash. Many of the themes are structured around the different pairings and this metatext that emerges from

them. The overall conclusions in this study are based on my own observations, and examples were chosen to represent those observations in an attempt to describe each pairing as they currently exist in the fandom.

Before analyzing the Potter slash pairings through examples, this study will define what slash fan fiction is in more detail and summarize the recent academic debate on how some ideas from Queer Theory are used to explain slash, both as a unified concept and on a more specific level. It will then discuss Potter slash more closely by looking at the different forms of sexual desire present in different pairings, and finally, by analyzing buddy, enemy and power slash pairings within the Potter fandom, attempt to define factors that determine whether or not a specific fic or pairing can be said to have queer elements in it and what those queer elements are. In other words, how much of the heteronormative appears in the most popular pairings in the Potter fandom, and, on the other hand, in what way the queer manifests itself in these pairings.

2. Defining Slash

In order to examine more closely what types of pairings and genres are the most popular and influential, specifically in Potter slash, and to justify why specifically those pairings are used as examples in this study, this section will define what slash fan fiction is and how it has developed to its current state.

As mentioned above, slash currently covers hundreds of genres and pairings, with same-sex desire as the dominant and possibly only theme that connects all different forms of slash. This is especially the case with Potter slash, since, as Catherine Tosenberger points out, “there really is no such thing as a typical Potter slash story” (“Homosexuality” 195). This is because of the aforementioned number of characters the writers have access to, which then in turn generates thousands of stories, each having their own unique take on the original novels, in other words, the Potter canon. The second reason is the development of slash in itself; the genres and different pairings have developed their own unique characteristics when it comes to the nature of a pairing and the portrayal of the characters. So far, not much scholarship has concentrated on these different pairings even though they provide a better overview of slash fiction than one specific genre, for instance.

As noted earlier, the very first type of slash was not so much sexually explicit, but rather explored the emotional connection between two best friends, or partners, in cases such as Kirk/Spock in *Star Trek*, Han Solo/Luke Skywalker in *Star Wars*, and Starsky/Hutch in *Starsky and Hutch*, by adding the romance element to their relationship. This so-called buddy slash builds on platonic friendships that already exist between male characters in the canon. As Kustritz describes, the buddy is someone who is “always available, constantly sympathetic, and may be the only person on the planet to see the hero cry” (377). This model is found in Potter slash as well; Harry/Ron is a popular pairing applicable to the buddy model. In Harry/Ron fics, Harry is often the suffering hero and Ron, the loyal sidekick who comforts him.

Since buddy slash was the first type of fan fiction depicting homosexual themes in accordance to how fan fiction is defined today, and because it still holds a certain degree of popularity in several fandoms, many theories on slash are based on that model. Henry Jenkins describes it as uncovering “the erotics of male friendship” (205), and Kustritz claims that slash is not about sexual attraction, it is “about being in love” (379). These are stories that are based on the idea that it is not so much about sex

or gender, but rather about romantic feelings. The idea behind the buddy model is that the relationships are based on a strong positive emotional connection between the characters; an intimacy that is then extended to include romantic elements in a way that crosses the already thin line between a homosocial bond (a strong friendship between persons of the same sex) and homosexual desire (Jenkins 205).

Having said all this, buddy slash fics consist of only a fraction of all the material that is currently available on the Internet. For one thing, many of the fics include graphic depictions of sex more frequently than before, and scenarios extending beyond just romance are explored more as well. As mentioned above, Tosenberger argues that the Potter fandom in particular challenges any attempt to construct a unifying theory on slash (“Homosexuality” 190). This is partly because of the aforementioned size of it and partly because of the number of characters available to be slashed with each other.

Even though buddy slash is not necessarily the main interest of slash writers any longer, the most popular slash pairings still build on the emotion between the characters found in canon texts. The only difference is that they are not based on an already existing friendship or partnership. Currently among the most popular pairings in the Harry Potter fandom, are those belonging to a group of enemy slash and power slash (Tosenberger, “Homosexuality” 191). Enemy slash is a narrative in which two characters, who are enemies in the canon, are slashed together. The story arc is usually spent overcoming whatever emotional and physical obstacles there are in order to get the two together. Power slash, in turn, makes use of characters that are different in terms of their “personal, cultural or social agency” (Tosenberger, “Homosexuality” 191). In other words, it depicts relationships between older and younger characters (e.g. Snape/Harry) and/or physically or intellectually stronger and weaker characters (e.g. Voldemort/Harry). The power dynamics between the characters are then an influential part of constructing a general description of these slash pairings; they all represent a different kind of relationship in terms of dominance, feminine-masculine characteristics portrayed in the pairings, and what type of stories certain pairings tend to be featured in.

Based on the popularity of power and enemy slash, the claim that at the core of a slash pairing there has to be some sort of unresolved emotional/sexual tension (S. Pugh 94), whether it is positive or negative, seems to be closer to the truth than claiming it is all about romance. However, even this definition is too narrow when considering the other several forms that Potter slash comes in. For instance, there are the PWP (Plot,

What Plot? or Porn Without Plot) fics that do not address any of the above mentioned issues concerning emotions, depicting only sexual encounters between the characters. There are also many fics that portray characters that do not interact in the source text and thus do not have any pre-existing unresolved issues between them to build on. The pairings are not restricted to only male characters either; femslash or femmeslash with female characters, proposes a problem to the already weak theory concerning buddy slash and male intimacy that most of the academic research has previously concentrated on.

In addition to categorizing slash fics by the pairings, the different genres are also a notable way of grouping the fics together. As a common rule in the Potter fandom, the beginning of each fic must include certain information. In addition to the author, title and rating (how sexually explicit or violent the fic is), the beginning of a slash fic must state the genre and any possible warnings, in order for the readers to find stories to their taste. Different genres include: romance, darkfic (darker, usually very bleak themes), adventure, horror, drama, PWP, angst, and crack (humor) among others. The warnings, on the other hand, indicate different tropes used in a fic to help prevent the reader stumbling upon something they may not wish to read. Common warnings include: extreme violence, character death, torture, m-preg (male pregnancy), and various different sexual acts. There are also warnings for fluff (light-hearted, excessive romance), AU (alternative universe) and OOC (out of character - a character's personality and actions do not follow canon). The OOC warning is normally used, for instance, when a character is overly feminized or instead of being evil, they are good. This makes a good reference point later on to the fact that if a character is very much feminized or, in turn, masculinized, it alters the power dynamic between the characters of a pairing in question.

In short, slash has developed from a relationship between best friends into covering all pairings available in the canon and extending from romance to any genre imaginable. However, there are conventions formed, such as pairings of buddy, enemy, and power slash that make it somewhat easier to categorize and examine slash. Still, the overlapping of the genres and tropes often makes it difficult to give any overall description of a typical slash fic, especially in Potter slash. It is not uncommon to have a Harry/Draco m-preg story that is also a horror story, or a fic including torture having a fluffy, romantic ending. That is why it is useful to examine how slash, in terms of its treatment of gender and sexuality, shares similar elements with Queer Theory's way of

approaching the same issues. In doing this, it will help to determine the possibility of queer qualities in Potter slash. This issue will be concentrated on in the next section.

3. Queering Slash

In this section, the relationship between slash fan fiction and Queer Theory is examined and the different interpretations of that relationship are introduced, highlighting the notion that not all slash necessarily shares similarities with the ideas of Queer Theory.

As fan fiction is not published through official channels, but mostly circulated through online forums, communities and archives such as LiveJournal and FanFiction.Net, the writers are not confined by censorship of any authoritative channels. Thus, they are not, as Tosenberger suggests, “being restricted to institutionalized discourse” (“Homosexuality”, 185). This offers the writer a chance to think outside the box, generating fiction in which “the borders of heteronormativity are sometimes blurred” (Dhaenens, Van Bauwel, and Biltereyst 345); they are free to explore themes concerning gender and sexuality that would not make it to print in book form, which in turn suggests that some fan fiction, especially slash, does not follow conventional norms on said themes.

What is meant here by institutionalized discourse and conventional norms, are those invisible rules and restrictions that our language and society function by: norms such as heterosexuality and biological conceptions of gender regarding femininity and masculinity. These can be found in mass and popular culture as well; for example, the lack of gay characters in narratives or leading roles and the idealization of heterosexual romance and marriage in popular fiction and television. This so-called heteronormativity is based on the acknowledgement and acceptance of only the biological and natural forms of gender, gender identity and gender roles (Dhaenens, Van Bauwel, and Biltereyst 336-339). It suggests clear cut divisions between male and female; feminine and masculine attributes are considered to be connected to biological sex, creating a set of norms. These norms imply that men are expected to be masculine and women, feminine; the male is the one penetrating, and the female is the one penetrated.

Heteronormativity, as the name indicates, also considers heterosexuality as the norm, or as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick describes it, “obligatory heterosexuality” (3) within our society. Thus, homosexuality, bisexuality and other sexual orientations are automatically abnormal and inferior (Sedgwick 3). It is then given, as we are already aware of the slash fiction’s suggested marginalized and (homo) sexualized nature, that the stories are not necessarily restricted by this norm. Slash challenges this oppositional

thinking by playing around with these mainstream concepts, at least to a certain degree. Interestingly enough, as will later be discussed in more detail, there are fics that do follow the so-called heteronormative route, regardless of the fact that, on the surface, they seem to queer their subjects.

This heteronormativity is transgressed by queer theorists who resist the oppositional thinking of gender. Queer Theory emerged in the 1970s, in the wake of gay and lesbian studies, when the concept of homosexual desire began to be seen in a cultural and historical context, and homosexuality began to be seen as a less uniform concept (Dhaenens, Van Bauwel, and Biltreyst 337). It became apparent that the queer community was much more diverse than consisting only of gays and lesbians. It was also noted that throughout history, homosexual desire was affected by its cultural surroundings of the time and was a much more complex construction than simply labeling someone as 'gay'.

The term 'queer' in relation to Queer Theory is a complex term and one of the problems with it is its vagueness, as queer theorists tend to generally reject any kind of set definition. Nikki Sullivan sums up the term as a “vague and indefinable set of practices and (political) positions that has the potential to challenge normative knowledges and identities” and that it is “not restricted to gays and lesbians but [...] anyone who feels marginalized as a result of their sexual practices” (44). It can then be used to describe something as resistant and oppositional to mainstream attitudes and approaches, and is something non-straight. In a way, queer goes against mainstream and resists the mainstream but it is not only about homosexuality; it is a broader concept.

In regards to slash, Dhaenens, Van Bauwel, and Biltreyst go on to say that it shares a similar approach to Queer Theory, in terms of its deconstructive nature. Queer theorists interpret material in a similar way to slash writers; they both “deconstruct traditional narratives and reveal the queer from reading between the story lines” (343). When discussing queer readings in popular culture, as Sullivan proposes, the focus is more on searching for more complex interpretations from texts, rather than only active resistance to the mainstream cultural products and narratives. There is therefore, no one right way to queer popular culture; it is not simply a product to be consumed, but by “reading [popular culture texts] we actively re-create them” (Sullivan 189). It is not about passively receiving popular culture texts as they are, but being active participants as consumers, constantly forming our understanding of them by contrasting and comparing them to our own knowledge and belief systems (Sullivan 189).

Overall, Potter slash can be seen as a literal way of recreating a text and finding new ways and more complex interpretations within the already existing text, using the above mentioned deconstruction as a basis. The *Harry Potter* canon provides an existing arrangement of us versus them: the wizards versus the muggles (non-magical people), an arrangement which could be read as queer. In this case, the whole concept of wizardry is read as a metaphor for homosexuality. However, this type of queer reading of *Harry Potter* as a whole differs slightly from what slash writers and readers seem to be doing. Many of them find it fascinating to explore the characters because they provide an array of possible queer readings on a more specific level. A slash writer, venturous1, explained the interest with the *Harry Potter* canon as a source of slash:

Many characters are eccentric in ways that twist stereotypic [sic] gender roles. Harry seems oddly sexless in his interaction with Ginny; Snape is basically a stereotypical witch (ugly nose, long hair, cauldron, black dress) who happens to be male; male wizards dress in flamboyant clothing; Draco is pretty, Hermione is tough and independent. (venturous1)

In a way, slash writers search for clues around which they might construct their fic. There are several settings in slash in which Harry's "oddly sexless interaction" with Ginny is explained by Harry's homosexuality; similarly, Snape's canon qualities are used to support his mysteriously hidden relationship with male character X. Slash fics make use of the way in which the canon characters are written in the original text (e.g. their relationships with other characters or the way they behave or dress); thus, this type of queer reading is derived from an already existing material. As Alexander Doty points out, queer readings are not made up from an imaginary source; they have existed all along with the so-called heteronormative, or straight, readings and they are the result of recognizing and connecting the complex sphere of already existing queerness from popular culture (16). In this light, slash writers are only pointing out the possibility of other readings of a text, rather than there only being the obvious one, in other words, the heteronormative one.

Moreover, it is argued that Queer readings are like any other interpretation of a given text. Ika Willis proposes that slash reveals the queer in a particular text not by filling in the gaps but "more like revealing the gaps" (158) of a particular text. In other words, the queer material concerning gender and sexuality already exists, a queer reading only approaches it from another angle. For instance, reading a character as homosexual is not so different from reading them as heterosexual if the description in

canon does not indicate it one way or another. However, because heterosexual romance is considered as the norm in our society, heteronormativity is often opposed with queerness in Queer Theory.

These set norms and ideals for gender and sexual behavior, and the idealization of heterosexual identity and marriage in popular culture texts often invite slash writers to use those readings to their advantage in slash fiction. This is why slash is often seen as a transgression of heteronormative texts, as slash writers merely re-interpret texts and recreate them along the lines of their own way of seeing the world. However, the interpretation is not always as transgressive as it might first seem to be. Once the slash pairings are examined individually, one will see differences of how much certain fics are more influenced by heteronormative ideals and how some are more transgressive and queer than others.

