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REWRITING AUTHORITY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF RUSSOPHONE AND
ANGLOPHONE *HARRY POTTER* FANFICTION

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Rewriting Authority: A Comparative Study of Russophone and Anglophone *Harry Potter*
Fanfiction

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Abstract

This thesis is a comparative study of Russophone and Anglophone bodies of fanfiction, based on *Harry Potter* series across two major online databases, Ficbook.com and Archive of Our Own. By analyzing interpretations of canonical events, recurring narratives and main characters, this thesis mainly focuses on the Russophone body of fanfiction and the ways in which it differs from the Anglophone one. By highlighting the differences and trends in those two bodies of fanfictions we can gain an insight on how cultural memory, discourses across media and politics as well as common anxieties of the post-Soviet media world shaped the variations of Russophone *Harry Potter* fanfiction canons.

To achieve this, I read and analyzed two hundred fanfictions that were the most liked and engaged with across the Russophone and Anglophone fandoms. As a result, I have discovered that Russophone fanfiction's main traits are distrust towards institutions, a persistent sense of paranoia and an "enemy" lurking outside and within, as well as the desire to "fix" major plot points within the original narrative. These traits appear far less consistently in the Anglophone body of fanfiction, suggesting that the political events and the media propaganda's influence in Russophone world are reflected in the fan-produced narratives. As fanfiction is often described to be a "microcosm" of the society, the study of trends in Russophone fanfiction allows us to see what kind of narratives, anxieties and beliefs continue to circulate within the post-Soviet cultural consciousness.

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Introduction

Each year a conversation around the interpretation of Dumbledore's or Ron Weasley's characters resurfaces on various Harry Potter fan communities online. There was one particularly heated debate where one fan writing in English said that Ron Weasley was such a good friend to Harry Potter that his family practically "adopted" Harry, to which another fan replied in Russian that Ron Weasley was an evil character who was friends with Harry just for the purpose of financial gain. They went back and forth on the interpretation of Ron Weasley and the original commenter ended the conversation by advising the other user to reread the original series of Harry Potter since their interpretation was so far off from the universe created by J.K. Rowling.

This divide in interpretation of the canonical characters and narratives in *Harry Potter* is seen clearly in works of fanfiction across Anglophone and Russophone platforms. Although Harry Potter fandom is a global and highly interconnected space, the same canonical narratives and characters can be reinterpreted in strikingly different ways across linguistic and cultural borders. By analyzing top two hundred Anglophone and Russophone fanfiction online, this thesis argues that Anglophone fanfiction often has narratives connected to personal identity, friendship or romance, while Russophone fanfiction is concerned with broader structures as they reconstruct the world of the original series through narratives of institutional distrust, persistent sense of external and internal threats, paranoia as well as the desire to "fix" the entire society in a way that would bring prosperity and peace to all its citizens.

This difference suggests that fanfiction can serve as a site where different cultural communities renegotiate their social and cultural identity through narrative restructuring. These interpretations mirror to the cultural consciousness of communities, which in turn reveal broader social anxieties, media and political discourses, and remaining collective memories that still

circulate in the society, and in this case in the post-Soviet Russophone world. Thus, using theories on post-Soviet cultural memory and restorative narrative practices developed by Svetlana Boym and Sergei Oushakine, this thesis explores how Russophone fanfiction rewrites and reconstructs canonical narratives in ways that reflect bigger ideological anxieties within the post-Soviet media space.

This thesis is divided into two chapters focusing on two different themes discussed above: the distrust in authorial institutions and the desire to “fix” the society and the order that stems out of it. After the discussion of the methodology and ethical considerations as well as the literature review pertaining to the research, there is the first chapter titled “The Difference in Depiction of Institutions and Authority Across Fandoms,” which will argue that Russophone fanfiction rewrites the canon in a way that all the institutions and authorities turn out to be corrupt and untrustworthy. I will use theoretical framework by Svetlana Boym and Sergei Oushakine to analyze this phenomenon.

Second chapter titled “The Phenomenon of Time travel and Fix-it Works in Russophone Fandom” argues that this distrust in institutions and authorities propels a desire to “fix” the world one is imagining in a way that one becomes a “strong leader” who single-handedly rescues the entire society. Using Borenstein’s and Brouwer’s arguments as well as still drawing on Boym’s work, this chapter will argue that these rewriting practices reveal which parts of the society Russophone authors deem in need of “fixing” as well as how one intends to “fix” it. The conclusion and future directions in research will be following after this chapter.

Methodology

To analyze the Russophone and Anglophone bodies of fanfiction, I focused on two biggest databases that contain those fanfictions, Ficbook.net and Archive of Our Own (AO3) respectively. These current biggest archives in Russian and English on *Harry Potter* fanfiction were created at the same year and developed across the same timeframe, however the content and the trends across those platforms differ dramatically.

Ficbook (ficbook.net), a major Russian platform for fanfiction, was launched in 2009, creating a space for Russophone fans to publish their own fanfiction away from English-dominated websites. The first ever fanfiction written in Russian on *Harry Potter* on Ficbook dates back to 2010, around the same time period when Archive of Our Own (archiveofourown.org), the largest depository for fanfiction in English was created and soon enough new *Harry Potter* fanfiction also started to appear there.

To make a comparative analysis of the works on Ficbook (Russophone fanfiction) and AO3 (Anglophone fanfiction), I have read a hundred most liked works on each side sorted by the number of likes as the measure of the level of engagement from the public. Although there are ways to sort the works through most commented and viewed as well, sorting them by the most liked is the most indicative way to gain an insight into which works are read and are valued by the wide public for each fandom. Users might view the work, but not necessarily like it, or they might leave a comment on the work, but it might be a comment that disagrees with the author's view, so I concluded that likes are the most trustworthy medium to display public agreement and interest. The likes on fanfictions on both platforms are accumulated through years and reflect works that have been read and references for a while.

I have excluded works that are very short¹ from my analysis since they can give very little insight into the themes and narratives of societal rebuilding and identity renegotiation that I would like to explore in my research. Most of the works that I have analyzed follow a very specific narrative structure, which makes them easy to compare both across AO3 and Ficbook as well as across fanfictions within those websites too. This narrative structure consists of several important plot points: life before an invitation to Hogwarts, receiving a letter from Hogwarts, initiation into one of the four Hogwarts Houses and canonical events afterwards. I turned this narrative structure into an anchor point to compare works, in order to showcase the differences in a clearer manner.

I will highlight the general trends and differences in fanfictions across Ficbook and AO3 in order to showcase the stark difference in narrative preferences across websites before delving into a deeper analysis of individual fanfictions. In general, Russophone works often depict Dumbledore, the Ministry of Magic and the Weasleys in a less favorable light than Anglophone works do. In addition to that, Russophone works tend to position traditionalist, blood-purist characters from Slytherin as misunderstood heroes, and Dumbledore as an evil force who is willing to destroy the society for his “delusional” ideas about inclusivity, love and friendship.

Out of one hundred fanfictions written in Russian on Ficbook, 64 of them depicted the Slytherin House, a canonically classist and traditionalist House, in a favorable light, as they have argued that their ideals were “misunderstood,” and they were holding on to precious traditions. In contrast to this, out of one hundred fanfictions written in English on Archive of Our Own (AO3), only twenty-six decided to depict Slytherin House in a favorable light. Counter to that,

¹ I considered fanfictions that are less than twenty-five pages long as being too short to be included in my analysis. I chose this number specifically as from reading two hundred fanfictions I have concluded that twenty-five pages is a minimum optimal number of pages to write a work that elaborates on deeper themes and narratives that I am looking for.

two works on Ficbook have depicted the Slytherin house in an unfavorable light, and this number increases to eighteen when it comes to AO3.

As for the interpretations of individual characters, on Ficbook, 34 works out of hundred have depicted Ronald Weasley and his family in an unfavorable light as being opportunists and latching on to Harry's wealth, whereas the number in this category drops to four when it comes to AO3 as in Anglophone world Weasleys are depicted as kind and compassionate people, who have been unlucky with their funds.

As for the depiction of Dumbledore the numbers are starker, as thirty-three works written in Russian portray him as “дамбигад” (Dumblebad), which interprets Dumbledore as a manipulative and evil character, while on AO3 this depiction of Dumbledore is found only in seven fanfictions out of hundred.

The difference in common narratives is most visible when it comes to the works with such tags as time-travel and “fix-it” changes in the canon. Those tags are used under the works that follow a storyline when a character travels back in time to change the events of canonical timeline. These events are usually tragic such as death of Harry's parents or death of Sirius Black, Harry's godfather. This “fix-it time travel” tag exists both in Russophone and Anglophone bodies of fanfictions, however what aspects of canonical storyline those authors decide to “fix” and how they write their characters to fix it is drastically different. In Anglophone fandom “fix-it time-travel” works depict one of the characters from the canonical storyline such as Harry or Hermione travelling back in time to save their friends or family that might have died in canonical storyline such as Potters or Sirius Black. In Russophone fandom, “fix-it time-travel” works usually are centered around new characters invented by the fanfiction authors that were not present in the canonical storyline. Those characters then go on to “fix” broader structures

such as Ministry of Magic as they invent new laws or create revolutions in the Wizarding World. For Russophone works, the most important thing to fix is not deaths of individual characters, but the way history occurred and how society functions on a day-to-day basis. This is a crucial difference between Anglophone and Russophone trends in fanfiction as in Ficbook there are eighteen works on the top one hundred that are centered around characters not introduced in the original *Harry Potter* series, but which are creations of fanfiction authors. In AO3 there are no works with such narrative across the one hundred most liked fanfictions.

Time-travel is also possible for characters that were in the canon, such as Harry, and in this case AO3 has thirteen works of Harry going back in time and fixing his life, while Ficbook has nine such works. Time-travelling Harry being more present on AO3 is interesting, since it shows that time-travel is not uniquely Russophone, but the way it happens and what exact plot points the authors want to change differs dramatically across websites, which will be discussed later.