Therefore, the queerness of slash cannot be based on the fact that it depicts two same sex characters in a relationship or, in other words, rewrite them as homosexuals. In most slash fics, the wizarding world “is an idealized one [...] in which someone’s sexual orientation is a matter of indifference” (MacDonald 30). Thus the political aspect of homosexuality cannot be used as the basis for slash fiction’s queerness either. Those fics that do use it as a plot line are essentially coming-out stories in which a character struggles in a homophobic environment but mostly, at least in Potter slash, this subject is not the main target of interest. The themes are more concerned with the particular pairing and their interaction rather than the political aspect of homosexuality. Therefore, if the whole universe of Potter slash is seen as an idealization of a society in which sexual orientation does not matter, the queerness does not derive from the sexual orientation in itself. Regardless of the theme of homosexuality in Potter slash, many of the fics parallel the romance narrative derived from mainstream literature and popular culture. For that reason, the treatment of homosexuality in slash fics cannot be the reason for arguing that all slash is somehow queer, since most of the fics take that idealized approach to homosexuality.

Moreover, it is proposed that slashing is an act outside the boundaries of only same-sex desire. One fan fiction writer claimed that there is something called 'het slash' (heterosexual slash); the core of slash consisting of the already discussed emotions and vulnerability, rather than anything to do with sexual orientation. If two heterosexual characters have a lot of unresolved emotional tension between them, they can, according to the writer, be slashed together just as well as same-sex couples (S. Pugh 94).

According to S. Pugh, this is a point on which slash writers often disagree; some fans argue that if there is emotional connection between the canon characters, it can be interpreted as unresolved sexual tension and the fics written about that relationship are called slash regardless of the sex of the characters. Others, however, say that it can only be called slash if the fan fic involves same-sex relationships, regardless of how it is done (109). This idea of heterosexual slashing is, nevertheless, based more on a theory of fan fiction as a whole because, as it has been pointed out in this study, the only concrete theme that connects all slash is the pairings of same-sex.

However, the possible queerness of slash fiction is not solely derived from how much it derives from heteronormative canon. Slash also plays around with the concept of gender in a similar way that Queer theorists do; the act of slashing has also been applied to Judith Butler's idea of gender as a performance. Sonia K. Katyal compared slash narratives to drag performances, as they "subvert the structural, natural and normal expectations associated with gender" (487) in similar ways to drag. Butler defines drag as follows:

Drag [...] suggests a dissonance between sex and performance, sex and gender, and gender and performance, because the so-called sex of the performer is not the same as the gender being performed. Gender, then, is nothing but a parody. (qtd in Sullivan 86)

Gender, then, is not connected to biological sex, but acted out in society because that is what people are taught to do. There is an evident connection to slash in this way since, for example, a Potter slash story in which Draco and Harry are a married couple with children, can be interpreted as a mockery of a heterosexual marriage. Here, the writers have taken the traditional mother-father gender roles and transferred them to a male/male pairing, thus queering a biological concept of parenthood. Other examples from slash would include the feminization of a character, gender swapping, or cross dressing that all suggest the performative nature of gender in slash.

In this connection to drag and the performativity, Sullivan explains that parody and performance "on the other hand, [...] could be [...] read as subversive, and on the other, it could be, [...] read as reinforcing particular hegemonic values and identities." (91) What this means is that while the exaggeration in a specific fic or a pairing parodies gender in some way, it can also be seen as enforcing the heteronormative stereotype of current Western society; men are to be masculine; women, feminine. This

is how they are expected to dress, behave, and act. It is evident in literature as well. In the *Harry Potter* series, all characters follow the expected path to heterosexual femininity and masculinity, ending in marriage and children. There are no mentions of questioning one's sexuality or gender identity in the novels. The slash pairings in this study, even though they all alter the canon, contain different amounts of that canon ranging from only the names of the characters to including most of the story (except for the heterosexuality of the character). Particular pairings may adopt some themes from mainstream romance narrative that exist in *Harry Potter* novels, as well as other literature that does not question the norm and remains one-dimensional. On the contrary, some pairings do not conform to borrowing mainstream romance narratives but rather go against the traditional romance slash, exhibiting more non-normative material.

In sum, it is claimed that Queer Theory shares similar elements with the way that slash treats canon texts. This includes generating queer readings out of popular culture texts and its treatment of gender and gender roles. However, this is only one side of the phenomenon. 'Slashing' as an act and specific slash pairings cannot be treated as the same thing in regards to the degree of queerness, as different pairings in slash differ from each other significantly. The next section will address this issue more specifically describing different ways in which queering is seen as part of the nature of slash fiction.

3.1. Queer or Non-Queer Slash?

This section discusses the queer nature of slash fiction more specifically, in that, even though there is a notion of dividing slash into either queer or non-queer based on the genres, the pairings manifest both qualities in themselves.

As we have seen, scholars have mostly examined slashing as a unified concept, grouping all slash together, or concentrating more on the reason why it is written rather than breaking it down and examining different forms this queering might take. Seeing all slash as transgressing and challenging heteronormative gender roles and blurring the lines of mainstream fiction in relation to Queer Theory practices, provides a useful background when analyzing slash in relation to queer readings. However, it might be too narrow a way to approach such a vast phenomenon, at least when examining different pairings of Potter slash. Perhaps slashing as an act, that is, generating queer

readings from a source text and turning them into slash fiction, could be seen as transgressing and challenging the boundaries of heteronormativity as such, but the ways in which the pairings model this idea are different.

As this study suggests, the pairings within Potter slash differ in regards to their queerness. This has little to do with the homosexuality of the characters, as all slash fics feature the characters as homosexuals to a certain degree, or for at least for the amount of time it takes for them to get involved with a character of the same sex. As said, the political implications of homosexuality are often disregarded in Potter slash, meaning that being a homosexual in a heteronormative society is not the main theme in most of the fics unless it is a coming out fic. These fics do exist in Potter fandom but are not as numerous as slash that ignores the political aspects of homophobia (Tosenberger, “Homosexuality” 194).

A more productive approach in the context of this study is to examine slash fandoms, as Anne Reid describes them, not as a homogeneous group of writers who produce slash that falls under the same label of queer, but as a group that has queer processes visible in some of their members' reading and writing practices (1). The general idea is to oppose normativity with queerness, rather than heterosexuality with homosexuality, bearing in mind the deconstructive thinking in Queer Theory which treats sexuality as more of a continuum of different sexual orientations than as two oppositions.

Instead of stating that slash rewrites characters as homosexuals, which in turn generates it into a queer reading of the canon, Reid suggests that there is a difference between traditionally feminine genres of slash and more controversial slash. The term 'feminine slash' refers to stories that depict romance plots, domestic settings and balanced, happy relationships; in other words, plot lines that depict heteronormative themes. More controversial or 'non-feminine' slash can then refer to stories that deal with darker themes. This assumption is based on the idea that fan fiction writers who are writing gen fics (general fan fiction without depictions of sexual relationships) and romance fics are the majority, and because they are the majority, they claim the “status of normativity” (2).

As opposed to so-called normative slash, Reid claims, that when considering all different fandoms as a whole, fans who write kinkier, more violent and hard-edged narratives are the minority. These narratives reject heteronormative assumptions, making them resistant and thus queerer (1-19). As an example of a more controversial

fic genre, Reid introduces a slash mode called “darkfic” that usually refers to slash that is bleak, horrific, and sometimes sadistic; mostly rated NC-17 due to violence and/or sexual content. However, in Potter slash, many of these themes can be found in stories which are otherwise considered traditional; for example, buddy fics involving extreme violence, or romance fics involving incest; among some of the most popular pairings there is the pairing of Fred and George who are brothers. There are also creature fics featuring *animagi* (people who can turn into animals), house elves and *veela* (beautiful magical creatures reminiscent of the Sirens of Greek mythology) that are paired up. Even though Reid’s approach is more sensible in examining different pairings than treating slash as a unified concept, it still has a minority-majority division, which again does not follow the idea of sexual fluidity.

Therefore, dividing Potter slash into queer and non-queer slash is problematic if the criteria are based only on how violent, bleak, sexually explicit or 'out there' the fics might be. They do not necessarily apply to Reid’s definition of controversial slash, because they mix both traditional and non-normative themes in the same stories. Since this study concentrates on a few of the most popular pairings in the Potter fandom, it differs from what has been done previously in slash studies, and thus takes on a different angle towards the question of heteronormativity and queerness in different pairings. Each pairing and fic is analyzed individually in the context of queerness and heteronormativity before determining whether it features characteristics from either.

In relation to this, Tosenberger argues that “not all source texts are created equally heteronormative” (“The Epic love story” 1.3). She is talking about the relationship between canon texts and slash, and how much slash alters the original canon into a queerer direction. She goes on to say that if slash is seen as a “subversion of canon” at large it might overshadow the possible queer readings in the canon itself (1.3). This can, however, be applied to slash within slash as well. If slash is only treated as an act, a single phenomenon without actually breaking it down into different categories, one might miss the subtle nuances the fics exhibit. In short, dividing slash into majority and minority (heteronormative and queer) in regards of how sexually explicit or, on the other hand, romantic they are, is not a sufficient way of determining the queer aspects of a specific pairing. The next section will look into these different pairings and forms of sexual desire within these pairings in order to define their nature in more detail.

3.2. Pairings in Potter Slash: Forms of Sexual Desire

So far, the different ways that slash might be considered queer, based on how queer theorists define the term, has been discussed. Also, the possible division between queer and non-queer slash, based on how traditional or unconventional a genre is, has been covered. This section will concentrate on the pairings and forms of sexual desire connected to each buddy, enemy and power slash in order to highlight the differences in each. Also, the concepts of PWP fics and rare pairings are discussed in more detail to demonstrate that the heteronormativity and queerness within a specific pairing is derived from several factors.

Since the division into pairings help to clarify the way in which queerness might manifest itself in Potter slash, one should examine the different forms in which sexual desire is presented in certain popular male/male pairings. Each pairing consists of a homosexual relationship, but the way this relationship is presented varies according to the power dynamics within the pairing. If one considers how the normative or non-normative qualities are evident in the subject matter of the fic, the power dynamics between the characters who are slashed, and the masculinity and femininity in their characteristics based on the earlier discussion, it might help to determine which slash pairings then have more of the queerer characteristics than others and which ones exemplify more from the heteronormative side of slashing so to speak.

As noted earlier, the most popular types of slash pairings are buddy slash, power slash and enemy slash. In addition to these, several other specific pairing types are also popular, such as, creature/human fics, incest fics, rare pairings and PWP fics. Since buddy slash was the first form of slash, earlier theories tend to focus on the way that buddy slash functions, ignoring the other forms. As such, it has misleadingly been suggested to cover all slash. Jenkins defines slash as follows:

Slash throws conventional notions of masculinity into crisis by removing the barriers blocking the realization of homosocial desire. Slash unmask the erotics of male friendship, confronting the fears keeping men from achieving intimacy. (205)

This definition is mostly applicable to the buddy slash model, as pointed out by Tosenberger (“Homosexuality” 192) since, in buddy slash, the two friends — usually partners of some kind — move beyond friendship into the realm of romance. The stories are mainly concerned with two male characters who already care a great deal about each

other. Usually through a conflict or a tragedy they are pushed one step further into realizing they love each other. In this case, it is about romantic love and desire allowing men to share their feelings with one another. Men are expected to be tough and emotionally withdrawn, with any expressions of platonic intimacy being generally unaccepted but buddy slash breaks this rule by allowing the usually masculine and tough hero to express emotional vulnerability.

This desire between friends is connected to Sedgwick's concept of homosocial desire (Tosenberger, "Homosexuality" 192). Sedgwick suggests that the male bonds, the platonic homosocial bonds in society, are built on the homophobic society we live in, and by adding desire is to "hypothesize the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual" (1-2). This is evident in buddy slash, in which the friendship or homosocial bond is turned into sexual desire. Therefore, instead of only being a story of friendship with intimacy, romantic and sexual aspects have been added.

However, this form of slash that Jenkins and Tosenberger are discussing, seems to be more of the type that is concerned with the more traditional forms of romantic slash. According to Kustritz, in these traditionally romantic slash narratives, sex "is used as an expression of trust [...] rather than an act of domination" (377). This refers to sex scenes in slash which are tender, soft and romantic, and in which characters are in love with each other, and aware of each other's needs. They are also "self-aware, confident, and nurturing" (Kustritz 377). This is often the case with the relationship between the buddies in buddy slash, in which many of the fics include tender love-making such as this, suggesting that characters are equal in every way.

Nonetheless, when examining buddy fics more closely, one can see that this is not always the case. Most of the time, the buddy of the hero is slightly more submissive and slightly more feminized than the hero, who is the more masculine one. This might be an indication of an idealized version of heterosexual romance. Like Kustritz suggests, the hero, then, is in the role of the man, and the buddy, in the role of a woman. Through the nurturing of the buddy, the hero can become emotionally vulnerable in a safe environment and become an ideal man for the woman: an equal partner who can share his feelings and be tender as well as masculine.

The claim that sex in slash narratives is always written in an emotional context, meaning that slash is not about sex for its own sake (pornography) but is always linked to a romantic and emotional aspect, is true to a certain degree. The most popular

pairings all share this intensive emotion between the characters, but the emotion in question is not always romance or love. This is the case with enemy slash, in which the connection of the pairing is drawn from dislike, rather than mutual friendship, contrary to the buddy model. Enemy slash is often based on the belief that there is a thin line between love and hate. The sexual connection is built on lust, rather than love, or in other cases, a deep mutual hatred that slowly turns into physical desire and ultimately, love. Enemy slash also provides kinkier material more often than buddy slash; for instance, gender swap, m-preg, or cross dressing. The enemies are equals, but on opposing sides; such is the case with Harry and Draco, the characters being representations of good and evil in the *Harry Potter* novels. They are more or less evenly matched in age, power, and intellect; both in canon and in slash fics.