In general, we can see that Russophone fandom has significantly greater sympathy towards the Slytherin house, figure of Draco Malfoy, and old traditions, while also having much more negative portrayals of Dumbledore and the Weasleys as well as institutions that possess authority such as Ministry of Magic, which all follow Dumbledore's lead. Russophone fandom is also unique in having so many fanfictions centered around characters that were not in the original series and which aim to "fix" the canon (see fig.1).

Narrative Trope / Theme	Russophone	Anglophone
Draco portrayed positively / Slytherin-centered narratives	64	26
Ron Weasley portrayed negatively	34	4
Slytherin portrayed negatively	2	18
Outsider-insert protagonist (non-Harry)	18	0

Narrative Trope / Theme	Russophone Anglophone	
Dumbledore portrayed negatively	33	7
Harry travels back in time	9	13

Figure 1. This table depicts numbers of fanfictions out of one hundred most liked across each website pertaining to popular narratives and tropes.

On Archive of Our Own, the most liked fanfiction on *Harry Potter* of all time titled “All the Young Dudes” presents a story of Harry Potter’s parents’ and their friends’ life in all the tragic ways that it has had happened accurately according to the series. On Ficbook, the most liked Harry Potter fanfiction of all time titled “Платина и шоколад” (Platinum and chocolate) tells a story of Draco Malfoy and Hermione Granger falling in love and Hermione distancing herself from Gryffindor and Ron Weasley.

Thus, while Ficbook is full of works that change the original storyline and introduce alternative storylines, AO3 is full of stories that follow the original Harry Potter series storyline, with the introduction of small details and interpretations while being in general faithful to the canonical interpretation. For instance, “All the Young Dudes” introduces a love story between Sirius Black and Remus Lupin, which was not mentioned in the original series, yet it still follows through with the Voldemort killing Harry’s parents like it was in the original series. “Platinum and chocolate” on the other case, reject the love story between Hermione and Ron, present in the original series, and instead rewrite it as happening between Draco and Hermione which was not present in the original series.

Considering the fact that both bodies of fanfictions have one original series as their reference, as well as the timeframe and the fandom that they exist in, these drastic differences in common trends could tell us more about broader topics. As Brit Kelley, a scholar of fan cultures

and fanfiction states “Sycophant Hex, LiveJournal, Fanfiction.net, Archive of Our Own, Wattpad [...] These communities are resistant to yet complicit within larger power structures” (Kelley 2021, p. 13). Thus, by highlighting the differences and trends in those two bodies of fanfictions we can gain an insight on how cultural memory, discourses across media and politics as well as common anxieties of the post-Soviet world shaped the variations of Russophone *Harry Potter* fanfiction canons.

Although I have read and analyzed two hundred works across Russophone and Anglophone fandoms, it would be impossible to include them all in my analysis in chapter one and two, so I will only include the most indicative examples of trends that were repeated across multiple works. Thus, all the mentioned works here are indicative examples of narrative trends that have been repeated in various levels across other two hundred works, and those works are chosen because they illustrate the example for the argument in the most expressive and direct way.

Ethical considerations

Although reading and researching fanfiction texts does not require a direct contact with a person or an approval of the Institutional Ethics Committee since all of the materials are available on an open-to-public platform, there are still some nuances and complications that occur when researching fan materials and fandoms. As Deller states in her article “Ethics in Fan Studies Research” there are several issues with the ethics in the fan studies field such as fans potentially recognizing each other’s nicknames which led to “tensions if the things some fans have said are not well received by others, such as the tensions in the One Direction fan community” (Deller 2018, p. 128). This shows that the researcher should always be conscious of the public not only outside of the fandom but within the fandom as well.

Fan communities even have a practice called “silencing” which “can occur within fan communities themselves, as fans enact forms of boundary policing and “shaming” about what is and is not acceptable practice” (Deller 2018, p. 131). Thus, fandom cannot be perceived as a unified body because it has many parties within itself, which can conflict at times. To protect the wellbeing of the participants, the researcher must always be aware of the possible conflict within the fandom.

Busse, in her article “The Ethics of Studying Online Fandom” agrees with Deller and adds that “strict rules ultimately fail to fully account for the complexities of online interactions” (Busse 2017, p. 10). One of such issues is when the researcher is a fan of as well as “even with underlying guidelines of always placing other fans and fandom spaces first, our roles as fans, academics [...] may interfere with and affect one another in ways that might not be immediately obvious” (Busse 2017, p. 10). Thus, Busse suggests the scholars to proceed with caution as well as shift the “focus from universal rules to the particular situations of fan scholars and their interactions and relationships” (Busse 2017, p. 10).

As Busse discusses further, fandom is a sensitive matter because of the continuous stigma of shame that had and is surrounding it in the public. So, it is important to untangle the complexities of each case and resolve them one by one depending on the case because the rules that we have now are not fully capable of giving a comprehensible and ethically correct resolution at all times. In order to prevent causing any harm to the community, it is important to be aware of the potential tensions and issues that might arise from using several works comparatively.

Literature review

This literature review is an overview of major scholarly papers and books related to the theme of Anglophone and Russophone fanfiction as well as the post-Soviet narratives and media space. The first part of the review will consist of works on fan studies and fanfiction studies as well as the role of *Harry Potter* series in Russophone media space. The second part of the review will cover works specifically related to Harry Potter fanfictions in Russian and English. Third and final part of the review will discuss how my work differs and contributes to the works that I have discussed in the literature review.

When it comes to the study of fanfiction as a phenomenon, fan studies suggest analyzing it considering real world hierarchies and societal structures. Brit Kelley, in her book *Loving Fanfiction: Exploring the Role of Emotion in Online Fandoms*, states: “Fan works are not just emotional but emotioned. Emotioned literacy is situated in time, space, and social relationships. It is influenced by previous texts, people, encounters, and experiences gained through lifelong learning” (Kelley 2021, p. 3). The term “emotioned literacy”, according to Kelley, is “a term that best captures the complex ways in which identity, cognition, emotion, the body, and embodiment come together in literacy development” (Kelley 2021, p. 5). In the case of the fanfiction works, they are emotioned in a sense that it brings together the past experiences, history, culture and collective identities that those people operate in their real lives. A work of fanfiction, in this definition referred to as a “literacy development,” contains more than the rewriting of the canonical work, it contains pieces of important national and cultural myths and narratives.

It is important to consider which fandom one is analyzing when working on fanfiction as not all fandoms have equal global acceptance and popularity as well as timelines across borders. *Harry Potter* is one of the few fandoms that has a media presence which translates through

borders, which Eliot Borenstein talks about in his book *The Politics of Fantasy: Magic, Children's Literature, and Fandom in Putin's Russia*.

In the beginning of his book, Borenstein discusses the environment in Russia when the first *Harry Potter* series were translated and reproduced in 2000s: "Russian culture in the twenty-first century was dominated by two contradictory phenomena: the growing hegemony of mass culture (both domestic and foreign), which tended to push the boundaries of acceptability, good taste, and conventional mores, and a conservative backlash that, while reminiscent of Soviet-era rigidity, was part of a broader culture war about religion, art, sexuality, and values" (Borenstein 2025, p. 6). While Russophone fanfiction on *Harry Potter* displays some traits of Western mass culture traits such as some conventional values and morality, yet the traces of Soviet ideals and beliefs are still persistent in those fanfiction narratives. As Borenstein states "Fanfiction denies the very foreignness of the foreign work. Harry Potter may be originally a British creation, but when Russians tell stories of their own set in the Wizarding World, they subvert the Russian/foreign opposition that is so central to post-Soviet discussions of popular culture" (Borenstein 2025, p. 96). Thus, Borenstein supports Kelley's points regarding the function of the fanfiction as a cultural medium, yet his book mainly focuses on political articles, internet memes and songs rather than purely fanfiction, which my work will be focusing on.

A very important contribution that Borenstein makes is that he introduces the political and cultural arena of the Russophone fandom that the *Harry Potter* series entered in the 2000s. He states that *Harry Potter* series were one of the biggest hegemonies in the Russian online fandom space, as soon as the first translation came out in 2000. Translations of *Harry Potter* into Russian came out to the Russian fandom space roughly at the same time as the original books, which means there was almost no gap in the timeline between Anglophone and Russophone

development of the respective fandoms. Thus, for the sake of comparing the central plotlines, tropes and narratives, the *Harry Potter* series is a perfect model as it allows for an actual timeline side by side comparison. As Borenstein notes, the peak of *Harry Potter*'s popularity coincides with Putin's first two rounds of presidency (2000-2008), and as thus all the anxieties and collective panic of the post-Yeltsin world, which began when Putin was made president in 1999, and confirmed when he was elected in 2000.

Public's reaction to the book series reflects the political environment they came to be received in as Borenstein makes an example of book critics Medvedev and Shishova criticizing Harry for being "ungrateful" to Dursleys, despite all the abuse. The fact that those and numerous other critics managed to miss all the abuse towards an orphan depicted in the book and turned it into a cautionary story about child and adult hierarchy as well as dangers of insubordination speaks of something bigger than just Harry or the book series. In fact, it speaks to a broader narrative that was spread across the society at that time as Borenstein states: "This brand of conservative argument is not, strictly speaking, political, and it is certainly not the result of Putinism, but it does end up fitting in quite well with the emerging conservatism of the later Putin years: authorities should not be subject to questioning" (Borenstein 2025, p. 110). In such a political environment, it is only natural for fandom to reflect it, as contrary to popular belief fandom is not a space that is distanced and closed off from all the outside politics and social structures. As Kelley states "online fanfiction communities are, themselves, not only implicated within capitalism, but are deeply implicated within problematic, hegemonic expectations regarding class, race, and gender" (Kelley 2021, 79). The view that fanfiction is a "microcosm" of the society in a way that it reflects the hierarchies and expectations of the real world is

supported by Jenkins (2017), Helleksen (2017), and Chin (2018) and many other fanfiction and fandom scholars.

While the questions of race and gender are at the forefront of the Anglophone fandom discussion, the focus shifts when it comes to the Russophone side as Borenstein states “Rowling’s saga fits into a familiar Anglo-American mold [...], in which a single virtuous hero or group of friends can, against all odds, triumph over evil. The events of Putin’s third and fourth terms seem to demonstrate the opposite: courageous individuals tend to be killed, tortured, imprisoned, exiled, or simply silenced” (Borenstein 2025, p. 151). This sharp contrast between the original series’ depiction of reality and the real political situation within the country create a sense of distrust towards the narratives in the *Harry Potter* original series, and thus, Russophone fanfiction authors renegotiate and rewrite the world of the original *Harry Potter* series.

There is significantly more research on Harry Potter fanfiction in English than in Russian, and the topics of these scholarly works also differ significantly. The English body of research tends to explore notions of homosexuality, diversity and women’s voices within the fanfictions, while the only existing published research in Russian explores storyline archetypes and narratives in Russophone fanfiction. Pugh’s article titled “The Evolving Harry Potter Canon.” In *Harry Potter and Beyond: On J. K. Rowling’s Fantasies and Other Fictions*” explores how Anglophone fanfiction authors ignore the heteronormative frames of the original series and choose to rewrite characters as queer as a way of dealing with lack of diversity in the original series. As Pugh states, “Slash attempts to resolve the troubling conundrum of queer invisibility at Hogwarts [...] for all of Rowling’s supportive statements about LGBTQ+ rights, readers do not see queer students at Hogwarts in the series’ seven novels, and so slash grants fans the opportunity to [...] overwrite the absences of her fictional world” (Pugh, 2020, p. 105). Thus, the

reason for recurring themes of love and personal growth in Anglophone body of fanfiction is because Anglophone readers are focused on visibility and diversity, and while doing that they care less about the corrupt institutions and enormous societal changes. It is about personal journey and self-acceptance rather than anything else.

In a similar way, the issue of diversity is also central for Anglophone fans as they use fanfiction to change the race, nationality and the appearance of canonical characters in order to increase the diversity and visibility that they do not see in the original series: “with white characters filling the vast majority of major roles, [they] can create a world in which Harry is Southeast Asian, or Hermione is explicitly described as black, or any possible permutation of character and race/ethnicity that they desire” (Pugh, 2020, p. 106). This shows that Russophone and Anglophone fanfictions have very different focus and the issues that they deem in need of rewriting and reconstructing.

Elzaveta Kasilova in her recent article “Reinterpreting Archetypes in Russian Harry Potter Fanfiction” focuses on how Russian fans understand and interpret the storytelling archetypes of the original series in their own fanfictions. According to her Harry’s interpretation might be intertwined with the traditions of Russian classic literature, portraying him as a “small ordinary man,” or there is an interpretation where Harry is used as an instrument by adults such as Dumbledore (Kasilova 2025, p. 6). These connections are not arbitrary as she believes fanfiction to be “fundamental texts that help us comprehend reception processes in unique cultural contexts” and thus shows how the Russian reinterpretations of the archetypes in Harry Potter fanfiction are deeply embedded in culture (Kasilova 2025, p. 2).

She introduces Dumbledore’s image that has gone through several changes in the Russophone fandom as she states, “In 2005, having examined the build-up of Rowling’s books,

the Russian fans anna_y and Catherine proposed a theory they called The Albus Dumbledore Big Game 25, which holds that many of Harry's adventures are not casual occurrences, but actions planned by the headmaster in his long-standing project" (Kasilova 2025, p. 3). The notion of Dumbledore being an "invisible hand," a puppeteer behind all of Harry's misfortunes is still popular nowadays, and this argument shows that this narrative interpretation has been around for a very long while. Thus, in the Russophone fandom, there has already been a shift towards a different perception of Dumbledore, which explains the established general trends in fanfiction which we can see nowadays.

As Kasilova concludes "Russian fanfiction writers rework the Harry Potter novels from their own cultural contexts. For example, they relate Rowling's plots to aspects of Russia's modern history, canonical texts of Russian literature, and the Russian public's collective memory of the Soviet past" (Kasilova 2025, p.18). Her article shows the overall trends in the Russophone fanfiction body and hints at intertextual references and folklore archetypes that those reinterpretations might be connected to. Thus, she argues that the society that the fanfiction body is based on has a great influence on how some parts of collective beliefs, fear and discourses might manifest in the works themselves. Although mine and Kasilova's argument aligns at some points, she analyzes only Russophone fanfictions through archetypes in folktale described in Propp's *Morphology of Folktale* (1928). Thus, she categorizes Harry's adventures and characters in *Harry Potter* according to character archetypes described Propp's work, while my work focuses on attitudes towards broader structures such as institutions, authorities and historical timeline itself, rather than individual characters and their representations.

This thesis differs from all the works discussed above as unlike Borenstein's work its main focus is the research of fanfiction, while Borenstein focuses on various forms of media

such as video clips, memes and songs. He mentions fanfiction in his research briefly but does not delve into it, while this research will. There is a wide corpus of scholarship on Anglophone Harry Potter fanfiction, yet there is almost no Russophone fanfiction research. Kasilova's work does a great comparative analysis of main character archetypes across both bodies of fanfiction, yet it does not connect it to larger media space in the post-Soviet Russophone space, which my research will do. Her article analyzes various character archetypes, yet only connects these archetypes to famous character archetypes in Russian classical literature, such as an archetype of a "little man" character in Gogol's works. This thesis focuses on connecting the broader trends in worldbuilding and attitude towards institutions in Russophone fanfiction to post-Soviet self-consciousness post-Soviet media space such as online web novels and popular sentiments. Thus, this research will combine a deep analysis of fanfiction narratives, as well as connect it to theories on post-Soviet memory and cultural consciousness using Svetlana Boym and Sergei Oushakine's theoretical frameworks, which all the above-mentioned works did explore.

Chapter 1: The Difference in Depiction of Institutions and Authority Across Fandoms

The trend of disliking the characters that were depicted in a positive light in *Harry Potter* such as Dumbledore and Ron Weasley in Russophone fandom stems from something deeper than just individual dislike. Russophone fandom reconstructs the interpretation of the systems of power in a negative way, and as a result, the characters that are close to this system of power are also represented in a negative light. Dumbledore, while being a Headmaster of Hogwarts is also a Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot and a Supreme Mugwump of the International Confederation of Wizards. Thus, he could be the figure with the most power in the Wizarding

World, a face of authority and institutional power. The Weasley family, who are favored by Dumbledore in the canon, are also seen as people who are close to this institutional power and are willing to do everything to stay close to it.

This chapter will argue that Russophone fanfiction often reconstructs power figures and institutions as manipulative, corrupt and fundamentally dangerous. Authority figures as well as institutions are portrayed as deceptive forces with hidden goals that threaten one's autonomy or safety. This trend is less consistent across the Anglophone fanfictions as their institutions and figures of authority are presented as imperfect, but stable structures that still need some change but are trustworthy overall. This chapter will analyze the recurring tropes such as brainwashing by Ministry of Magic or Dumbledore, institutional conspiracy, Slytherin and old traditions rehabilitation. I will argue that in Russophone fanfiction institutional authority becomes reframed as something unstable, untrustworthy, and dangerous, rather than something stable or something to rely on.

This chapter will be drawing on theories of post-Soviet cultural memory of paranoia, conspiracy and distrust developed by Svetlana Boym and Sergei Oushakine. Although these authors did not write on fanfiction or media specifically, the concepts they developed could still be applied to the way that narratives in Russophone fanfiction are interpreted.

Svetlana Boym in her book *The Future of Nostalgia* introduces a phenomenon called “restorative nostalgia.” This phenomenon, as she states, has “two main narrative plots—the restoration of origins and the conspiracy theory, characteristic of the most extreme cases of contemporary nationalism fed on right-wing popular culture. The conspiratorial worldview reflects a nostalgia for a transcendental cosmology and a simple pre- modern conception of good and evil” (Boym, 2001, p. 64). The way authority is presented in Russophone fanfiction is

centered around these two narratives, as Slytherins are usually depicted as good since they are trying to preserve the origins of wizarding traditions, and institutions and Dumbledore are trying to prevent it, as their actions are laced with conspiracy theories.

Morally grey characters or any sense of ambiguity is excluded in such thinking as Boym states that “conspiratorial worldview is based on a single transhistorical plot, a Manichaean battle of good and evil and the inevitable scapegoating of the mythical enemy. Ambivalence, the complexity of history and the specificity of modern circumstances is thus erased, and modern history is seen as a fulfillment of ancient prophecy” (Boym, 2001, p. 64). In this worldview, the image of a “home” is “forever under siege, requiring defense against the plotting enemy” (Boym, 2001, p. 64). In Russophone fanfiction, the wizarding world is protected by the traditions and the old Slytherin families, while being attacked by Dumbledore and the institutions that want to destroy these traditions and it is depicted as a battle of good and evil.

In a restorative nostalgia, home is rebuilt, yet it needs constant protection: “They” conspire against “our” homecoming, hence “we” have to conspire against “them” in order to restore “our” imagined community” (Boym, 2001, p. 64). There is a sense of “enemy” lurking around and paranoia as one needs to be able to protect themselves and their home.