In power slash, however, the relationship between the characters, as defined earlier, is based on dominant-submissive role playing. As such, the characters are unequal. Whether it is age, intelligence or strength, one character is always in a more submissive role. The desire, or kink, is then built on an unequal power dynamic between the characters; very much in opposition with the suggestion that sex in slash is somehow a form of nurture, rather than an act of domination. Power slash also includes sexual acts such as non-consensual sex, BDSM and physical or mental abuse; possibly even more so than enemy slash.

In short, it might seem that buddy slash is the tamer of the three; meaning it is more traditional and thus more (hetero)normative. However, even power slash — and especially enemy slash — often has a romantic, or a so-called traditional happy ending; no matter how sexually graphic or kinky it might get. This then presents a conflict when determining how non-normative or queer a pairing might be. This is why other factors in addition to the sexual content, such as the genre and how a specific fic depicts gender and gender roles, should also be taken into consideration within a pairing.

3.3. Rare pairings, PWPs (and Femmeslash)

The rare pairings (pairings that are not popular in the fandom or otherwise uncommon is slash) and Plot What Plot fics (consisting only of sexual content), furthermore enforce the claim that generalizing any kind of queerness factor across all slash is impossible, and even generalizing it across different pairings or genres is more complex than simply claiming that one type is queerer than another. Thus, the heteronormativity and

queerness within a specific pairing is derived from several factors.

In the Potter slash fandom, there are several communities dedicated to rare pairings. One of such communities defines a rare pairing as, “unusual, unconventional, or has a significant lack of fanfic or art dedicated to it” (hprarepairs). This also indicates that pairings that do not belong to any established category, such as buddy slash, still exist; in which case, the fic is not constructed to any existing power dynamic within the pairing and as such, the writer has more freedom to come up with different scenarios for the characters to develop their feelings for each other. In these cases, the canon is less influential to the story. Similarly, PWPs do not make much use of the canon because they are stories that contain, more or less, nothing other than sexual interactions between the characters, so any emotional connection between them is irrelevant. Thus, even within the pairings of certain characters, for example within Harry/Ron, there are contrasting elements when it comes to the subject matter, and even though this study attempts to draw some conclusions on each popular pairing, the rare pairings and PWPs indicate that even this is lacking on some levels. In other words, although this study suggests that a certain pairing has certain elements, one must still take into account these exceptions as well.

Femmeslash, in turn, concentrates on the relationships between female characters and is nowadays almost as popular as relationships between male characters. Categories like enemy slash and power slash are also made use of in femmeslash; some of the most popular pairings being Bellatrix/Hermione and Ginny/Pansy, the former belonging to power slash and latter to enemy slash. Buddy slash in the Potter fandom is more problematic in this case, because even though there are friendship pairings such as Hermione/Ginny, their dynamic is different from the definition of buddy slash as there is no masculine intimacy involved. Even though it would be interesting to examine the relationship between femmeslash and heteronormativity as well, the scope of the study is not wide enough to cover that subject which will hopefully be a topic of future research.

The most popular pairings of Potter slash have now been outlined, and the connection between slash, Queer Theory and heteronormativity has been discussed. The next section will analyze buddy, enemy, and power slash using the Potter slash fandom as an example. The analysis will break down elements that may or may not be considered queer in Harry/Ron, Harry/Draco and Harry/Severus pairings. The analysis will also cover some aspects of PWPs and rare pairings, in order to highlight the

complex nature of slash. Discovering how these pairings, genres and different forms of sexual desire in slash are evident in practice, will provide some guidelines to list features that can be considered queer and possibly answer the question of whether any kind of guidelines can be given in terms of normativity versus queerness in Potter slash.

4. Slash Analysis: Buddy, Enemy and Power Slash in Harry Potter Fan Fiction

The first part of this study concentrated on the definitions of slash, the different genres and pairings, and the possible queer and heteronormative elements existing in slash. The second part will present examples from Potter slash fics, individually analyzing the pairings of buddy, enemy and power slash and breaking down the differences in each type in the light of heteronormativity and queerness. This section will argue that there is variation in the way queerness manifests itself in the pairings, with buddy slash being the most influenced by heteronormative ideals, enemy slash mixing both transgressive and traditional material, and power slash being the most diverse and thus exhibiting queerer characteristics than the other Potter slash pairings in this study. Lastly, PWP and rare pairings are discussed as an example of more complex, uncategorized slash and how these types of fics tend to vary in terms of heteronormativity and queerness more frequently than the established pairings of buddy, enemy, and power slash.

4.1. *Harry/Ron— Because Best Mates Do It Better*

This section will argue that although buddy slash as a pairing rewrites the characters as homosexuals in the sense that they have sexual relations with the same sex, and seems to queer its subjects by rewriting the canon text, it only does so on a surface level, in comparison to other pairings of enemy and power slash. Buddy slash idealizes heterosexual romance, not only enhancing heteronormative ideals but disguising them as transgressive modeling of homosexual desire. Harry/Ron buddy slash also draws more material from the original canon text of *Harry Potter* than the other pairings. The *Harry Potter* novels are part of mainstream popular literature and contain heteronormative ideals. As buddy slash also shares similar characteristics and draws more of its material from the canon, it is thus less queer than other slash pairings.

The essence of Harry/Ron buddy slash lies in the loving, intimate connection between the two characters. A common example of this is found, for example, in “Fighting. Afraid. Dreaming. Safe.” by a slash writer katie_padfoot. In the fic, Harry is going through painful memories from his past. His godfather has passed away and Harry is distressed, cannot sleep and is having recurring nightmares when he does. As his best friend, Ron is taking care of him on a very intimate level:

And so for the first time in his life [Harry] lets it all out – all the hurt, the pain, the guilt...it all flows from him in long broken sobs which at some point end up being muffled by [Ron's] t-shirt. They're embracing and neither really knows how it happens, but it just seems right and Harry feels safe and at the moment that is all that matters to either of them. (katie_padfoot)

The only person who can understand Harry and the only one, who can comfort him, is Ron: his best friend. This intimate connection between friends is the model for buddy slash and fics such as “Fighting. Afraid. Dreaming. Safe.” are numerous within the pairing. They are emotional, usually including a conflict which brings the characters closer together, and the step from embracing as friends to embracing as lovers is small. This pattern is used repetitively in buddy slash, indicating that the most common fics are those that concentrate on the intimacy and love between friends.

In the canon, Harry Potter and Ron Weasley have been friends from the moment they met at the age of eleven and have been inseparable ever since. That is why they are the most prolific source for buddy slash in the Potter fandom. Even though there are other pairings, such as Sirius/Remus that could be counted as buddy slash, the old-school hero-sidekick model is best suited for Harry and Ron. Similar duos are found in many popular culture texts such as Frodo and Sam in *Lord of the Rings*, Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson in *Sherlock Holmes*, and Batman and Robin in *Batman*; all of whom share a deep friendship in canon. Most often, the fics written about the pairing of Harry/Ron feature romance, domesticity, and excessive emotional intimacy. These are themes that are claimed to be influenced by the Harlequin romances (Jones, Salmon qtd in Woledge 98) and to present an idealized version of heterosexual romance (Kustritz 377). In fact, a lot of the scholarship defining and describing slash seems to suit buddy slash pairings best and perhaps that is the reason why it is generally seen more queer than it actually is.

Another reason for claiming that buddy slash is queer is that it models homosocial desire (Jenkins 205) and thus rewrites patriarchy (Kustritz 376). However, in comparison to power and enemy slash, buddy slash depicts either fluffy romance that follows traditional romance narratives, or a close bond between two well-known characters. Some Harry/Ron fics deviate from the original pattern of best friends falling in love; thus suggesting the diminishing popularity of the buddy pairing within the Potter fandom and the growing diversity of the Potter. At this moment, however, it

seems that the current, most popular Harry/Ron fics more or less follow the original pattern; as such, it seems appropriate to focus on those.

One of the ways that Harry/Ron buddy slash is different from enemy and power slash is the form that the sexual attraction takes between the characters. The emphasis of the sexual attraction is more on the characters' friendship than sexual attraction between two males, suggesting that the pairing has more to do with love than gender and sex. This is not to say that love is only connected to heteronormativity but it makes buddy slash more like the heterosexual romance presented in mainstream popular culture since it does not present gender or sexual attraction in a different way from the mainstream.

In most Harry/Ron fics, the growing romantic interest between Harry and Ron develops slowly and it takes time before anything physical happens between them; when it finally does, it is generally based on mutual love and trust. Many of the fics follow the plot of a romantic comedy or drama narrative in which misunderstandings and secretly falling in love with each other leads to a happily-ever-after. Even though Harry and Ron are very close to begin with, it is usually a shock to one of them to realize that they are in love. From then on everything is seen in a new light. In "Close Enough" by Helen, Ron and Harry are adults, working together as *Aurors* (wizard police). Ron has been in love with Harry for a long time and is certain that Harry does not feel the same way but still wishes that his feelings would be answered somehow:

Harry touched him nine times that week—three times, their fingers brushed as Harry handed him a file, and Harry clapped him on the shoulder twice.[...], and Ron waited, looked for some answering spark in Harry's glance, in his touch, and saw nothing beyond friendship. (Helen)

As expected, by the end of the fic, it is revealed that Harry has felt the same way about Ron all along and they end up together, living happily ever after.

The intimacy between male friends that is turned into romance is connected to homosocial desire as noted earlier. In the extract from "Close Enough", the still platonic but yet physical relationship between Harry and Ron is given a new meaning, as Ron starts to feel more towards Harry than a best friend should. The friendship is then sexualized; every touch and look is given a new meaning, which normally would not matter in the slightest were it only two friends playing around. That is what the moving from homosocial bond into a homosexual desire means in practice. In the homophobic

society we live in, it is not acceptable for men to show physical affection. Since buddy slash goes against this notion, it is argued that it connects the two (Jenkins 205).

Buddy slash is the only pairing that the concept of homosocial desire can be applied to, because both power and enemy slash are based on different forms of sexual attraction. Susanne Jung argues that this type of romance imposes a threat to “carefully constructed heterosexual identities” by blurring the line between a heterosexual male friendship and homosexual desire (23). Thus, because buddy slash romanticizes male friendship by adding sexual attraction to emotional intimacy, it can be interpreted as transgressing the heterosexual matrix.

Nevertheless, although it seems that on the surface Harry/Ron buddy slash does challenge the heteronormative patterns in depicting male intimacy, it only does this on the surface level. As already noted above, more often than not Harry/Ron buddy slash fics tend to belong to that group of slash fics that are not about sex but love (Kustritz 379). It is because the characters share that strong, emotional connection and love each other no matter what, while getting physically involved even though they are not attracted to each other based on their gender or sexual orientation. The sexual attraction is built upon the connection they already have; the characters make an exception for each other only because of the emotional connection they share; it is not because they are both male.

As indicated in the first example from “Fighting. Afraid. Dreaming. Safe” by *katie_padfoot*, the recurring themes of trust and vulnerability of the buddy pairings seem to challenge patriarchal thinking on the surface level even though they rather highlight the fantasy of heterosexual romance. In addition to the theme of trust, the hero’s vulnerability also plays a part in Harry/Ron fics. According to Woledge, in slash, emotional intimacy is always established before the sexual act (110). This is what happens between Harry and Ron in most buddy fics. The emotional intimacy already exists between them, but for the hero to be utterly vulnerable, the story line usually uses tragedy or trauma to allow Harry to break down and cry in front of his best friend, thus enforcing the intimacy.

The hero’s vulnerability is then closely linked with the hurt/comfort genre introduced above, in which one of the characters is physically or emotionally hurt and the other comforts him. According to Woledge, the “element of hurt permits [the hero] to share intimacies that would otherwise be kept private” (110), thus letting the reader see a hero that is both soft and vulnerable. Because Harry and Ron are best friends, they

already trust each other unquestionably; therefore, when one of them is hurting, usually Harry, Ron is the only one who is allowed to witness his pain. “More Than Friends” by rickey_a demonstrates the hurt/comfort trope accordingly; Harry is the suffering hero, haunted by his tragic past and the people who died defending him; Ron is there to help:

Once a day I would ask him if [Harry] wanted to talk. He would answer, “No” and I would leave it at that. Some nights he would just give me a look and I knew he needed me. I would hold him and be consumed by guilt for wanting more.
(rickey_a)

When Harry is going through his most painful memories, Ron is there to support him. Usually the sharing of emotions (i.e. emotional intimacy) then leads to a love affair, since no one else can understand them as well as they do each other. It only requires “a look” from Harry and Ron knows what he needs.

The repetitive theme of Harry, being the representation of the tough masculine hero, revealing his vulnerability is said to challenge patriarchal thinking, since in buddy slash, men are allowed to cry too. However, this argument is based on the claim that slash is a way for heterosexual women to fantasize about the perfect relationship; thus, they write their male characters as sensitive and their partner being the one who saves them. As such, the only way of claiming that this type of buddy fic rewrites masculinity, is to look at slash as a product of heterosexual women for heterosexual women; a notion that is already out-dated since the Potter fandom consists of all ages, sexes and sexual orientations. Rather than making buddy slash go against the grain of mainstream romance, it only pushes it towards a more traditional Harlequin type of narrative; overly emotional and soft, with a happy ending. These are features that appear less in both enemy and power slash. In a way, the idealized heterosexual romance is transferred on to a male/male pairing; it does not queer the characters or turn them into queer subjects but highlights the heterosexual romance derived from traditional romance narrative.