This distrust in the authorities or institutions is expressed not only in media or fandoms, but it is also a feeling that lingers after the society has experienced a collective shock or a disaster. Sergei Oushakine writes about the nature of this feeling in his book titled *The Patriotism of Despair. Nation, War, and Loss in Russia*. As he states, “Amplified by the corrupt privatization of national assets and a massive transformation of existing norms and conventions, this collapse produced a lasting impact on individual and collective identities, modes of social exchange, and forms of symbolization” (Oushakine, 2009, p.8). The aftermath of the collapse of

the Soviet Union, and the hardships of the post-Soviet world has left people with distrust towards such stable structures as institutions, as history showed how these institutions can crumble and fall in an instant.

The collapse of the institutions after the Soviet rule left a narrative behind, that is still being told in various retellings. Oushakine interviewed people of the Altai and one of them stated “Today everyone lies; everyone steals. The whole country steals because of our [leadership’s] politics. . . . In short, some people are good at stealing, while others work for those who steal” (Oushakine, 2009, p. 38). In this interpretation, the entire power structure within the society is positioned as corrupt and evil.

Next paragraphs will analyze a few Russophone and Anglophone fanfictions in depth. These fanfictions were chosen because they represent how Russophone works rewrite authority as being evil and untrustworthy, while also rewriting traditionalist old families of Slytherin to be one thing that is “real,” thus the only societal structure that one can trust.

There is a stark contrast in how Anglophone fanfiction depicts Draco Malfoy and other traditionalist families as backwards and non-progressive, while Russophone fandom depicts them as saviors of magic and as the only power structure one can trust. In the third most liked fanfic on the AO3, a website for Anglophone works, titled “Oh God Not Again” by Sarah 1284, Harry Potter expresses his views on Draco’s family and his political views: “Malfoy could probably do quite a bit to taint my Hogwarts experience if he so chose, and I know that he endorses Death Eater views, but he's eleven; he doesn't really understand it” (Sarah1284 “Oh God Not Again”, 4). A stark contrast to it is a fanfic of Ficbook which states:

Лили Эванс может сколько угодно твердить о равных правах всех со всеми, но магия устроена иначе. Ей нет дела до магловских идей о справедливом мироустройстве. [...] Наш род не слишком стар, нам далеко до древности и могущества тех же Блэков, но мы всегда жили магией, хранили и приумножали её,

и до сегодняшнего дня нам нечего было стыдиться” (Kukulkan, “В борьбе обретешь ты...”, 8).²

In the first case, all the characters were seen as independent actors, who did not necessarily follow in their parents’ footsteps, however the Russian fanfic depicts every person as a part of the bigger “magic” system where a family is at the forefront as every member of it is responsible for preserving and continuing the line of the wizards. This is a common trend across all the Russophone fanfictions, as people are perceived not as individuals, but as parts of broader systems such as magic lines and families. With this, there is a sense of distrust towards the outside world or anything that could harm the immediate tight circles of family and magical connections. This distrust is a unique phenomenon that is only applicable to Russophone works.

In the Anglophone works the individual prevails over the collective. The importance is placed on narratives of interpersonal relationships and choices made by individuals, rather than collective identities. In “Oh God Not Again” by Sarah1284, Harry is discussing families and their blood status with his friends, and he discovers that Seamus’ mom did not tell his dad that she was wizard until the marriage and Harry says:

The others laughed, but Harry frowned. It had seemed so amusing the first time around, but with what he'd heard of Snape's upbringing because Eileen Prince had done exactly the same thing... "You're lucky," Harry found himself saying. Everyone looked over at him, confused. "You're lucky your dad took it so well. He could have easily panicked and left. Or stayed and resented your mother for lying to him and you for trapping him there. You're lucky that your father's a good man (Sarah1284 “Oh God Not Again”, 2).

² “Lily Evans can talk all she wants about equal rights for everyone, but magic works differently. She doesn't care about Muggle ideas about a just world order. [...] Our family isn't particularly old, we're nowhere near the antiquity and power of the Blacks, but we've always lived by magic, preserved and enhanced it, and until today, we've had nothing to be ashamed of” [translation my own].

In this case even if the matter is about blood status, what is at the forefront is Seamus' father making this choice out of individual convictions, not because he is a part of a bigger system. In such a system, the blood-purity seems irrelevant as Harry thinks:

You'll find that **Blood Purity**, like many things in the Wizarding World, **makes no sense** whatsoever. Wizards, of course, don't seem to notice this and continue to act like it's the gospel truth. It's basically the school of thought that only those who are pureblooded have a right to be wizards and everyone else is **inherently inferior**. They won't actually give any reason as to why they think that, save occasionally someone mentioning that Muggle-borns live the first eleven years of their life in a **completely different culture**. Note that that is exactly like saying that someone who was raised in a **different country** is inherently inferior because they don't understand **British ways** (Sarah1284 "Oh God Not Again", 4).

The Anglophone narratives about blood-purity are negative since they are discriminatory and seem to not make any sense as what people really value are individual qualities and abilities. Sometimes the blood-purity ideas are taken to the absolute and are connected to horrible narratives on inbreeding: "'Oh, don't tell me they..." Hermione trailed off again, looking slightly green. "You know what, I think I have my own philosophy regarding marriage: 'If you know how closely related you are to someone, you're too closely related to date'" (Sarah1284 "Oh God Not Again", 4). In the Anglophone space, the mission that Voldemort was after is seen as atrocious, and the pure-blood families are seen as old-fashioned and oppressive. This is not the case in the Russophone fandom.

In the Russophone fandom any mention of an external threat is then continued on with the narrative that the only trustworthy party is the close family that are connected to one another by blood. Paranoia is so strong that even measures like genocide against enemy races of magical creatures are seen as acceptable as in "Целитель" (Healer) by Gezenshaft, the main character thinks in the face of the threat from the goblins the only solution is to exterminate them all:

"Если верить памяти эльфа, то есть решение касательно этой злобной расы, оно же

единственно правильное — геноцид. Ради всеобщего блага, разумеется”³ (Gezenshaft, “Целитель”, chapter 2).

The decision is taken lightly as the threat to the general public should be exterminated so that the others do not live in constant fear and distrust. In this type of the system, there is always a division into groups and being in a pureblood group is seen as favorable as they still have their traditions, old knowledge and blood ties which reduces the risk of betrayal. In “Целитель” Draco Malfoy, a member of one of the pureblood family states:

Не дело чистокровной юной леди якшаться с грязнокровкой. — Ей не замуж за него выходить, а грамотный волшебник всегда полезен. — Полезен... Т-ц... — шикнул куда-то в сторону Малфой [...] Какая с него польза? Ни родословной, ни денег, ни влияния. То ли дело мой отец... Тео лишь удрученно покачал головой, а Драко со своими вышибалами отправился занимать более выгодное место для просмотра матча ⁴(Gezenshaft, “Целитель”, chapter 13).

Being in one of the pureblood families provides one with history, money and power in the society, however those are not the only valuable things that can be gained from being born into a pureblood old family as it is stated:

“Окончат Хогвартс, и лидерство постепенно перейдёт к Драко и другим детям из наших семей. Где взять денег грязнокровке для качественной, редкой и нужной литературы, чтобы дальше развиваться? Куда пойти работать, где бы тебя взяли учиться? Куда податься на учёбу? Какому мастеру вообще нужны магглорождённые, с которых и взять-то нечего? И подобных вопросов очень и очень много. Каков, в среднем, потолок? Аврор, а при упорстве и немалом везении — хороший боевик лет через тридцать” ⁵(Gezenshaft, “Целитель”, chapter 18).

³ If the elf's memory is correct, there is a solution for this evil race, and it's the only correct one—genocide. For the greater good, of course.

⁴ It's not for a pureblood young lady to consort with a Mudblood. "She wouldn't marry him, besides a competent wizard is always useful." "Useful... Tsk..." Malfoy hissed somewhere off to the side. "What use is he? No pedigree, no money, no influence. My father is a different story..." Theo merely shook his head dejectedly, and Draco and his bouncers went off to find a better spot to watch the match.

⁵ They'll graduate from Hogwarts, and leadership will gradually pass to Draco and the other children from our families. Where will a Mudblood get money for high-quality, rare, and necessary literature to further develop herself? Where will she go to work, where will someone teach her? Where will she go to study? What kind of wizard would even need Muggleborns, who have nothing to offer? And there are so many such questions. What's the

It is a systematic issue as in that society being in the pureblood side of the party allows one to study from the masters that are connected to those systems, while muggle-born who came from the non-wizarding side do not have access to any of those.

However, it is not only an issue of the privileged and poor, it runs deeper as in “Месть Слизерина” (Slytherin’s Revenge) by darketo31, a character from the pureblood families conducts a ritual that saves the wizarding world as magic starts to leave its premises: “Лорд Малфой всегда держал данное им слово. И поэтому он стоял перед сложенным лично костром, находящимся в центре рунного круга. Он положил последнее полено и придирчиво оглядел результат. Сложенные шестигранным колодцем, поленья лежали прочно. Каждая грань имела свою символику: огонь, воздух, вода, земля, жизнь, смерть. Руны вокруг костра означали жизнь, смерть, память, благодарность, дар, путь”⁶ (darketo31, “Месть Слизерина, chapter 19). He uses the ancient knowledge his pureblood family has preserved for centuries to save the magic, the essence of magic, in itself. When a character betrays those centuries old traditions and power accumulates through the collective effort of the generations, for the elusive ideas about equality or politics, they are punished by the narrative.

This is exactly what happens to Sirius Black, who betrayed his pureblood origins, traditions and family for the sake of Dumbledore’s ideals about equality which are frowned upon in the Russophone space:

Сириус Орион Блэк, - начал речь Найджелус Блэк, - за все твои поступки, недостойные потомка Рода Блэк, ты лишен всех своих прав. Ты не можешь более

average highest position for them? An Auror, and with persistence and a fair bit of luck, a good fighter in about thirty years.