In addition to the hero’s vulnerability, Harry/Ron fics also depict another relationship pattern that can be seen as enforcing a heteronormative narrative. They are almost never equal when it comes to power dynamics, even though they are supposed to be if they are seen as challenging the patriarchal thinking in which females are inferior and men are stronger. Kustritz claims that the intimacy between the slashed characters is linked with the idea that the characters, in this case Harry and Ron, are somehow more equal than heterosexual pairings would be, due to how their relationship is written. The

male characters are evenly matched from “decision making to love making” (Kustritz 377), which is then supposed to create an opposite to a heterosexist romance or relationship. Rather than following this pattern, however, the buddy pairing almost exclusively writes one of the characters as stronger, more intelligent and more masculine. Whether it is Harry or Ron, does not matter; one of them is feminized. This draws a parallel to heterosexist popular culture texts in which the woman is always the weaker partner, whether it be physical or intellectual power, and in which the man comes to the rescue. “Self-Deprecating” by chocolate shows this pattern of inequality between Harry and Ron. In the fic, they are co-workers and Harry is harboring secret romantic feelings towards Ron, and is sure that Ron cannot feel the same way. In this scene, Harry has just reluctantly revealed his feelings to Ron:

[Harry] stopped babbling and looked small and scared and vulnerable. And he was Harry. My Harry.
Who never looked small, or scared, or vulnerable.
And I felt strong and protective and ridiculously self-appreciating.
(chocolate)

In “Self-Deprecating”, it is Ron who is written into a more masculine role and Harry who is depicted as “babbling” and “small” as he struggles to tell Ron how he is feeling; adjectives that are associated with weakness. More often it is Harry who is written as the more intelligent, talented and dominating of the two. Such is the case in “Close Enough” by Helen. The best friend, Ron, is clearly the less confident one and Harry is the hero who saved the wizarding world from the evil wizard Voldemort. Ron, who is secretly in love with Harry, has not even considered that Harry might have romantic feelings towards him:

It had not occurred to [Ron], even in the intervening years since the war, that Harry might have entertained such thoughts about himself—not Harry, who might have had anyone at all, but who, nonetheless, stubbornly topped out M's list of most eligible—and available—bachelors every year. (Helen)

It is usually Ron that is placed on an unequal footing with Harry and in this example he is portrayed as lacking in confidence, whereas Harry is portrayed as a playboy. The way their relationship is described in both examples enforces, rather than transgresses, stereotypical gender roles since one of them is always inferior to the other.

One of the reasons for this inequality and feminization of characters might be that the pairing is more influenced by the source text, the *Harry Potter* canon, than enemy or power slash pairings are. Harry and Ron are best friends in the books and their romance is based on that friendship; furthermore, it also explains why they are not portrayed as equals. In the books, Harry is the hero and Ron is his sidekick, placing them on an unequal footing to begin with. As noted earlier, Pugh T. and Wallace argue that the *Harry Potter* series is more heteronormative than queer, claiming, among other reasons, that, “Ron can never match Harry in terms of his accomplishments because that would undermine the hero’s masculinity” (272). The hero, Harry, must at all times be more masculine than any other of his male friends, which is the case throughout all seven novels. In buddy slash, this seems to mean that the heteronormative hero-friend, weak-strong pattern is transferred to their romantic relationship as well, making it as heterosexist as the one in the original canon. Although their roles are sometimes reversed in fics which portray Ron as the dominating one, the inequality between them still remains.

In addition to how characters are portrayed, the themes and subject matters in Harry/Ron buddy slash are also more traditional than in power or enemy slash. Excessive romance and domesticity are popular themes in buddy slash more often than in enemy and power slash, and although many fics feature Harry and Ron on an adventure or include a lot of angst, many more tend to be overly fluffy and domestic. In “A Home Of Their Own” by magicofisis, for example, Harry and Ron are a couple in a long-term relationship. The story revolves around them trying to find their first home together:

"How many was that today?" asked Ron as he flopped onto the couch. Harry sat down next to him and leaned his head against Ron's shoulder. "Eight. I think that makes twenty-seven houses altogether." [...]
 "I just don't know how many more weekends like this I can take. We've got to find something we can agree on soon." Harry pushed Ron to a lying position and pulled Ron's other foot onto his lap.
 "I know. It's just that it's a lot of money, and it's our first house – really the first big thing we've ever bought together. I want it to be perfect."
 Harry nodded. "Me too. Although I suppose any house with you in it would be perfect." (magicofisis)

This romanticized domesticity is frequent in buddy slash; they are portrayed as happily in love and performing tasks that any couple would in the beginning of their relationship. The example also shows the overly romantic writing that is common in buddy slash; they compliment each other and take care of each other and dilemmas that are described in the fic are connected to mundane tasks such as grocery shopping or buying a house. Their love-making is also described as perfect and romantic (albeit graphic), enhancing the description of a perfect relationship. The overall nature of Harry/Ron is more romantic and soft than other pairings. The pairing depicts less gender-bending themes such as gender-swap, m-preg and BDSM. In other words, since it sticks to mostly to the old school slash themes it is less diverse, and thus, less queer.

Lastly, buddy slash includes less diverse endings than other pairings. Mostly, the couple ends up together because they already love each other and, once they find out they are attracted to each other, the ending is straightforward, copying the Harlequin type romance narrative which must always have “an optimistic and emotionally satisfying ending” (Romance Writers of America). One of the definitions of more traditional slash, as stated above, is fics that depict romance plots, domestic settings and balanced, happy relationships (Reid 4). All of these are featured in the pairing of Harry/Ron, making it lean towards the more traditional slash. Endings such as this one in “A Home of Their Own” are typical for the pairing:

"We can have sex anytime we want without worrying about interruptions."
 Harry looked up at his lover, cocking his head and grinning. "How about now?"
 "Just what I was thinking. Come on."
 Harry and Ron walked hand-in-hand to the bedroom – their own brand new
 bedroom – on their way to start their new life together. (magicofisis)

These types of fics often do not have any dramatic climax or plot twists, they give description on how the characters would act in situations like, for instance, buying a house. Then the ending is as light and cheerful as the whole fic, often also including a cliché of starting their “new life together”.

Many of the characteristics of buddy slash listed above can also be found in both enemy and power slash, but rarely all of them at once, nor so frequently. In short, the combination of the way Harry and Ron are written as characters, the way the buddy fics depict sexual attraction between two male characters and the way the plotlines and subject matter appear in the pairing, indicate that the buddy pairing is an echo of an idealized heterosexual romance more so than enemy or power slash. Specifically, Harry

and Ron as a pairing lean towards a more heteronormative coupling because of the way they are influenced by the canon text of the *Harry Potter* novels. This is a combination of several factors, thus, claiming that Harry/Ron is wholly a heteronormative pairing is not necessarily accurate, but if one considers all the characteristics overall, it is less queer than the other pairings examined in this study.

The examples presented above are from Harry/Ron fics that represent the most common and numerous fics in the pairing, in other words, the general nature of the pairing. As said, there are fics that deviate from the most common patterns, suggesting the diminishing popularity of traditional buddy slash in the Potter fandom. It seems that the direction that these fics have taken is to somehow alter the original setting. Usually this is done so that it is more of a challenge for the characters to be together. These are called AU (Alternative Universe) fics that change the canon setting dramatically. Examples from AU Harry/Ron fics are those in which their relationship is changed in some way; they do not know each other, their memories are altered through magic, or one of them is evil. For example, in the “Two Household” series by Mad Martha, Harry is placed in the House of Slytherin, the rivals of the Gryffindors, making Harry and Ron enemies from the start of their education. Instead of becoming friends with Ron, as in the novels, he befriends Draco Malfoy, the enemy of Ron:

Ron Weasley - outraged that Harry could shake the blond boy's hand after the things he'd said about the Weasley family - had stormed out of the compartment and spent the rest of the journey with his brothers further down the train. It had been an innocent mistake made out of simple politeness, but like other such mistakes in Harry's life, it had far-reaching consequences. They hadn't spoken - really spoken - since. It had been five years. (MadMartha)

Harry is secretly in love with Ron, but hated by him, and the plot revolves around them slowly becoming friends and ending up falling in love. This extract of “Two Households” is an alternate path that the original canon text would have been like if Harry had been placed in Slytherin. In the novels, Harry refuses to shake Malfoy’s hand since he is a bully and rude towards the Weasley family, but this fic, however, presents a different scenario in which Harry accepts the hand shake, thus making an enemy of Ron from the beginning. The challenge of the fic, then, is to get them together because Ron dislikes Harry a great deal from the start, and they have never been friends or shared that emotional connection that they always have in most buddy fics. This also

alters the relationship dynamic of the pairing, changing it from buddy slash to enemy slash; the pairing type which will be the focus of the next section. As seen in the example above, enemy slash shares less similarities with the canon as it alters the original relationship of the characters; enemies will become lovers. Enemy slash is also more diverse in its subject matter such as transgressing gender roles and mixing queer and non-queer slash, making it less heteronormative than buddy slash.

4.2. *Harry/Draco – A Thin Line Between Love and Hate*

This section will discuss the enemy slash pairing of Harry/Draco of the Potter slash fandom, arguing that enemy slash mixes both queer and non-queer elements more so than buddy slash.

Similarly to buddies sharing an intense emotional connection, enemies who share an equally strong emotional connection are found in popular culture texts, but for some reason the eroticization of that relationship is a less studied subject than the one between best friends. This might be because the hero and his enemy might not have enough close interaction in the canon for it to be homoerotic in that sense. However, in slash, the enemy pairing is among the most popular pairings that there are. Some of the most favored enemy pairings include The Doctor/Master from *Doctor Who*, Mohinder/Sylar from *Heroes*, and Batman/The Joker from *Batman* to name but a few.

The Harry/Draco enemy pairing is a mixture of both traditional and queer slash because it idealizes heterosexual romance and makes a mockery out of that ideal, almost in contrast to buddy slash. More specifically, the attraction between the enemies is based on male aggression rather than homosocial desire and the subject matter vary more than in buddy slash involving both romance, gender-bending and parody. Harry/Draco mixes domesticity, an established relationship and non-normative sexual practices more often than buddy slash. In addition, it both mocks and idealizes the heterosexist nuclear family structure. Also, the characters' vulnerability is not so much about rewriting patriarchy because the relationship dynamic in the pairing is based on enemy rivalry rather than establishing intimacy between two male characters. Lastly, the power balance between Harry and Draco changes more often than in buddy slash because it does not have to stick to the hero-sidekick structure, thus making it more diverse than Harry/Ron as a pairing.

Harry/Draco is possibly the most widely read and written slash pairing in the Potter fandom. Other such enemy pairings include Ron/Draco, Snape/Sirius, and Dumbledore/Grindewald among several others. The idea behind the pairing is that opposites attract and nothing comes easy. Since the characters are archenemies and getting them involved in any kind of positive interaction is not easy. What slash writers then do, is read that hatred as lust, recasting it “as sexual tension” (Tosenberger, “Homosexuality” 193). It is the so called “fight-fight-shag-model” (dsudis) that is

employed here, meaning that any aggressive behavior between the characters is interpreted as underlying sexual tension, or hidden romantic feelings. First, they engage in heated dialog or even physical fighting that then turns into a sexual encounter. In “Are We Having Fun Yet?” Harry has decided to make sure Draco gets punished and convicted for the crimes he has committed during the war; Harry is determined to get revenge for everything Draco has done to him and his friends:

"I will not go to Azkaban, Potter. You will never see me behind those bars." Malfoy drawls. And suddenly Harry can't take it anymore. He delivers a punch at the other boy, who has no time to react. The fist hits the blond, splitting his lip and sending him flying into the corner. Harry follows, grabbing Malfoy's collar and pushing him flat against the wall.

"Don't think you can escape this one, Malfoy!" he growls, his face inches from Malfoy's. "I will lock you away, sooner or later!"

Malfoy stands paralysed against the wall, breathing heavily. Harry suddenly becomes very aware of the blond's breath, ghosting against his, the bathrobe hanging loose and revealing a pale chest covered with scars. And those gunmetal eyes, striking with deviance. Before he knows what he is doing, he has pressed his lips against Malfoy's. (thewickednix)

This is a typical situation for Harry and Draco; they either bicker or provoke each other until one of them snaps. Firstly, as in this example, they succumb to violence which then suddenly turns into sexual desire. There is a thin line between the fighting and the sex, and descriptions of the fighting are very similar to those of the sex that follows; they accidentally rip each others' clothing off as they fight and “before he knows what he is doing”, the fight turns into something else. The scenario differs from buddy slash in which the first sexual encounters are usually tender and soft in comparison.

The usual set up is that Harry and Draco are forced to spend time together through an accident or unfortunate circumstance; they fight until they are at breaking point and, instead of killing each other, end up having sex. It is an unconscious animalistic want that is depicted here, not a romantic encounter between two people in love. Harry and Draco are an ideal enemy slash pairing; in canon, they hate and distrust each other from the moment they meet, and they are on the opposite sides of the war against the evil wizard Voldemort. Harry is the brave and pure hero whereas Draco is a spoiled coward. Their relationship is based on the rivalry of two equally strong characters, and it is a constant struggle of who wins, both in strength and sexual dominance.

As Tosenberger states, enemy slash is based on the “expectations of male aggression” (“Homosexuality” 193) which eliminates it from having to do with eroticization of male friendship or homosocial desire, because what it depicts is two male characters lusting after one another regardless of their feelings. It has more to do with physical lust than emotional lust, separating it from buddy slash. However, Harry/Draco also includes excessive romance and happy endings to a certain degree; only the road to that point is more complex as they have to overcome their hatred at least to the point where they have sex.