⁶ Lord Malfoy always kept his word. And so he stood before the fire he had personally built, located in the center of the rune circle. He placed the last log and meticulously examined the result. Stacked in a hexagonal shape, the logs lay securely. Each facet had its own symbolism: fire, air, water, earth, life, death. The runes around the fire signified life, death, remembrance, gratitude, gift, and the path.

пользоваться Именем и Магией Рода Блэк. Сейфы для тебя закрыты. Пошел вон, безродный! - после этих слов его выкинуло на улицу, словно мусор. Лежа в луже, он мог только в ужасе наблюдать, как дом Блэков исчез. Полное поражение в правах⁷ (darketo31, "Месть Слизерина, chapter 17).

The worst thing to be in the Russophone fanfictions is "безродный" thus, without roots to their family or history. There is in general the sense of "us" versus "them", where "us" are the pureblood families trying to preserve their traditions and "them" are newcomers, who do not have family history, do not know who they are and where they came from.

In "Вперед в прошлое" ([Let's go] Forward Into the Past) Malfoy instantly wants to become friends with Harry as soon as he finds out that he belongs to the Potters: "— О, так ты из наших, — тягучий голос Малфоя потеплел, — так ведь?"⁸ (Бакуко, "Вперед в прошлое", chapter 2). The change of demeanor is explained by the fact that Harry knows where he came from and knows the importance of preserving magic if he comes from an old family.

However, Potter is influenced by Dumbledore's ideas about opening up to the muggle world and this Draco cannot forgive as he threatens him

Малфой отстранился, опасно прищурился, а его рука легла Гарри на плечо, удерживая его прижатым к стене. Большой палец коснулся обнаженного горла, и на секунду мальчику показалось, что к его шее приставили кинжал. — Я знаю, что ты думаешь обо мне. А ты знаешь, что я считаю тебя тупым болваном, который мог общаться с настоящими волшебниками, а предпочел марать руки о грязнокровку и Уизли, которые забыли цену своей крови. И да, я выше всего ставлю мою кровь и традиции, можешь подавиться своими выкриками⁹ (Бакуко, "Вперед в прошлое", chapter 26).

⁷ "Sirius Orion Black," Nigellus Black began, "for all your actions unworthy of a descendant of the Black family, you have been stripped of all your rights. You can no longer use the Black family name or magic. The safes are closed to you. Get out, you bastard!" After these words, he was thrown out into the street like trash. Lying in a puddle, he could only watch in horror as the Black family home disappeared. A complete loss of rights.

⁸ "Oh, so you're one of ours," Malfoy's voice warmed up, "is that it?"

⁹ Malfoy pulled back, his eyes narrowed dangerously, and his hand landed on Harry's shoulder, pinning him against the wall. His thumb brushed over his exposed throat, and for a second the boy felt like a dagger was pressed to his neck. "I know what you think of me. And you know that I consider you a dumb idiot who could have associated

The fact that he thinks himself as the “real” wizard while Ron, who is pureblood but forgot about his traditions and rituals of preserving magic is considered to be a traitor, tells us that in the Russophone universe the preservation of traditions is the most important mission of every wizard and if it is not accomplished then they are scorned and judged. There is a sense of absolute loyalty to the party considered as “us” as one of the pureblood family members kills another one and Draco is livid as he states “Я слизеринец, — выдавил Драко сквозь зубы, — а ты убийца. Ты напал на своих, а это хуже, чем быть грязнокровкой”¹⁰ (Бакуко, “Вперед в прошлое”, chapter 29). In this case, as someone breaks the trust among those old pureblood families, they are considered to be even worse than the muggle-born as the loyalty and trust are the pillars of the pureblood community in the Russophone fandom’s canons.

Thus, the sense of distrust is underlined: “Всегда нужно быть настороже. Не стоит забывать о том, что ваши союзники могут в любой момент превратиться в ваших врагов”¹¹ (Бакуко, “Вперед в прошлое”, chapter 31). This sense of distrust towards one’s “side” is a common occurrence across all the fanfiction on the Russophone part of the fandom.

On the Anglophone side of the fandom, the sense of distrust and paranoia and division to choosing “sides” is almost close to none. In “Oh God Not Again” by Sarah1284, Harry thanks Ron for being his friend through it all:

Harry put a hand on his best friend's shoulder. "Ron, look at me." Ron did, reluctantly. "You gave me your friendship when I had no one. The only other person I even knew was Hagrid, and he had to be nice to me, he was a representative of the school and knew my parents. You didn't have to be and even though it took a bit, you remain

with real wizards but chose to dirty his hands with a Mudblood and Weasleys who have forgotten the value of their blood. And yes, I value my blood and traditions above all else, you can choke on your screams."

¹⁰ "I'm a Slytherin," Draco said through clenched teeth, "and you're a murderer. You attacked your own people, and that's worse than being a Mudblood."

¹¹ You always need to be on guard. Don't forget that your allies can turn into your enemies at any moment.

one of the only people here who can see past my scar and you have no idea how much that meant to me (Sarah1284, “Oh God Not Again”, chapter 6).

Harry appreciates Ron for being his friend and for seeing past his family relations, past his status of a hero and savior and for seeing Harry as a person. In the Russophone fandom it never happens, as everyone being a potential enemy, Ron is also seen as someone who is dreaming of gaining something from Harry and thus deceiving him. He is portrayed as even worse than Draco Malfoy, who is a blood purist who bullies Harry:

Наследник и единственный сын в семье Малфой, очень богатой, влиятельной чистокровной семьи волшебников. Самоуверенный, трусливый, наглый. Говорят, негласный лидер факультета. Узли, который рыжий, с Гриффиндора — шестой сын бедной чистокровной семьи. Вспыльчивый, тупой, наглый, ленивый, завистливый. По мнению большинства — паразитирует на Поттере под видом дружбы¹² (Gezenshaft, “Целитель”, chapter 3).

Draco’s cowardice is bleak as compared to Ron, who is portrayed as someone who wishes to gain favors from being a hero’s friend. The distrust towards Ron or any other characters portrayed in Russophone space is even considered weak in comparison to the distrust towards authorities:

Да-да, а иначе, судя по намёкам, будет применено совершенно легальное заклинание, и мы сами с радостью побежим отдавать сына в Хогвартс. Не нравится мне подобное принуждение и безвыходность. И куда смотрит правительство? — Как будто у нас что-то не так. И, дорогой, ты правда думаешь, что правительство не в курсе о волшебниках? — Просто мне бы не хотелось к чему-то принуждать Гектора¹³ (Gezenshaft, “Целитель”, chapter 2).

¹² The heir and only son of the Malfoy family, a very wealthy and influential pureblood wizarding family. Arrogant, cowardly, and audacious. He's said to be the unofficial leader of the house. Weasley, the red-haired one, is a Gryffindor—the sixth son of a poor pureblood family. He's hot-tempered, stupid, arrogant, lazy, and envious. Most people believe he's been exploiting Potter under the guise of friendship.

¹³ Yes, yes, otherwise, judging by the hints, a perfectly legal spell will be used, and we ourselves will happily rush to send our son to Hogwarts. I don't like this kind of coercion and hopelessness. And where is the government looking? - As if there's something wrong with us. And, my dear, do you really think the government doesn't know about wizards? - I just wouldn't want to force Hector into anything.

When Hector's parents, who is the main character of the story, think about sending their son to Hogwarts, they realize that the government is capable of anything, and they can send Hector to school while brainwashing his parents. The sense of helplessness and threat from the authorities is overwhelming across almost all of the Russophone works. The enemy is not only the authorities, but they are also everywhere as after visiting the bank with the goblins, Hector asks: "Я изучил книги Гермионы за первый и второй курсы. Теперь меня снедает вопрос. Что побудило волшебников не только оставить в живых расу разумных и кровожадных хищников, но и передать в их руки управление финансовыми потоками?"¹⁴ (Gezenshaft, "Целитель", chapter 2). The possibility of goblins taking over the wizarding society is also widely discussed across Russophone works, and more than several ones of them suggest exterminating them all since they are a big threat.

Not only other types of magical creatures, but also within wizards there is a sense of looming threat:

Из-за этого конфликта нам нужно «держать руку на пульсе», и если есть желание дружить и общаться с учениками этих факультетов, всегда держать в уме возможность заносчивой агрессии от гриффиндорцев, и хитрой подставы от слизеринцев, ведь, к всеобщей печали, наш факультет многие считают логовом недалёких тупиц¹⁵ (Gezenshaft, "Целитель", chapter 3).

Gryffindor, Slytherin, Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw all seem to possess a threat towards the main character, and one should always be ready for a confrontation. Even the house elves whose main

¹⁴ I've studied Hermione's first- and second-year books. Now I'm consumed with the question: What motivated wizards to not only spare a race of intelligent and bloodthirsty predators, but also to hand over financial control to them?

¹⁵ Because of this conflict, we need to be on guard, and if we want to be friends and communicate with students of these faculties, we must always keep in mind the possibility of arrogant aggression from the Gryffindors and a cunning set-up from the Slytherins, because, to everyone's sorrow, many consider our faculty to be a den of narrow-minded blockheads.

goal is to prepare food and take care of the wizards are portrayed as magic-sucking parasites:

“Голод даже человека может подтолкнуть к необдуманным поступкам. Что уж говорить о существах, цель и смысл существования которых в утолении этого голода. А тут целый замок школьников”¹⁶ (Gezenshaft, “Целитель”, chapter 5). And when one of the student states that Dumbledore will save them, the other one replies “У обычных людей есть много поговорок, общий смысл которых сводится к фразе: “В высшие силы верь, а сам не плошай”¹⁷ (Gezenshaft, “Целитель”, chapter 5). Thus, one can trust in the divine that might help and save, yet one should always rely on themselves with so many threats and constant paranoia around.