As for the subject matter in Harry/Draco enemy slash, it varies more than in buddy slash. The pairing features more gender bending themes such as m-preg, cross dressing, and gender swap than buddy slash, but includes a lot of the traditional themes of romance and domesticity and family as well. The difference is that, more often than in buddy slash, they are less conventional; at times even mocking. So, rather than idealizing heterosexual romance, which enemy slash also admittedly does at times, it makes a mockery out of it. Enemy slash, especially the Harry/Draco pairing, mixes the traditional themes from earlier slash, the so called Harlequin romance narratives, but simultaneously uses the same narratives to feature more complex gender identities and plays around with masculinity and femininity of the characters more than buddy slash does.

The reason for this mix of queer and non-queer material in the pairing might derive from the fact that earlier Harry/Draco fics seem to be influenced by the buddy model, since it was the only one that existed at the time. Later on, when the pairing took a life of its own and gained more writers and readers, it started to include more kinky and deviating material that is associated more with the queerer type of slash, as noted earlier. This is merely speculation but when comparing the earlier fics of the pairings to the later ones, this seems to be the case. The first novel-length fics that have become classics in the Harry/Draco fandom are excessively romantic and use the theme of emotional vulnerability in a similar way to buddy fics. Because Harry/Draco is — as are all three pairings examined in this study — based on a strong connection between characters, the themes of vulnerability and trust are frequently used as well in these romance fics. The difference is that the characters go through a bigger struggle to open up to each other because it is an enemy they are facing, not a friend. Trust is more difficult to gain when they know that they are facing their archenemy. Then, it is not about tough, masculine heroes being allowed to cry, but rather two characters who hate

each other but are consciously or unconsciously physically attracted to each other.

As stated above, the power dynamic is different from the hero-friend model used in buddy slash; it is based on obsession and attraction more than being emotionally intimate with another male character. Even though the theme of trust is frequently used, it is not about masculine characters who are afraid to show their feelings to another male character; it is about the struggle to come to terms with the fact that the character might love or lust after their enemy. In Rhysenn's "Irresistible Poison", Draco accidentally drinks a love potion, falling in love with Harry against his own will. They are forced to work together in need of finding the antidote and, in the process, end up falling in love, regardless of the effects of the potion. At first, they distrust each other but slowly their feelings start to change:

[Harry] couldn't allow himself to trust Malfoy so easily. It made him too vulnerable. He thought about what he'd told Hermione: Malfoy's done absolutely nothing to deserve my trust. Harry sighed. Which makes it all the more impossible to explain why I do. (Rhysenn)

Enemy slash uses the concept of male intimacy differently to buddy slash, discrediting the suggestion that the hero's vulnerability as a way of rewriting patriarchy would work in enemy slash. Thus, enemy slash does not conform to the same pattern as buddy slash. In buddy slash, Harry already trusts Ron and the only reason for him finding it difficult to open up to him, is the fact that the hero must be strong and tough. In enemy slash, however, Draco has done "nothing to deserve" Harry's trust but the underlying sexual attraction or feelings of love that Harry already feels towards his enemy, make him do so unconsciously.

However, the concept of emotional bonding is used in Harry/Draco-fics, albeit in a different way, which suggests an influence from the buddy model and thus the pairing also includes traditional elements similarly to buddy slash. This type of enemy slash takes care of the hate aspect of the pairing quickly through a love potion or some other magical accident, so that the two characters can engage in emotional bonding. Similarly to buddy fics, they have long inner monologues in which they analyze and reflect on their feelings towards each other and the writing is often excessively emotional. In "Irresistible Poison" Draco's strong emotions are described in detail as he is starting to feel the effects of the love potion that makes him fall in love with Harry:

All Draco could do was stare at [Harry], helpless as the aching sensation rushed through his veins and engulfed him. It left his mind shaken but disturbingly clear as it flooded his body, as every fiber yielded to this terrifying new sensation which possessed him whole. (Rhysenn)

The description of Draco falling in love with Harry is emphasized and exaggerated. This style of enemy slash is fluffy, angsty and romantic, relying on describing the feeling of falling in love or any other powerful emotion that the characters are experiencing. It is traditional, old-school romance slash, and, regardless of the differences in the set-up, is part of the heteronormative slash described above. The scenes in these fics are written from the point of view of how Harry and Draco are feeling about themselves or each other. Their mutual hatred is explained by the fact that they had not known each other properly before being forced to spend time together. This is also a pattern used in many romantic comedies; first they fight but then suddenly realize it is because they love each other. This being one of the arguments for slash following the traditional romance narrative makes it lean towards the more heteronormative side of slash fiction.

In these types of enemy slash romance fics, the emotional vulnerability also extends to cover their physical relationship. In “Irresistible Poison” Harry and Draco first grow to tolerate each other, then like each other, and ultimately the physical attraction becomes a natural part of their growing emotional attachment. The sexual acts, which do not extend beyond kissing or cuddling, are linked to romance rather than being about sex or lust. The scenes in which they kiss or are otherwise physically involved are described through emotions:

This kiss felt different, like an altogether new sensation — Draco had kissed him before, but not... like this. This wasn't just kissing, it was loving, an act of romance that far surpassed anything he had ever experienced before (Rhysenn).

Since Harry and Draco are written as overly emotional versions of themselves, and fics such as these suggest that slash is more about love than sex and gender, it idealizes heterosexual romance rather than transgresses it. It is all about true love and romance in a similar pattern to buddy slash. Furthermore, the characters are written into an idealized relationship not addressing the theme of same-sex desire, or any queer reading of the canon text. Reid refers to this type of slash as “feminine slash” (4), since it

features romance plots and happy relationships, both of which are used in romance novels and movies which are heterosexist and targeted towards a female audience. Thus, it is evident that enemy slash also features characteristics that make it part of non-queer slash fiction. Kustritz states that these romance fics exhibit “the gradual establishment of trust and acceptance between the two men [...] in great detail” (379). This is the kind of pattern also found in buddy slash as well. Therefore, even though enemy slash is more transgressive of gender stereotypes and its subject matter, it also idealizes heterosexual romance in similar ways that buddy slash does. Because enemy slash includes fics that depict re-enactments or idealized versions of heterosexual romance in popular culture texts, it can be said to be more heteronormative.

However, as we have seen, enemy slash also differs from the buddy slash model in the way it approaches same-sex desire, gender and gender identities, and femininity and masculinity. This suggests a change towards a more heterogeneous direction in the pairing. More diverse material in online forums and archives started to emerge after the Harry/Draco pairing. This material includes m-preg, blending gender identities, intersexuality, cross dressing, creature fics and parodying heteronormative family structure; themes that will be discussed next.

One of the common tropes in Harry/Draco is m-preg; a slash trope that features a male character having a baby. It is also used in buddy and power slash, although less frequently in Harry/Ron than in other pairings. As m-preg is a highly popular trope in the Harry/Draco pairing, it is a good representation of one of the characteristics of enemy slash and demonstrates that the pairing in fact includes queerer elements than buddy slash. In other words, m-preg, as it appears in enemy slash, does not follow the traditional romance narrative and strays further from heteronormative gender behavior.

The most common form of m-preg allows male characters to conceive a family together, which in itself is out of the scope of traditional romance slash, but also uses fiction to overcome the limitations of biological sex and treats gender as a more fluid concept, altering the stereotypical image of a male body. Butler describes the separation of sex and gender through drag performance: “sex of the performer is not the same as the gender being performed” (qtd in Sullivan 86), creating a parody out of the whole concept of gender. M-preg works in similar ways separating sex and gender; thus allowing a male character to perform as the female gender through being able to have children. In Harry/Draco m-preg, the concept is used in two distinct ways: similarly to drag, making a parody out of the whole experience and exaggerating the experience of

being a female by transferring the experience onto a male body, or on the other hand, creating an inter-sexed character that embodies both female and male attributes in a male body, literally blending two genders. The first of the two, the transfer of the female experience onto a male body, is used in Harry/Draco both as comic relief and a look at pregnancy from a masculine point of view. In “I’d Rather Change Nappies...” by frayach, Harry and Draco are a married couple and Draco has just given birth to their first child (in the wizarding world of slash writers, it is often natural and easy for males to carry children). The reality of having a child, however, is very different from what Draco had imagined. The experience of motherhood is described as comical:

This – this – is the problem. Harry simply has no clue. After all, he hadn’t been the one vomiting nearly everyday. He hadn’t been the one struggling to make a virtually impossible pregnancy work by restricting his movements and surrendering his position as Seeker for the Magpies. He hadn’t been the one in constant discomfort. He hadn’t been the one who’d had to set aside fifteen minutes just to take a piss. He hadn’t been the one whose body was trying to produce nourishment for a fetus. He wasn’t the one who almost died during delivery. He wasn’t the one who was having his nipples chewed on every other hour. (frayach)

Draco in this story is physically a fully male character, the only exception being that he experienced the pregnancy and delivered a baby. The exaggeration of the female experience is comical as the fic transfers the clichés of motherhood on to a male character, and describes their family life as ordinary, concentrating on every day relationship issues and raising children. Such descriptions of the hardships Draco goes through, suffering physically as his body changes, giving up his career as a successful Quidditch player and having his freedom restricted, are described in a humorous manner. This shows that, rather than idealizing heterosexist parenthood – writing a romantic, domestic bliss which is often the case in buddy slash that has m-preg as a theme – these fics make a mockery out of it. These comical m-preg fics are usually different from fics that include cross dressing and intersexuality which go even further in altering the image of the canon characters.

Another way m-preg is handled in the Harry/Draco pairing, is to create an intersexed character out of one of them so that the character is physically both male and female. This is a literal blending of two sexes and sometimes it is used as a way for the character to have a child, sometimes as a sexual fetish. However, in the case of m-preg, it is used to blend feminine motherhood and masculinity, creating a more complex representation of gender. In a fic titled “Things That Change” by eutyichides, Draco has

accidentally drunk a potion that has turned him into a half-male half-female. He has seduced Harry and gotten pregnant. Draco attempts to identify as a male throughout the story but is pushed into the role of a woman, a wife, and a mother. His experience is described as being painful and depressing:

The baby cries all morning and Draco has such a pounding headache that he screams back at her and she cries harder. He wants to stick his head in a toilet because he's dizzy and he can't hear bloody anything except for the sounds of her wailing. She's being ruddy awful and he sorely wants to dump her off on Potter, who isn't home at all. (eutychides)

As Draco is forced to act out the role of the mother and go through the physical functions from childbirth to menstruation, he automatically adopts some of the stereotypical characteristics associated with being a female, such as over-sensitivity, which makes him partly feminized as a character, not only physically but emotionally as well. Similarly to the example above, his female experience is also somewhat comical. The character's pregnancies, and his/her experiences, are described as painful, violent and gory, almost criticizing and ridiculing the whole concept of motherhood.

Blended gender identities such as these are numerous and popular in enemy slash m-preg fics and they are unique in the sense that they combine both male and female attributes, sometimes partly due to circumstances the character finds himself in and partly due to the changes in his biological body. By playing around with gender identities, m-preg does not follow the traditional slash narratives depicted in buddy slash and thus queers the characters in the fics that use the trope.

Another non-normative and popular theme in Harry/Draco is cross-dressing. One of the characters dresses or disguises himself as a female in order to make himself sexually attractive to the other. Cross dressing goes against the norms and expectations of how males and females should dress in any given heteronormative society, and in enemy slash it is used frequently; sometimes it is to hide their true identity in order to seduce their desired partner, sometimes just to cater to their sexual preferences. In "Gloss" by SilentAuror, Harry and Draco are in a relationship and the cross dressing theme is used as a way of pleasing Harry's character in the bedroom:

His cheeks blazing, Draco scowled. "Just because I have a higher voice than you doesn't mean I sound like a girl. I happen to be a tenor."
"It was girly," Harry stated. "Very girly. I think we should put you in a skirt."
The outrage, if possible, grew. "Don't even suggest it!"

Harry opened his mouth to say something else along these lines, something to further provoke Draco, until this image formed itself in his mind. Draco in a skirt. Draco in silky, satiny, girly clothing. Lingerie, that was the word. Draco in that old lip gloss Ginny had left in his backpack years and years ago, which Harry should have thrown out but had kept it as a sentimental reminder for some reason. [...]

He smiled up into Draco's eyes. "What if I suggested it in all seriousness?"
(SilentAuror)

This example shows that sometimes cross dressing is also featured in fics that are domestic. Whether it is used as part of a sex scene or part of a plot twist, it nevertheless depicts a queering of a character's sexual behavior. Like "Gloss" shows, sometimes these examples are from romantic fics which first feature graphic sex scenes but end up in a fluffy romance. This simultaneously includes elements from romance slash but also more kinky material that is not usually associated with fluff. Therefore, enemy slash mixes both heteronormative slash and queer slash. This way enemy slash, then, contradicts Reid's suggestion about the division into minority and mainstream slash (normative versus queer slash) since it combines not only romance, domesticity and an established relationship but also non-heteronormative sexual practices in the form of m-preg and cross dressing.

Another alternative example of mixing both of these elements, queer and non-queer slash, in the pairing of Harry/Draco, is creature fics in which one of the characters turns into an animal or possesses animalistic qualities which are part of the sexual behavior of a character. In the following extract from "Uninvited Guest" by winnet, the violent and kinky content is mixed with romantic love between Harry and Draco. Harry accidentally puts on a magical leather dog collar that turns him half human, half canine. The collar wearer feels animalistic want and obsession towards the first person he sees; it makes Harry lust after Draco, so the sexual desire is based on physical reaction rather than a romantic connection, which only comes into play later on in the fic when Draco falls in love with Harry:

Harry melted into Draco's grip, and Draco realized he'd never felt anything so good in his life. The warmth of Harry, the heady, musky scent, the strength in those arms wrapped around him. He planted kiss after kiss on Harry's furred face. "Don't ever leave like that again. Don't ever leave me." (winnet)

The sexual desire is established before they fall in love, and fics such as "Uninvited Guest" include non-normative sexual practices such as those that the creature theme

shows. Therefore it enhances the blend of both traditional romance and non-heteronormative themes within the pairing.

In addition to having more gender blending themes such as m-preg, intersexed characters and cross-dressing, the treatment of family in enemy slash mixes both traditional and more transgressive slash. It both idealizes and mocks the heterosexist nuclear family pattern in which the wife has to stay home and take care of the children and in which the husband goes to work and provides for the family. In “Things That Change”, by eutyichides, Harry and Draco are together out of necessity; they have a child together and even though they do not initially like each other they stay together for the sake of the child. Their family parallels the stereotypical nuclear family, and even though they are both male, end up adopting the roles of a wife and husband:

The baby cries all morning and Draco has such a pounding headache that he screams back at her and she cries harder. He wants to stick his head in a toilet because he’s dizzy and he can’t hear bloody *anything* except for the sounds of her wailing. She’s being ruddy awful and he sorely wants to dump her off on Potter, who isn’t home at all. (eutyichides)

Harry is working to put food on the table while Draco is stuck at home in the suburb. As the example shows, the fic is an opposite of idealizing heterosexual romance, since the description of their family life is not romantic or fluffy; it is bleak and depressing. Day after day, Draco is stuck at home with the child and is forced to live with Harry. This suggests that Harry/Draco goes further in exploring the domestic trope, not only depicting the light hearted romance but also more complex themes in which the character questions his identity or in which the roles in their relationship are not clear cut; the power balance changing depending on the choice of the writer. In “Things That Change” Draco as a character is written not as a weaker character but someone who is forced to adopt the role of the mother and wife, regardless of his wishes. He struggles taking care of the baby and hates every aspect of his life. It is a parody of the heteronormative family structure and furthermore enforces the diversity in enemy slash fics.

As the examples above suggest, enemy slash is a mix of both queer and non-queer slash in the way it blends queerer themes with more traditional romance narratives which, in turn, are more prevalent in buddy slash. Themes such as gender, blending, parody, cross dressing, and creature fics indicate that enemy slash is more

diverse in themes and subject matter but also can include excessive romance and domesticity.

4.2. Power Slash, Harry/Snape – Dominance and Submission, power dynamics as the source of desire

Between Potter and myself, there is mutual loathing, distrust, and obligation. Nothing more. Nor will there ever be! - Severus Snape (Cluegirl)

This section will examine power slash as it appears in the pairing of Harry/Snape of the Potter fandom. The following examples illustrate that the pairing in question exhibits the most transgressing material in the fics in terms of subject matter, gender blending, sexual content, and the way characters are represented in the fics in comparison to buddy or enemy slash. Therefore, the power slash pairing Harry/Snape includes more queer elements than enemy or buddy slash pairings.

In power slash, the characters are not equal rivals, as in enemy slash, but are on an uneven footing when it comes to power, whether it be physical, intellectual or social. The sexual desire is based on a dominance-submission model which often leads to romance through a power struggle that the characters go through, usually because of some tragic conflict that brings them together. Sometimes, it remains purely physical attraction when the power struggle develops only into a sexual encounter and the romance element is left out. The non-heteronormativity or queer themes do not depend on the marginality of the pairing since all three pairings included in this study are widely read and written. In the case of Harry/Snape, the non-heteronormativity is more derived from the fact that it continuously breaks the pattern of the traditional romance slash, more so than buddy or enemy slash.

Harry/Snape or “Snarry” is one of the most popular pairings alongside Harry/Draco (MacDonald 29), and stretches even further in its treatment of gender and sex than Harry/Draco, since power slash pairings present a multilayered set of sexual practices, forms of sexual desire, and gender concepts that are more non-normative than enemy slash. The Harry/Snape pairing is not queerer because it is more controversial, it is queerer because it is the most diverse of the three and it does not follow any set conventions like many other pairings. Within the pairing, there are both dark, hopeless

tics belonging to the genre of darkfic, and fluffy, soft fics that exaggerate and parody the romance narrative, as well as fics that incorporate all the aforementioned themes.

In the *Harry Potter* novels, Severus Snape is Harry's malicious teacher and carries a grudge towards Harry because of his father who bullied Snape during their adolescence. Snape was also in love with Harry's mother which makes him a tragic character who, in the end, sacrifices himself to save Harry. Snape's loyalties are questioned until the very end when it is revealed that he is one of the good guys. From the start, Harry and Snape hate each other; Snape is "Harry's least favourite person at Hogwarts. Harry's loathing of Snape was matched only by Snape's hatred of him" (Rowling 194); Harry blames Snape for the death of his parents and the death of Dumbledore. The pairing has been criticized and questioned due to the fact that, in some fics, Harry is underage and Snape is in a position of authority, making the pairing non-consensual and perhaps the most controversial out of the most popular pairings in the Potter fandom. The fics often feature Snape in the position of a double-agent, similarly to the novels, and Harry has to question Snape's loyalties because, even though he in some cases is on Harry's side, they still hate each other.

Whatever form their relationship in the fics takes, the characters start off with mutual hatred, similarly to enemy slash, but with one character having some form of control over the other. This is the basis and inspiration for power slash, and as Tosenberger states, it "contradicts outright the premises of equality theory" ("Homosexuality" 193) in which characters are in a loving, balanced relationship. As has been discussed earlier, this equality theory on slash claims absolute equality between partners on both a sexual and emotional level, and, as demonstrated above, none of the pairings examined in this study precisely fit under that definition. The premise of power slash negates this equality from the start and does not even attempt to mask it as anything else, in contrast to buddy slash which depicts the characters in a happy, loving relationship but which still writes one of the characters more submissive. Buddy slash appears to present the couple in a more egalitarian relationship and presents male characters as more sensitive and emotional, creating an idealized version of heterosexual romance. Power slash does not follow the same pattern, being unique in the sense that it presents a relationship in which all the expectations are disregarded and anything goes.

Even though there are fics in this pairing that feature romance and established relationships to some extent, the manner in which it is done contrasts with both buddy

and enemy slash. It is in some aspects identical to enemy slash in that it rather ridicules the set ideals of heterosexist family life than idealizes it. Overall, Snarry fics tend to be darker and angstier, regardless of whether the fic in question is more unconventional or traditional in its subject matter, because of both Harry and Snape's personal background and especially the tragic characterization of Snape derived from the canon.

Power slash includes romance narratives in which Harry and Snape open up to each other emotionally (the hurt/comfort genre being popular in power slash), but the construction of the pairing differs from the other pairings because of the unequal power balance. Most of the time, an emotional bond already exists in the form of dislike, distrust or hatred, but it requires a conflict or a tragedy in order to turn into sexual desire and/or romance. As Marianne MacDonald described the pairing, the main theme is "the development of the relationship from mutual hatred to mutual love or lust" (29). This is of course not the case in every Snarry fic but the overall feel of the pairing is drawn from this position in very similar ways than in enemy slash. The aggression slowly turns into a sexual foreplay; Snape is in control since he is physically and intellectually stronger. In "Can't Take the Sky" by Cluegirl, Harry and Snape are forced to work together because they are both fighting on the same side of the war; Snape as a double-agent. The power struggle is aptly described in the beginning of the fic, before they have established any trust between them; they dislike each other and there is a lot of unresolved tension between them because neither of them trust the other:

[Severus] stood nose to nose with Potter, fists wound tight in the brat's shirtfront, wand an unyielding knot between fabric and fingers. His heart and head pounded too hard for even the shadow of a spell to form in his mind. His breath was a storming fury through clenched teeth. Severus teetered on the far edge of a very bad night, stared Potter in his too green eyes, and waited to see which of them would fall first. (Cluegirl)

Similarly to Harry/Draco, the characters are often literally put face to face in a heated argument which often ends with a sex scene. In fics such as "Can't Take The Sky" words like "brat" are used to indicate the inequality between Harry and Snape. This type of wording is rarely used in buddy slash in which the language is much softer. This is one of the features of power slash that separates it from the more traditional forms introduced above. However, as the example shows, there is already an indication of attraction. Snape stares into Harry's "too green eyes", hinting that there is something

else underneath the aggressive exterior. Sometimes power slash uses the negative emotional bond to create a scene in which the characters end up in a sexual relationship; sometimes the emotional bond turns into a romantic one. Regardless of the way in which the fic ends (whether it is a more complex relationship or a one time encounter), the physical relationship is initiated through those negative emotions rather than positive ones.

One of the recurring themes in Snape/Harry slash is some form of humiliation and verbal abuse of one of them, usually Harry. In addition to it being a reminder of the unequal power balance between them, it is often connected to the unresolved sexual tension between the two enemies. The repetitive dialogue is set up so that Snape is either insulting Harry or humiliating him verbally. This is used to build the sexual tension and/or some form of flirtation between the two. In a second example from “Can’t Take the Sky”, Harry is still questioning Snape’s loyalties although Harry knows he is a double-agent and fighting against Voldemort. Harry cannot be certain that Snape is not going to betray him and he is still afraid of Snape even though he has just saved him from a serious accident:

The rising panic must have shown on [Harry’s] face, because Snape rolled his eyes in disgust. "Why yes, Potter, I did, in point of fact, repair your broken jaw, cheek, ribs and arm, and re-grow your eye, your fingernails, your hair, and most of your skin purely because I wanted you to be healthy when I poisoned you." He flung his towel onto the table and stood. "Imbecile." (Cluegirl)

The sarcastic insulting is typical for Snape in the canon and it is used excessively in Snape/Harry fics to create tension between the couple. Willis suggests that by implying that the tension in the relationship between Harry and Snape is misunderstood as anger, “it opens up the possibility of reading that canonical intensity and physicality according to a set of sexual associations” (161). This type of dialog between Harry and Snape is then also found in the *Harry Potter* novels, and in power slash the writers interpret it as a basis for the underlying sexual tension between the characters. Like the example above shows, Snape’s insults are both provocative and degrading towards Harry and they continue throughout the fic until they end up in bed together.

The constant insults and humiliation are used as a form of sexual desire, something that is not evident in other pairings examined in this study. The theme of humiliation then contradicts the claim that in slash sex is used “as an expression of trust rather than an act of domination” (Kustritz 377). Snape/Harry is derived from a

contrasting model of sexual desire which is founded on dominance and submission. This type of heated, angry dialog is found in enemy slash as well, but it is more about rivalry when it comes to insults; whereas in power slash, Snape is usually the one doing the provoking, and Harry often powerless, has to submit to it. In doing so, he also accepts his role in the foreplay, admitting at least subconsciously that he is sexually attracted to him. It is like a rehearsed play that they both take part in.

At times, the initial bonding between Harry and Snape is created non-consensually, breaking the other character down, emotionally shattering them, which then ultimately leads to a strong connection between the two. This pattern is mostly used in power slash in comparison to the other pairings of this study, again showing that the pairing is more diverse. Thus, in addition to the verbal foreplay, the characters use magic as a form of abuse. Snape's power over Harry is based on his age and talent as a wizard, and it is depicted in various scenarios; most of them using magic as the source of power. One popular example borrowed from the canon that slash writers use is the magic of Legilimency: an act of penetrating one's mind by force and reading one's thoughts. There are several scenes in the canon in which Snape performs this magic on Harry, and it is used as a basis in many fics as a kind of mental rape that leads to complete humiliation for Harry. Usually Snape can see Harry's sexual fantasies, revealing Harry's secret desires by force. Naturally, the mental penetration then usually leads to a physical one, fulfilling Harry's fantasies. In "Barrier" by florahart, Snape uses Legilimency because he is supposed to teach Harry to protect his mind from Voldemort's attacks. However, he is abusing his position and Harry is trying to fight back:

"Owfuck!" Harry reeled but managed not to fall. His carefully crafted deflection, however, collapsed under the onslaught. Before Harry could recover, Snape had sunk his claws into a fresh scrap of memory and was hauling it into view. Harry set his teeth as the locker room arose before his eyes -- steam-clouded and draped with casually flung red and gold practice robes.

Head still throbbing a bit, Harry choked back a surge of rage and took a steadying breath, reminding himself (rather louder than necessary) that Snape was only being an asshole to wind him up because he couldn't win by playing fair anymore. (florahart)

This shows the power struggle between them but also Harry's powerlessness and anger for being weaker than Snape. By revealing his sexual fantasies, Snape is humiliating

and tearing him apart, but also discovering the sexual attraction between them.

Although rape fics still exist within the pairing, it is often something that both of the characters secretly want, a form of sexual fantasy, and not written as non-consensual. Fics such as “Barrier” show that the pairing is not an idyllic love story between two male characters that the original slash suggested; it is more complex, sometimes ending in tragedy, sometimes love, and sometimes only sexual gratification. It is a pairing that differs from both enemy and buddy slash in the way it uses the combination of sexual themes; not only because the range of topics is wider but also because of the different manner in which it treats the traditional themes.

Similarly to both buddy and enemy slash, Snarry uses the hurt/comfort trope to bring the characters closer together. As we have seen, a character’s vulnerability is often described through physical or emotional hurt. Since power slash already taps into that emotional weakness of a character, hurt/comfort is frequently used within the pairing. This demonstrates that even though the pairing uses the same tropes as enemy and buddy slash, it treats them differently. The hurt/comfort is not used as a way to allow male characters to express their feelings but to emotionally break down a character and admitting that he might love his enemy. Therefore, hurt/comfort as it is used in Snarry, illustrates that the pairing does not follow the same traditional pattern as buddy slash.