Everyone is constantly plotting and scheming and especially the authorities such as Minister of Magic:

Фадж — боится собственной тени. Он так боится, что Сириус умудрится подорвать репутацию его и министерства, что готов убить его на месте без суда и следствия. Под предлогом того, что тот охотится на Поттера, он согнал этих проклятых тварей к Хогвартсу и ни за какие деньги, услуги и обещания не желает менять их на авроров. — Ведь люди умеют разговаривать, и не дай Мерлин, заговорят с Блэком. — Именно. Будь любезен, передай Драко мою настоятельную просьбу. Пусть даже не думает шляться по замку в одиночку и даже в небольшой компании¹⁸ (Gezenshaft, “Целитель”, chapter 6).

Here Harry theorizes that the dementors in school are here not because the public is scared of Sirius Black, but because the Minister is afraid Sirius will tell the public he is innocent, and his

¹⁶ Hunger can push even humans to reckless actions. To say nothing of creatures whose purpose and meaning in existence is to satisfy that hunger. And here's a whole castle of schoolchildren.

¹⁷ Ordinary people have many sayings, the general meaning of which boils down to the phrase: “Believe in higher powers, but trust yourself the most.”

¹⁸ Fudge is afraid of his own shadow. He's so afraid that Sirius will manage to undermine his and the Ministry's reputation that he's willing to kill him on the spot, without trial. Under the pretext that Sirius is hunting Potter, he drove those damned creatures to Hogwarts and refuses to exchange them for Aurors for any amount of money, favors, or promises. "After all, people can talk, and Merlin forbid, they'll talk to Black." "Exactly. Be kind enough to convey my urgent request to Draco. He's not even to think of wandering around the castle alone, or even in a small group.

position will be lost. In this world no one acts according to their conscience, everyone is constantly plotting for their own survival and monetary gain.

The plotting is so intense, one cannot even relax while eating: “Проверяют еду на посторонние примеси: яды, зелья и так далее. А то, мало ли что могут бросить или подлить в тарелку. - Интересно, что это за заклинание? - Если хочешь, я тебя могу научить, - Невилл, смутившись, посмотрел на Гарри”¹⁹ (darketo31, “Месть Слизерина, chapter 3). They need to be on constant guard and check for potions in their food as this is the society full of schemers and enemies. The authorities even exploit unwilling parties for their own schemes as one of the house elves tells Harry “Злой директор хозяин всех эльфов Хогвартса! Добби живет и работает в Хогвартсе! Он не может противиться приказам директора! - Добби попытался удариться головой об пол, но Гарри остановил его одним властным "стоять!”²⁰ (darketo31, “Месть Слизерина, chapter 5). So, when Dumbledore orders the elves to harm Harry for the sake of his own evil plots, the elves should do as he says, which shows that even if there are people who do not want to hurt someone, one should always be on guard cause authorities can always coerce them as well.

One cannot trust books and history as well: “Книги пишут люди. Люди могут ошибаться. Людям можно промыть мозги. Людей можно взять под контроль, стереть память или вложить ложные воспоминания. Умелая пропаганда идей национализма привела к процветанию нацизма и Второй Мировой”²¹ (Gezenshaft, “Целитель”, chapter 2).

¹⁹ They check food for foreign interventions: poisons, potions, and so on. You never know what they might throw or pour into your plate. “I wonder what kind of spell that is?” “If you want, I can teach you,” Neville, embarrassed, looked at Harry.

²⁰ The evil headmaster is the master of all the Hogwarts elves! Dobby lives and works at Hogwarts! He can't disobey the headmaster's orders! Dobby tried to bang his head on the floor, but Harry stopped him with one assertive "Stop!"

²¹ Books are written by people. People can make mistakes. People can be brainwashed. People can be controlled, their memories erased, or implanted with false memories. The skillful propaganda of nationalist ideas led to the flourishing of Nazism and World War II.

The paranoia is so deep that one cannot even trust their own mind as they might have been brainwashed by propaganda. And the worst part of it is that everyone is susceptible to this propaganda:

Однако книги одобрены Министерством Магии и в них не может быть неправды. Один человек с промытыми мозгами написал книгу, другой такой же выпустил в печать, третий пропустил через цензуру, четвёртый сертифицировал. Почему нет? А ещё есть взятки, шантаж, да что угодно! [...]— А почему бы и нет? Ты слышала такое выражение: «Историю пишут победители»?²² (Gezenshaft, “Целитель”, chapter 2).

Thus, nothing written or said can be trusted, as people who were victims of brainwashing can easily publish the works and the brainwashing campaign will continue for centuries and no one is safe from it.

In this harsh reality where one cannot trust anything and the authorities are corrupt, the only thing one can trust is something that has provable viable history such as the old pureblood families and their tradition.

Although they are judged for being purist in the Anglophone space, in the Russophone space those families are perceived to be the only thing that is “real” and is not tainted by betrayal and brainwashing. Those families have saved and passed on their traditions for centuries and it was not easy as in one of the fanfics Harry tries to enter the pureblood Black family’s mansion to finally see who he is and who his ancestors were:

Загубить всё то, что они добывали тяжким трудом, потом и кровью. В итоге мы пришли к выводу, что мне стоит попытаться найти кольцо Блэков. Без него все остальные споры не имеют никакого смысла. Дом меня принял как одного из

²² But books are approved by the Ministry of Magic, and they can't be untrue. “One brainwashed person wrote a book, another published it, a third censored it, a fourth certified it.” “Why not?” “And then there are bribes, blackmail, whatever!” [...] “And why not? Have you heard the expression, “History is written by the victors”?”

Блэков, потому я могу приходить сюда, хоть и к очень многому не имею доступа попросту из-за отсутствия кольца²³ (Gezenshaft, “Целитель”, chapter 7).

The mansion is a manifestation of magic itself as it has lived through centuries of wizards of that family working hard to preserve magic and save their bloodline, thus mansion becomes “alive” too, and this shows us that pureblood families are close to the essence of the magic itself, the only trustworthy thing in the entire world full of enemies:

Всё те же многие поколения Блэков жили здесь, колдовали, создавали свои чары, навешивали различные защиты и прочие ухищрения. Со временем любое подобное жилище превращается в этакий артефакт, в котором все эти заклинания, детские выбросы магии и прочее колдовство сливается в нечто единое, монументальное²⁴ (Gezenshaft, “Целитель”, chapter 7).

In the light of those traditions, those who do not come from the old family of wizards are seen as outsiders who will eventually destroy the system so meticulously built by those families for centuries: “Безродные не понимали и не принимали. Появлялись и редкие союзники, но куда больше — предатели, что побоялись мнения общественности. Побоялись сохранить свою историю, нравы и традиции. Отсюда и идут традиции Рода — знать не меньше предков, совершенствоваться в магии, тёмной, светлой, розовой-в-крапинку, не важно”²⁵ (Gezenshaft, “Целитель”, chapter 7).

The muggle-born do not understand the importance of acquired capital through generations and as the world turned against the old families, they all wanted to destroy the

²³ To ruin everything they'd earned through hard work, sweat, and blood. In the end, we came to the conclusion that I should try to find the Black ring. Without it, all other arguments are pointless. The House has accepted me as one of the Blacks, so I can come here, even though I have no access to much simply because I don't have the ring.

²⁴ The same many generations of Blacks lived here, casting spells, creating their own charms, erecting various wards and other tricks. Over time, any such dwelling turns into a kind of artifact, in which all these spells, childhood outbursts of magic, and other sorcery merge into something unified, monumental.

²⁵ The rootless didn't understand or accept them. A few allies emerged, but far more traitors, who feared public opinion. They were afraid to preserve their history, customs, and traditions. Hence the traditions of the kin, to know no less than their ancestors, to master magic, dark, light, pink-and-speckled, it didn't matter.

traditions and the magic that was accumulated through centuries. The pureblood families, as they have accumulated magic through centuries perceive it as something far more important than the elusive ideals of equality and love: “Чтобы пронести и приумножить наследие сквозь века, не растерять и не разбавить вымышленной псевдо-моралью и надуманными принципами. Чтобы не поддаваться тлетворному влиянию маггловских идей о каком-то там свете, любви и всепрощении. Это — чистота крови. Это — сохранение и преумножение наследия, без деления на «можно» и «нельзя»”²⁶ (Gezenshaft, “Целитель”, chapter 7).

The magic and traditions are seen as being above the principles and ideas about right and wrong, as magic just exists, it is eternal, if one tries to practice and preach it for centuries. The fanfic states that it should not be understood as a discriminatory vicious thing as

Чистота крови — её нельзя понимать буквально. Это куда как большее, чем просто родословная. Тому, кто не имеет предков, не держал в руках древние книги, не чувствовал магии десятков поколений, их чаяний и стремлений, надежд, боли и разочарований, никогда не понять, не оценить и не принять этот дар. Нет большего предательства, чем наплевать и выбросить на помойку своё родство, семью, всё это. Даже магглы не опустятся до осквернения могил, хоть и не имеют ничего и рядом стоящего с подобной родственной связью²⁷ (Gezenshaft, “Целитель”, chapter 7).

The connection one has with their family history in this wizarding world is unfathomable and rises above all the other institutions as it connects one with the real history and real power that the closest blood relatives have acquired for them, and thus trusting Dumbledore and betraying

²⁶ To carry and enhance the legacy through the centuries, not to lose it or dilute it with fictitious pseudo-morals and contrived principles. To resist the corrupting influence of Muggle adjacent ideas about some kind of light, love, and forgiveness. This is blood purity. This is preserving and enhancing the legacy, without dividing it into "right" and "wrong."

²⁷ Blood purity—it shouldn't be understood literally. It's far more than just a lineage. Those who have no ancestors, haven't held the ancient books in their hands, haven't felt the magic of dozens of generations, their hopes and aspirations, their pain and disappointments will never understand, appreciate, or accept this gift. There's no greater betrayal than to disregard and throw away your kinship, your family, all of it. Even Muggles wouldn't stoop to desecrating graves, even though they have nothing comparable to such a familial connection.

one's family and believing in morals that Dumbledore preaches, is the worst crime possible according to the Russophone fanfictions, as in the world where one cannot trust anyone, they can trust the blood ties and centuries of history that cannot be altered.