The element of hurt is established quite early in the Harry/Snape fics, as Snape usually is the one to humiliate and torture, whereas Harry is the target of physical and mental injury. The comfort part, however, comes into play only when Snape realizes he cares about, and might even love, Harry. In “Can’t Take the Sky”, this theme is taken a step further by including a scene in which Snape is forced to torture Harry because Snape is a double-agent and he cannot reveal his true loyalties to Voldemort; Harry is a prisoner of war and Snape has to torture him in front of Voldemort:

He had trusted none of the other oafs with the lash when the order had been given -- had asked for the honour of beating his least favorite student bloody himself. The Dark Lord had been happy to grant him the indulgence, and in the secrecy of his own heart, Severus had felt himself shriveling away with each bloody stripe he laid into his hated rival's son. (Cluegirl)

Both Snape and Harry are forced to experience the torture, Harry on a physical level and Snape on an emotional level. The hurt, then, is inflicted on them both. In this way, Snape is starting to realize he cares for Harry because he does not want to hurt him, but to protect him from harm. This is connected to the already established sexual

connection they have and is completed later on in the fic when Snape secretly heals Harry's wounds and they end up having sex. The comfort part of hurt/comfort is then extended to both characters:

Now Severus stroked Potter's sweat-slick hair as the boy fought not to scream. His fingers clenched like iron around Severus' arms, and the breath that hissed through his clenched teeth was shrill and quick. Sensation would be truly reaching him now; his still-raw back, the bruises on his ribs, face and wrists, splatter-burns on his hands, they would all be part of the deluge now. Severus weathered an urge to apologize, but pushed the useless words away. Potter would face worse to come, and not at his hands.

"Hush, boy," Severus allowed himself to murmur instead, coaxing the rigid, trembling body to relax into his arms. "It will pass quicker if you do not fight it." He pushed Potter's filthy hair from his brow, curling the boy close as he calmed by degrees. "Easy now. Be easy. Slow your breathing...that's it." (Cluegirl)

This is an example of power slash fics being graphic, both in the description of violence and sex; contrasting with buddy slash which, in turn, uses the hurt/comfort more through dialog of discussing and sharing a trauma that has occurred in the past. As shown earlier, hurt/comfort in buddy slash is softer and more romantic, often including cuddling, whereas power slash uses the trope by breaking down a character through torture and forcing them to face their romantic feelings towards the person they thought they despised. As the example above shows, the descriptions are harsh and there is no declaration of love or first dates. It is very bleak and dramatic.

Although many fics in power slash are dark and graphic both in violence and in sexual content, they do not fit under the description of darkfic which, as discussed earlier, is defined as dark, kinky and having unhappy endings and no redeemed characters. Snape/Harry fics that are similar to "Can't Take the Sky" are numerous and popular within the pairing. The fic also shows good in the characters and portrays Snape as someone who falls in love and cares for Harry in the end. Therefore, for a fic to include queer elements, it does not have to be in the minority when it comes to the subject matter, at least in the Potter fandom. The queerness is more about the inclusion of various different scenarios and mixing of these themes that are depicted in the fic rather than being only specific and marginal content as Reid claims. Since Harry/Snape includes both dark and comical material in the fics, it shows more variation in its themes.

In addition to the diverse themes and the way the characters are portrayed, Harry/Snape also includes more non-normative sexual practices than other pairings, such as BDSM, non-consensual sex, and m-preg which is also popular within the pairing. Since Harry is several years younger than Snape and Snape is his teacher at Hogwarts, the fics that place them in the school setting are often called "chan", referring to underage sex. For this reason the pairing has been criticized and labeled as controversial even though most of the stories feature Harry as an adult, and almost never is he pre-puberty. Thus the pairing is not marginalized because it is less popular or more controversial than other pairings, but because it includes such a wide range of scenarios, not only the graphic sex and violence but all the other themes as well.

Among the non-normative sexual practices in the pairing, S/M (sadism/masochism) is included repeatedly for either purely sexual acts or as revenge that then turns into sexual attraction for both characters. A popular scenario from Harry/Snape is one in which Harry has to do detention in Snape's dungeon. These are often fics including non-consensual sex as well. "Detention Served" is a suitable example of this type of fic; during one of Harry's detentions, Snape starts to tease and bully him in a sexual manner:

"If you try to leave," Snape says, all brimstone and treacle, "you will forfeit this detention. I shall have to inform the headmaster that you fled detention, and of how defiant a student you are." He tugs at the waist of Harry's trousers and smallclothes, all the way down to the point where Harry's buttocks meet Snape's lap. "How dreadful that would sound. What would he do, I wonder? Would he have you expelled?" (Amanuensis)

Fics such as this are also connected to the humiliation theme discussed earlier. First, Harry is mortified and ashamed for what Snape is doing to him, but the scene then turns into pleasure for both characters. This particular scenario appears in other pairings as well, but since the inequality of the characters and their animosity in the canon offers such a convenient setting for power play and struggle for dominance, it is more frequent in this pairing.

Moreover, the sexual power play, the detention trope only being one of them, is sometimes used as a way for a character to become vulnerable as well as to reach emotional intimacy. Thus, Snarry also mixes the emotional vulnerability aspect to the

other themes featured in the pairing. This is only the case if the fic includes a plot in which Harry and Snape develop a romantic relationship, excluding the PWP (Plot What Plot fics) that only use the power play for a sexual fantasy and gratification for the characters. Sullivan claims that in S/M “the bottom seems to ultimately be the top” (163), therefore the fics in which Harry is under Snape’s control could be seen as empowering Harry as a character. Sullivan goes on to say that S/M can disconnect the commonly held negative associations about submissiveness such as weakness, vulnerability and so on (163), a common stance by queer theorists on sexual practices such as S/M. Because Harry/Snape uses this S/M trope more often than Harry/Draco or Harry/Ron, and takes the power play to another level in that way, it suggests that the pairing also switches the roles of the dominant and the submissive, again making the pairing more non-normative when it comes to the sexual content.

Furthermore, similarly to enemy slash, the first sexual encounter between Harry and Snape usually happens before they learn to like, or even tolerate, each other. Sometimes this is achieved by forcing the first sexual encounter upon them both. This is what Tosenberger refers to as a “fuck or die” scenario; a scenario in which supernatural elements force the characters to have sex to prevent something bad from happening (“The Epic love story” 5.8). It contradicts the idea that, in slash, intimacy is built before sexual acts occur (Willis 106). In this way, power slash (and enemy slash) reverses the pattern of intimacy before sex and breaks the usual pattern of slash seen in Harry/Ron buddy fics.

For example, in “A Convenient Marriage” by Diana Williams, one of Harry’s enemies, Lucius Malfoy, casts a dark spell on Harry. The only way to save Harry from a lifelong imprisonment is to marry him off to another powerful wizard who can protect him from Lucius. Thus, Harry is forced to marry Snape and even consummate their relationship to complete the protective magic that is created through the marriage. Even though in this fic Snape is completely on the good side, neither of them like each other and wish to have anything to do with each other, and Harry is appalled by the idea of marrying Snape:

"But it'd be a formality, right?" Harry said, a tinge of desperation in his voice.
 "We wouldn't be really married; it would be just the legal stuff."
 "If you are referring to consummation of the marriage, I'm afraid that is a requirement as well." Harry blanched and Snape smirked. "What, frightened by the thought of our wedding night, Potter? I promise to be gentle."
 "Bastard," Harry hissed at him. (Diana Williams)

As the example shows, in this type of fic, the physical relationship between Harry and Snape precedes the emotional relationship and is started out of necessity not because the characters like each other.

In “A Convenient Marriage” Snape becomes Harry’s protector and thus saves him, but in order for the protecting magic to work, they must marry and live together. Their physical relationship does not start because of any romantic reason as neither of them is attracted to the other, but as they are obligated to do all that, they end up noticing there is chemistry between them, and they end up falling in love and living happily ever after. However, as one of the central features in Harry/ Snape is the strong, negative, emotional connection derived from the canon, it is a sort of parallel to traditional intimacy fics in which characters get to know each other perfectly well and fall deeply in love before anything physical happens between them. Power slash fics such as “A Convenient Marriage” reverse this pattern and are comical versions of the traditional buddy, and sometimes enemy, slash.

One example of the fuck-or-die-scenario is in the above mentioned “Can’t Take the Sky”. Harry was injured in the beginning of the fic and they discover later on that he is, in fact, dying. They find out that one of the remedies to keep Harry alive is to have sex. In this case, Snape’s character is written as emotionless, ruthlessly basing his decisions on reason rather than emotion, and regarding sex as something solely physical; a way of keeping Harry alive. However, everything changes as they fall in love during the course of the fic. This is an example of the power struggle between Harry and Snape, showing that the power might sometimes transfer from Snape to Harry. The pairing is not as fixed in its relationship patterns as the other two pairings since, depending on the fic, the characters alter the dominance-submissive model:

A ragged sound tore loose of him, and Severus clutched the maddening, infuriating, loathsome bane of his existence into a whelming kiss. "I do not love you!" he whispered it to the damp well of Harry's lips, then kissed it home hard. "I don't!" "Shh. Yes you do." [said Harry] (Diana Williams)

A tragic love story such as this is popular in power slash, creating a darker version of the romance fic. This is where the power balance shifts from Snape to Harry; he takes the lead, telling Snape in a calm and quiet way how things are. Snape, however, is forever altered as he admits his feelings to himself. It is too late because Harry has to die to save the world, but for the first time, Snape learns how to feel. This plot twist can

be seen as an imitation of the hurt/comfort trope in reverse; it is Snape who is comforted by Harry, even though Harry in the beginning was in an inferior role. In this way, the pairing breaks the traditional pattern of hurt/comfort as well as extending the power struggle between the characters. Although Snape is physically and intellectually stronger, he still has to submit to Harry on an emotional level when he finally realizes that he feels something towards him.

Another way of using the dominance submission theme is the forced-marriage plot which is used extensively both in enemy and power slash. It does not describe an average, equal, loving romance between the characters but forces them together, usually with comical results. This can be seen as a parody of a legalized and socially constructed ideal of a heterosexual marriage, something that is not available for same-sex couples in most countries in the world. The queering and parodying of marriage and gender roles is especially distinguishable in the pairing of Harry/Snape, most probably because it depicts such an exaggerated version of it, even more so than Harry/Draco. As noted earlier, the parodying of heteronormative marriage and family structure can be seen as a mockery of that ideal and thus the pairing approaches traditional marriage in a more non-normative manner than buddy slash does.

There are several scenarios used in power slash in which Harry and Snape are forced to marry, sometimes in obscure circumstances that ridicule reality. For instance, there are Harry/Snape fics in which by “law, every person over a certain age must be married and have children - and all marriages must have a dominant and a submissive” (Lanta), which suggests both parody of forced marriage and stereotypical heterosexist gender roles. There are also similar fics that reverse the power struggle and feature Snape as the “wife” such as Red Claw’s “Just Husband” in which Snape is sold to Harry as a wife because of his family’s financial troubles.

Forced marriage fics parallel the traditional nuclear family structure and rewrite it in a manner that challenges the “notions of masculinity and femininity, of maleness and femaleness” (Jung 26), queering and mocking the heterosexist concept of family. They also exaggerate the stereotypes about wives being submissive, weak and sensitive, staying home with the children, while the husband is the strong, dominating one going to work every day. As the Snape/Harry pairing is structured around this dominant-submissive model to begin with, the marriage between them is almost a caricature and thus many fics including this theme are a parody in that sense. This in turn makes power slash more diverse than buddy and enemy slash because it literally

highlights the conventional gender behavior making fun of it.

These domestic parodies are making fun of marrying out of convenience rather than love and distorting gender roles in the same manner as enemy slash often does. In “A Convenient Marriage”, for instance, Harry is portrayed as a cliché of a newlywed virgin who does not understand how anyone can enjoy sex so much. He is described as weak and powerless; he was a virgin before the consummation of the marriage, and he goes through the emotions of being a newlywed virgin wife. This is in contrast to S. Pugh’s claim that “in mainstream romance there is an inevitability about the eventual surrender of virginity, generally in the context of marriage [...] there is no inevitability about the ‘first time’ is slash scenario [...] Far from being ‘natural’ (in narrative terms) end to the man’s story, it was an alternative path down which that story might go” (96). On the contrary to buddy slash, in which Harry chooses Ron over Ginny, the girl he is supposed to marry and thus is altered from his path, in power slash, the first time scenario is used for mocking the heterosexual stereotypes. In power slash and fics such as “A Convenient Marriage”, the virgin plot is written as comical and does not follow the expected pattern like Harry/Ron often does. Power slash uses this first-time scenario to its advantage, mocking the original, since fics are often written as humorous, and use that cliché to the point of exaggeration. Harry’s character in the fic finds his new husband’s rough sexual advances dissatisfying, and finds himself disappointed in sex: “We’ve done it - had sex - three times, and I hated it every time” (Diana Williams), Harry states several times to his friends but submits to his faith by busying himself with housework. Eventually Harry lets go of his successful Quidditch career to produce an heir to Snape, following the suburban housewife role discussed above.

Moreover, Snape sets the rules for their arrangement and even points out that they are allowed to cheat: “Harry’s mouth dropped open. ‘You’re giving me permission? To cheat on you?’ “Middle class Muggle morals,” Snape muttered”(Diana Williams). Ironically, they end up just like middle-class muggles with their baby, home, and conservative marriage; the very thing Snape ridiculed in the beginning of the story. The happy ending, which is described as overly sweet, also presents an exaggerated version of the romance slash. Ultimately, Harry is content in his new life:

"It isn't the same," Ron pointed out. "You're living in this house in the country instead of a flat in town, you're married with a baby instead of living the single life, and you're no longer playing Quidditch. It isn't the

same at all."[...] "No, it isn't," Harry said, and let out a deep sigh of contentment. "It's better." (Diana Williams)

One could argue that, since they are two male characters depicted in a marriage with a family, it is a queer interpretation of the canon. However, as all slash pairings included in this study depict this marriage between male characters in some form, it is the way it is described that determines whether the fic or pairing in question is non-normative or only enhances the fluffy romance. If the fic is comical, more than a serious romance, in its depiction of marriage and family and exaggerates the romance as Harry/Snape does, it is more of a parody than an idealized version of the theme.