In the Anglophone fandom the blood ties are considered as a part of the outdated system that discriminates against certain groups of people and are frowned upon. The Anglophone side of the fandom trusts in those exact elusive ideas about equality and they do not have the same sense of lingering paranoia about the authorities. The image of the Ministry of Magic in "All the Young Dudes", the most liked fanfiction on AO3 in the *Harry Potter* series, is complex, as it is both of an institution that is stable and eternal as well as of an institution that can be oppressive towards minority groups. When Sirius shows a time turner to Remus, a powerful artifact that allows for time travel, Jaime interrupts them and says "They're illegal [...] Without ministry permission. And really, really dangerous" (MsKingBean89, *All the Young Dudes*, p. 368). The Ministry is seen as a pillar of society, as something that has authority over privately possessed artifacts. However, it does not always exercise this power in the best way as it has been discriminatory towards the minorities such as werewolves: "I mean, you have to admit, the ministry has handled lycanthropy pretty poorly, so far. When we win this war, there's a chance to make things better. For all wizards. Even half-breeds" (MsKingBean89, *All the Young Dudes*, p. 745). It is not open and encouraging enough when it comes to talking about those minorities or protecting them: "Anything related to werewolves or "unidentified dark creatures." There was very little in there - James maintained that this was because the ministry didn't want to frighten anyone" (MsKingBean89, *All the Young Dudes*, p. 391).

However, despite its flaws in the way it functions, people still maintain trust in the Ministry and believe that they will come to the right decisions. As someone who has been

working closely with the Ministry, Dumbledore is also trusted: “If you think Dumbledore moved heaven and earth to get you an education just to see you end up no better than a squib, then you don’t know Dumbledore, my boy” (MsKingBean89, *All the Young Dudes*, p. 391). He is seen as an authority figure who fights for the werewolf Lupin and gives him an opportunity to gain an education. Similar to that, despite the volatile political situation, the Ministry is still seen as a desirable destination for the characters: “My mum says it’s a bad time to join the ministry,” Peter said, thoughtfully. “But Dezzie reckons it’s the best time - when the war’s over we’ll be on the ground floor to rebuild” (MsKingBean89, *All the Young Dudes*, p. 569). What is evident from those excerpts is that characters do not run or hide from the Ministry in chaotic times, it is quite the opposite as they seek asylum in those institutions and politicians.

On the other side of the war are old families, with their conservative views on the society and illegal rituals: “This mark that was left behind - it has been seen elsewhere. Some of the old families have adopted it; a kind of secret sign of their allegiance to Voldemort. Only not so secret, any more” (MsKingBean89, *All the Young Dudes*, p. 403). Old families are seen as outlaws, as something that should obey the authority, yet refuses to do so. Moreover, they are scorned as Harry in “Oh God Not Again!” wonders: “Just a friendly discussion on whether or not all the inbreeding affects one's memory” (Sarah1284 “Oh God Not Again”, 6). The word “inbred” is thrown around a lot, and old families are seen as backwards sick structures, while institutions are depicted more favorably.

In the case with “Большая игра” (Big game), which is ranked fifteenth on most liked on Ficbook within *Harry Potter* fandom, this image shifts dramatically as the institutions become corrupted and authorities turn into vultures who only care about their personal gain. In the beginning chapters the main character Ada, a member of the powerful dark family Black, who

are not pro-Voldemort yet also do not support Dumbledore, states “Этой книги нет в списке рекомендуемой литературы, потому что Министерству не выгодно, чтобы маги становились умнее [...] а Батильда Бэгшот, чей учебник нам рекомендовали, убрала из своей книги все, что может двусмысленно трактоваться. Поэтому остались там только гоблинские войны”²⁸(Alteara, “Большая игра”, p. 44). There is a sense of conspiracy, as if the Ministry is doing everything, they can so that everyone will remain uninformed and docile, as well as there is a fear of public judgement and uprisings which is the reason for censorship of history.

This distrust and paranoia is reminiscent of Svetlana Boym’s “restorative nostalgia” concept introduced earlier. Ada does not doubt her view on the conspiracy of the Ministry of Magic or the content of the history schoolbook, for there is only one possible canon— of plotting enemies. In this worldview, the image of a “home” is “forever under siege, requiring defense against the plotting enemy” (Boym, 2001, p. 64). The “plotting enemy” in this case are the institutions of authority such as the Ministry and Dumbledore, due to him being adjacent to politics. As it is reiterated in the moment where Ada and her friends try to commit a crime for a magical creature: “Хагрида нельзя в Азкабан, он же не понимает! А Министерство дракончика убьет, а он очень редкий и маленький. Пока еще. Мы договорились с драконологами, его заберут, но нам нельзя попадаться с контрабандным драконом!”²⁹(Alteara, “Большая игра”, p. 127).

²⁸ “This book isn't on the recommended reading list because the Ministry doesn't want wizards getting smarter [...] and Bathilda Bagshot, whose textbook was recommended to us, removed everything that could be interpreted ambiguously from her book. So, the only thing that remains in those books are Goblin Wars” [translation my own].

²⁹ “Hagrid can't go to Azkaban, he doesn't understand anything! And the Ministry will kill the little dragon, cause he's very rare and small. Small for now. We've made a deal with the dragonologists. They'll take him, but we can't get caught with a smuggled dragon!”

Hagrid, in this case, is one of the members of the “home” while the Ministry is the “enemy” that will kill the defenseless dragon without a trial. There are no possible discussions of the danger of having a dragon at school or possibility that the Ministry will not in fact kill the dragon— as Boym states, the complexities are erased and there are only simple narratives of good and evil. This simplistic rhetoric leads to further division and paranoia as “Paranoiac reconstruction of home is predicated on the fantasy of persecution. This is not simply forgetting of reality but a psychotic substitution of actual experiences with a dark conspiratorial vision: the creation of a delusionary homeland” (Boym, 2001, p. 64).

The inability to see other points such as the risks of transporting a dragon as kids as well as not being able to trust more capable adults to deal with the issue here is the image of this paranoia. Signs the paranoia and the division to “we” and “enemy” is apparent in *Большая игра*. The paranoia is always intertwined with the state affairs and institutions as one of the character states: “Возможно, министр уже под Империи Темного Лорда. Сейчас личности Тома Реддла около тридцати — тридцати пяти лет на вид. Мы не знаем, каким он был в этот период”³⁰ (Alteara, “Большая игра”, p. 613). The trust in the Ministry is so nonexistent that characters believe that the Minister’s mind is taken over by the enemy. Thus, there is no trust in those institutions. In fact, it is so frail, that Ada discusses having to put one of “their” people in the position of Minister at some point: “Все сводится к одному [...] Нужен свой кандидат на место министра”³¹ (Alteara, “Большая игра”, p. 476).

Moreover, not only the figure of Minister, but all the employees at the Ministry are also corrupted and are serving someone other than the general public: “Людей твоего прадеда в

³⁰ “The Minister may already be under Voldemort's Imperio. Tom Riddle's current personality appears to be around thirty to thirty-five years old. We don't know what he was like during that period” [translation my own].

³¹ “It all comes down to one thing [...] We need our own candidate for the position of the Minister” [translation my own].

Министерстве все меньше и меньше [...] И тебе нужны свои союзники. Я стану твоими глазами и ушами в Министерстве”³² (Alteara, “Большая игра”, p. 564). Thus, the Minister is seen as the replaceable, malleable character who is ruled by the parties, while the employees pursue the interests of their respective parties, not the ones of the public.

This narrative of the Ministry being corrupt and untrustworthy is a narrative that has been living since the collapse of the Soviet institutions and it is being retold even in the case of the *Harry Potter* fanfictions. However, if we cannot trust the institutions, then what other structure can we trust? Oushakine predicts it: “The popularly shared linkage between money and lies or capital and corruption resulted in yet another important strategy: attempts to rediscover real values” (Oushakine, 2009, p. 84). According to *Большая игра*, the real values shifted to smaller, more traditional and tighter communities. We can see this shift in the way Ron talks to his friends about his father:

мой отец выступил информатором министерства. Ему даже премию выплатили за активную гражданскую позицию... или ответственность ... не помню, какая там формулировка была [...] Стукачей никто не любит [...] До сих пор понять не могу, как он может так беспечно ко всему относиться? Однажды нам всем придется устраиваться на работу, вы с Драко не в счет, Ада. Так вот, прихожу я на работу, а там шепотки: «Нам здесь крыса не нужна. Будет слушать, а потом доносить...»³³ (Alteara, “Большая игра”, p. 161).

Ron’s father is the person who works for the Ministry, and without serving any other parties, tries to fight the old families that have supported the villain in the past. However, his concern is

³² “There are less and less people in the Ministry who are loyal to your great grandfather [...] And you need your own allies. I will be your eyes and ears in the Ministry” [translation my own].

³³ “My father acted as an informant for the ministry. He even received a bonus for his active civic position... or responsibility... I don't remember the exact wording [...] Nobody likes informers [...] I still can't understand how he can be so careless about everything. One day, we'll all have to get jobs, you and Draco don't count of course, Ada. So, I come to work, and there are whispers: "We don't need a rat here. He'll listen and then report..." [translation my own].

not appreciated and is even frowned at, as for Ron it seems to be more important that his family keeps the loyalty to close knight families rather than the Ministry.

As Boym states, post-Communist nostalgia “was not rooted in any institutions but depended largely on informal networks, personal connections and friendships. The mistrust of any institution or anything that resembled official discourse continued after the collapse of communism” (Boym, 2001, p. 83). Generations of people saw how frail the institutions were after the Soviet collapse, and this narrative still lives on as in those Russian language fanfictions still rewrite the canon in the way that the Ministry becomes untrustworthy and closer ties such as friendships and family rise to the forefront.