The examples presented above suggest that the Harry/Snape power slash pairing is more versatile in the treatment of the subject matter and includes themes that are considered non-heteronormative, thus going against the grain of traditional romance slash. The inequality between the characters indicates a parody of the heterosexist gender roles, and the sexual themes of S/M, non-con (non-consensual sex), m-preg and hurt/comfort mixed with romance and emotional vulnerability, make a pairing that is both diverse and non-heteronormative in comparison to Harry/Draco enemy slash, and especially Harry/Ron buddy slash. In sum, the Snape/Harry pairing is queerer than the other two pairings described above.

4.4. Plot What Plot and Rare Pairings – Queering Porn?

The following section will look into two distinct types of slash pairings in the Potter fandom: Plot What Plot fics that slash together any characters available and rare pairings that only pair up certain characters that are rarely matched up in slash. Both of these pairings are essential when determining how non-heteronormative a slash pairing might be since they are not based on any existing emotional connection between the characters but, in a way, are free to include any material ignoring the canon text of *Harry Potter*. PWP or rare pair fics are not necessarily any queerer than enemy or power slash just because they are less connected to canon than the established popular pairings of this study. They rather explore the homosexual desire in the form of graphic erotic writing and enforce the claim that slash is not always connected to emotions or romance, whether this romance is queered or not

Considerable amount of the material in each pairing discussed earlier is based on the characters from the original novels of *Harry Potter*, enforcing the idea of queering the heterosexist canon. The material from the canon focuses mainly on the characterization, background information, and most importantly their relationships with each other. In addition, naturally the world of *Harry Potter* is more often than not used as the setting for a fic. As the study has aimed to prove, however, separating slash from the canon and examining it as a phenomenon on its own while comparing the different forms of slash is also important in order to determine the specific differences in the genres and pairings themselves when it comes to queerness. It is not to say that the canon is not a significant part of slash, since there is the idea that at the core of each slash pairing there is emotion (S. Pugh 100) based on the relationship of the characters in the canon, an important part of the power dynamic of each pairing. However, this is only one aspect of the whole picture. There are fics in which the sole purpose is the sexual act: Porn-Without-Plot or Plot-What-Plot fics, sometimes only referred to as “smut”. These fics are often short since they have no plot, only graphic sex between the characters. The second, somewhat different genre of Potter slash, is rare pairings. These are pairing of characters that are not popular within a specific slash fandom and do not have much interaction between them in the canon, which means there is no strong emotional connection; no love or hate between them to build on. These fics tend to be longer and consist of more story line than PWP. They are unique because they are not dependent on the canon and thus the fan writers can interpret the relationship in any way they wish, indicating that the pairings do not follow metatext of the fandom.

PWPs are fics that concentrate only on homosexual desire between two male characters and, as the study specifically looks for gender and sexual practices in slash, it can be argued that they enforce the claim that slash is not solely about romance and established relationships; it is not even always about power struggles or unresolved sexual tension; it is at times only about sex. As mentioned above, the characteristics which make a slash pairing queer are dependent on how the characters are portrayed in relation to the canon, how gender roles are presented and what subject matter is included in the fic. The PWPs complicate the matter since they are solely about sex but at the same time enforce the idea that the nature of slash, especially Potter slash, is too complex to be categorized in any specific way as an entity. PWPs indicate that for a slash pairing to have queer elements, it might in fact just not have any heteronormative elements. Thus, claiming that PWP is queer, since it describes two males having sexual

relations, is sufficient since if it does not include any elements from mainstream romance slash. Some PWPs do have a romantic and fluffy ending which again complicates matters. However, as they are mostly about two wizards getting it on without character development or plot, PWPs can be labeled as queer porn slash.

There are two types of PWP fics. The first type uses some aspects from the characters and the canon; these are fics in which, for example, the rivalry or hatred between Harry and Draco is evident in the writing. The other type of PWP is simply graphic sexual content between two male characters which are named after the *Harry Potter* characters. In other words, they could be named after anyone and it would not change the premise of the fic or affect the overall outcome. Catherine Driscoll argues that “fan fiction draws upon both genres” of pornography and romance “yet fits neither’s conventions fully” (qtd in Reid 8). This is sometimes accurate when describing the other pairings of this study, especially the Harry/Ron buddy pairing which often includes excessive romance and graphic sexual situations, but PWPs, more specifically the ones that only depict sex, belong more on the side of written pornography and erotica than anything else. Examples of such fics might feature Snape and Harry having one of their detentions in the dungeon but excluding all the back story of the characters, only concentrating on the smut. Or Harry and Draco as regular people (no magic or wizards), as two homosexual men who happen to meet at a club and get together for a night.

The PWPs that do use characterization to some extent from the canon still rely on the power dynamics between the characters. Thus, even though these fics are mostly about sex, they also include some elements from the canon. For instance, a fic in which Snape poisons Harry with an aphrodisiac potion, takes advantage of him and in the end erases his memory with magic so that he will not remember anything afterwards. These are the Plot What Plot stories that take into account the emotional factor in slash. Regardless of the fact that the sole purpose is porn, the unequal power balance is still found in many PWPs. Thus, the Harry/Snape PWP includes more non-heteronormative elements than the Harry/Ron PWP since they differ in terms of queerness as a pairing. This also suggests that determining whether a slash pairing is queer, even if it is solely pornographic text, is still debatable depending on how the characters are presented.

Rare pairs are more complex in the sense that they contain both graphic sex and uncommon pairings if compared to the Potter slash fandom as a whole. They are in the minority if the division is made based on the rarity and sexual content. However, the

rare pairs also include romance, fluff, established relationships and domestic settings regardless of the pairing, consisting of characters that are close (for example Seamus and Dean who are good friends) or characters that are enemies but do not interact in the canon (Neville and Grabbe). Rare pairings also pair up characters that have a more neutral relationship since they do not interact very much in the novels (Albus Dumbledore and Slughorn).

Rare pairs might also slash together people or creatures that are considered unnatural, such as a human character with a magical creature such as a centaur or a house elf, or Dumbledore with any young student from Hogwarts. These pairings also imply that queerness is not only derived from sex acts, because these pairings might also feature all the heteronormative slash elements discussed earlier. Even if a pairing is in the minority, and on the surface seems very non-traditional, it might still be excessively romantic and transfer stereotypical gender roles onto the characters. Therefore, as suggested above, the queerness of a pairing is derived from several factors, not only based on which characters are slashed but also how they are written, and what is happening in the plot and the sexual behavior of the characters in question. PWPs and rare pairings are an apt example of the possible pairings and scenarios that are featured in Potter slash, and furthermore show that the queerness and heteronormative elements are only determined if every aspect of a pairing is taken into consideration.

5. Conclusion

To claim that all slash is marginalized and transgressive is not enough to describe the subtle characteristics of slash fan fiction that depict sexual and romantic relationships between same-sex characters from popular culture. The phenomenon in itself might on the surface appear to rewrite the canon texts into queer texts in which characters are free to explore any sexual behavior and romance imaginable. However, even the most obscure and, on the surface, queer slash fics can contain traces of the “obligatory heterosexuality” (Sedgwick 3) by transferring heteronormative and even homophobic cultural beliefs onto the narrative of the fic and onto a same sex pairing.

By discussing the similarities of Queer Theory and slash in the context of heteronormativity, this study aims to highlight the differences within slash, not only in relation to canon text, but also in relation to each other. There are different degrees of queerness, and different forms of queerness, depending on how specific forms of slash approach the themes of gender and sexuality. By choosing to analyze slash from the point of view of the pairings rather than from the perspective of the fan writers or genres, the study offers a fresh angle to approach the debate on the relationship between Queer Theory and slash fan fiction. Even though there are no set principles on how to group together slash fics since the general tendency in slash is to mix and blend everything, the pairings offer a somewhat categorized way of approaching the topic. By focusing on only a few of the most influential pairings in the Potter fandom, the study attempts to provide a description of the overall nature of Potter slash pairings in relation to Queer Theory as they appear in the moment of writing. The differences within pairings on the surface seems small but they do exist, and thus makes each pairing unique in the way they approach heteronormative themes derived from the canon of *Harry Potter* and other mainstream narratives.

To understand the nature of slash, one must dig deeper than the generalized definition that most of the earlier scholarship covered. This is changing as the number of fandoms and through that, the number of fics keeps growing. *Harry Potter* is currently the most popular fandom based on the amount of fic that is published online, and thus evolves faster than the other fandoms that generate less fic or have a smaller following, but similar analyses could be applied to any of the existing fandoms such as *Twilight*, *Lord of the Rings* or even *American Idol* to name but a few.

When discussing the similarities of Queer Theory and slash in the context of heteronormativity, gender, sexuality, and popular culture, the earlier scholarship has only scratched the surface. More studies that concentrate on the specificities of slash and the reflection of heteronormativity in slash beyond just a scope of the most popular pairings in one specific fandom such as *Harry Potter* are needed in order to get a clearer picture of the current state of slash fandom. This study is an example of the direction the fandom and slash fan fiction studies could take; examining the connection to heteronormative narratives in literature and how different forms of slash reflect or transgress those narratives.

This study argues that several factors should be taken into account when considering a specific slash pairing in the framework of heteronormativity and whether that pairing includes queer elements or not. Such factors include the way the pairing comes across in the metatext of fandom, the different representations of same sex desire within the pairings, and how specific fics treat themes related to homosexuality and same-sex relationships. Thus, regardless of the fact that all slash, one way or another, addresses themes concerning homosexual desire and same-sex relationships, it is not simply about pairing male or female characters together; it is more about how they are paired and how the characters are represented in the different pairings.

This study focuses on the three different types of pairings in Potter slash; buddy, enemy and power slash which all differ in the way they slash characters together. Harry/Ron buddy slash includes less queer elements than the other two pairings. Based on the examples provided above, the fics written of the pairing often use traditional romance plots and idealizes heteronormative gender and sexual norms. The buddy pairing idealizes and transfers the fixed gender roles and describes the male characters as models of stereotypical gender behavior. It is only a transfer of heteronormative one-dimensionality that comes across in the Harry/Ron fics. The more conventional features of slash are evident in the Harry/Ron-pairing more so than in other Potter slash pairings. Harry/Ron models the old school slash pairings closely, and it is more influenced by the canon of *Harry Potter* novels than enemy or power slash. Overall, buddy slash, as it is realized in the pairing of Harry/Ron, includes more elements from the more heteronormative slash, or old-school romance slash since it sticks to the norm more than the other two pairings in this study. Even if there are changes in the roles of Harry and Ron, and they occasionally deviate to more unconventional narratives, the overall nature of buddy slash still remains as it was in the

time of Kirk/Spock.

On the contrary to buddy slash, the enemy slash pairing of Harry/Draco both transgresses and idealizes gender stereotypes and mixes non-queer and queer elements in slash. As the examples above indicate, the fics of the pairing include both traditional romance and queer behaviors such as m-preg, cross-dressing and gender-blending. The pairing also includes family structures that deviate from the established norm, and even though they feature domesticity, they do so in a way that makes fun of the heterosexist norm. The pairing then turns gender roles into a parody and mockery of the expected ideal of heterosexual marriage and wife-husband roles. In enemy slash, queerness is more prevalent than in buddy slash but Harry/Draco also falls into categorization of heteronormative slash at times, since some of the fics are exactly what could be referred to as “slashing the romance narrative” (Kustritz 371); in other words, borrowing elements from the idealized heterosexual romance and transferring them on the slash pairing.

Even though most of the examples of slash that are labeled as traditional or non-queer in this study feature romance, it does not mean that in slash, romance is linked with heteronormativity either. It is those patterns in representations of gender and sexuality, and the power dynamics in the pairing that has heteronormative characteristics and for that reason are less queer, because they stick to the conventional gender stereotypes, or are representations of that heteronormative ideal. This is the case with buddy slash and sometimes enemy slash.

The third pairing analyzed in this study is Harry/Snape, the power slash pairing. It is a most fitting representation of queer slash since the fics in the pairing include the more diverse and non-normative material in comparison to the other two pairings. The fics exhibit more non-normative sexual practices and parody the stereotypical female and male behavior, following the queerer side of slashing. By highlighting the performativity of gender, power slash pairings parody the way in which sex and gender are linked together in heteronormative thinking. As the examples above show, pairing uses the stereotypes to the point of exaggeration, making the pairing more transgressive in this manner. The pairing does include romance but simultaneously lacks heterosexist gender patterns and traditional romance, including in the subject matters more diverse material than the other two pairings.

Finally, Plot What Plot fics and rare pairings suggest that categorizing slash pairings within queerness and heteronormativity is problematic because they differ so

much from the established pairings of buddy, enemy, and power slash but still exhibit similar patterns within the pairings themselves. Therefore, not all slash is queer, but not all slash transfer the idealized, heterosexist gender stereotypes onto a same-sex pairing. Because slash is such a multilayered phenomenon, as PWPs and rare pairings further indicate, there is no possible way (yet) to prove which is more prevalent; is it the romance of slash that describes a perfect, fantasy relationship of the mainstream romance narrative, or is it that search for more non-normative relationship patterns that do not conform to the expectations of society?

After studying each pairing, Harry/Ron, Harry/Draco, and Harry/Snape as representations of buddy, enemy and power slash, the different forms of slash represent different levels of that queering and some of them highlighting the heteronormative; some of them transgressing it. Thus, referring to all slashed characters as “queer subjects” (Dhaenens, Van Bauwel, and Biltreyst 335) because they are rewritten as homosexuals and featured in relationships with characters of the same sex, is not a sufficient way of describing slash. It is more about the differences in the pairings and the way they are slashed that determines the queerness factor of a specific pairing or a fic.

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