It is also interesting to note, how those old families, which are frowned at in “All the Young Dudes” become centers of power in *Большая игра* as Boym states “Suddenly, the word old became popular and commercially viable, promoting more goods than the word new [...] Old here refers to an ahistoric image of the good old days, when everyone was young, some time before the big change” (Boym, 2001, p. 86). Disappointed by the collapse of the Soviet institutions, people started to seek more stability from the old family ties and secretive private histories. As Oushakine states “With some adjustments, it is possible to read this narrative, in which the universal deceit and corruption among strangers are opposed by truth shared only among close friends, as yet another edition of the theme of cynicism, imposture, or dissimulation that has been firmly linked with the Soviet period” (Oushakine, 2009, p. 39). When the institutions fail, the disappointment leads to find another source of reliability, which is the old families with histories: “В школьных книжках такого не напишут [...] Министерство запретило, но семьи помнят”³⁴ (Alteara, “Большая игра”, p. 189).

³⁴ “They won't write this in school books [...] The ministry banned those, but families remember” [translation my own].

After the institutional collapse, with all the structures that have been erased, people will shift to smaller communities where loyalty could be shared with fewer members without the fear of being accused. People do not want to participate in grandeur ideology narratives, they crave a smaller personal engagement as “она постоянно говорила, что мы должны оставить эту борьбу министерству и аврорам, а Дамблдор был ей и вовсе не авторитет. Она была счастлива своим хаффлпаффским счастьем барсука, с домом, садом, дочерью и мужем”³⁵ (Alteara, “Большая игра”, p. 602).

In comparison to “All the Young Dudes” where characters were at the center of political events and were fighting for better laws for minorities such as werewolves, in *Большая игра*, werewolves are not even in the picture, as characters are busy being paranoid and fighting the institutions and being persecuted for belonging to the old families that still have their own history and values. It seems as if engaging in politics is useless and it is impossible to win over the corrupt Ministry so one might as well get away from politics altogether. As Boym suggests, “collective memory offers a zone of stability and normativity in the current of change that characterizes modern life. The collective frameworks of memory appear as safe guards in the stream of modernity and mediate between the present and the past, between self and other” (Boym, 2001, p. 74). Generations of retellings and living in the post-collapse of the Soviet institutions, Alteara, as probably many other Russian language-based writers, narrated *Harry Potter* in the way that reflected the ruins and lessons taken from the collapse of the trust in Soviet institutions.

³⁵ “She kept saying that we should leave this fight to the Ministry and the Aurors, and that Dumbledore wasn't an authority figure to her. She was happy with her small Hufflepuff type of happiness, with a house, a garden, a daughter, and a husband” [translation my own].

As Boym concludes: “Collective memory is a messy, unsystematic concept that nevertheless allows one to describe the phenomenology of human experience. The study of collective memory defies disciplinary boundaries and invites us to look at artistic as well as scholarly works” (Boym, 2001, p. 75). It does not read as history, as it is primarily a retelling, yet the way the author chose to alter the details and the system is reflective of the identity shared by generations of post-Soviet communities.

Chapter 2: The Phenomenon of Time travel and Fix-it Works in Russophone Fandom

The distrust and paranoia surrounding the institutions and authority figures discussed in the previous chapter requires a narrative resolution. If authority is portrayed as corrupt, incompetent, and untrustworthy, then Russophone fanfiction authors need to find a way to resolve the resulting social disorder and instability. In most Russophone works out of top one hundred that I have analyzed, this resolution takes the form of restructuring and rebuilding the existing corrupt society via using a figure of a strong capable leader. Thus, the narrative focus shifts from exposing the institutional failure to imagining alternative social order with restored sense of stability and trust in authority figures. There is a shift from “institutions are untrustworthy” to “the society needs to be rebuilt in a better way.”

One of the most recurring tropes in Russophone fanfiction is the desire to rewrite canon, correct past mistakes, and construct a more prospering and stable social order. Although the “time travel fix-it” tag provides an ideal opportunity for this kind of rewriting, this tag is employed differently across Anglophone and Russophone fanfiction. Anglophone fanfiction uses the “time travel fix-it” tag to uncover alternative possibilities for individual characters, such as

alternative storylines where Harry might have been sorted into Slytherin and have had different friendships and relationships. Russophone fanfiction, on the other hand, uses the “time travel fix-it” tag as a tool for imaginary social and institutional reconstruction. The opportunity to change the past becomes an opportunity to resolve societal uncertainty, overcome and fix the failures of authority and institutions as well as imagine a prosperous future.

The main point of this chapter will be a discussion of how exactly the Russophone authors decide to fix the societal order and what kind of future they deem to be the most prosperous for the society. After analyzing the top one hundred Russophone fanfiction works, I have discovered that the mechanisms of restoring the societal order are repeated throughout out the most of the “time travel fix-it” tagged works. In the perspective of top one hundred Russophone fanfictions, the society can be restored by defeating the corrupt institution and authorities, usually personified by Dumbledore, and then restoring the “real” values that were lost, such as old traditions, family ties and family values.

In order to accomplish these societal reforms, the Wizarding World needs a figure of a one strong and decisive leader, who will single-handedly lead the revolution and save the Wizarding World from paranoia and instability. This chapter argues that this myth of “fixing” the society by a strong leader is a trope that goes beyond *Harry Potter* fandom and fanfiction, as using theories employed by Sander Brouwer and Eliot Borenstein, this chapter shows that the “time travel fix-it” tag employed by Russophone authors is a phenomena unique to the Russophone fanfiction body, as it allows people to escape the turbulent wheel of the history and past traumas connected to fall of the systems. The “fix-it” stories serve as a way for the author and the reader to “make things right” and the ways in which those Russophone fanfiction authors decided to do it shows that the belief in a “strong leader” who can save the entire nation which

can be traced all the way back to Peter the Great and even further Ivan the Terrible, is still strong in people's minds and beliefs. This chapter argues that the Russophone fanfiction uses the "time travel fix-it" trope as a chance to symbolically resolve uncertainty, instability and distrust towards authorities and it uses a figure of a "strong leader" trope in order to do so.

There is a sequence of required actions in order for the "time travel fix-it" to occur in the Russophone fanfiction. First, there is a need for a strong leader who has the right knowledge and the vision for the better society. Then, this leader defeats the "uncertainty" and "corruption" within the society, usually personified by Dumbledore. After this, the strong leader performs several political reforms that end up resolving the uncertainty and restore the trust in the society. Each of these stages will be analyzed in detail in the following sections through the theoretical frameworks developed by Sander Brouwer and Eliot Borenstein.

Section 2.1: A Need for a Strong Leader and a Phenomena of "Popadantsy" in Russophone Media Space

The Wizarding World needs a strong leader, but not any character would do in the eyes of the Russophone fanfiction writers. Canonical characters of *Harry Potter* are deemed to be too naïve, and weak for the level of reforms needed in the society, so Russophone authors introduce new characters invented by them, who do not fall for schemes of the authority figures, and who have enough willpower and the right resolute mindset for societal reforms. As it was discussed earlier in the methodology section, out of one hundred works in Russophone and Anglophone works, there were eighteen Russophone works that had characters introduced by the fanfiction authors, while Anglophone side of the fandom did not have any works of that kind among its top

one hundred (see fig. 1). The notion of original characters introduced by the fanfiction authors and who act as strong leaders reforming the society later on is indeed a unique trait of the Russophone fanfiction space.

These newly introduced original characters are called “time-crashers” or “popadantsy” and they did not exist in canonical *Harry Potter* series. To unravel this phenomenon, there is a need to mention an entire genre of online web novels in Russophone media space that focus on introducing a stranger to the various historical events or fanfiction storylines and for those strangers to “save” everyone from tragedies and chaos. There is no past or ongoing research on the topic of “fix-it” narratives or “time crasher” narratives in English or Russian scholarship, so the online novels which depict people time traveling through history or fixing historical events is the closest analysis on the similar phenomena in fanfiction.

A scholar who worked extensively on analyzing the websites which contain online web novels on “time crasher” narratives is Eliot Borenstein, as in his work *Unstuck in Time: On the Post-Soviet Uncanny* introduces a relatively new type of fiction on the Russian online fiction scene: popadantsy. As he states: “a popadanets (the singular form of popadantsy) is someone who, usually through a completely mysterious or underexplained fantastic or science fictional plot device, ends up in another world, another dimension, or most often, another time” (Borenstein 2024, p. 9). He translates the term into Russian as “time crashers” and that is how this chapter will refer to them from now on.

The genre of time travelers is not foreign to English and American authors, however as Borenstein puts it they are “neither numerous nor popular” enough to be put in an identifiable genre. The “popadantsy” stories in online web novels across the Russophone space portray narratives where ordinary people have time travelled to important periods of Russian history and

averted what they would consider a crisis like the death of the Romanov's dynasty, the say Stalin conducted the matters in the Soviet Union or any other tragical big overturn of events. Eliot Borenstein tries to explain this phenomenon as he states that the wish for another "fixed" Russia that happened as a result of USSR that never collapsed is a common state narrative as:

Allegations that Vladimir Putin wants to revive the USSR have been a common neocon talking point for decades and have received a new lease on life thanks to the 2022 invasion of Ukraine[...] From 2006 to 2010, opposition leaders as diverse as the chess grandmaster Garry Kasparov and the National Bolshevik writer Eduard Limonov were part of a coalition called "Drugaiia Rossiia" (the name was subsequently taken by the party Limonov founded in 2010). The most accurate translation of the name would be "A Different Russia," but the firmly entrenched English rendering is "Another Russia." The aspiration is obviously not geographical. Rather, it is the somewhat utopian aspiration that a different kind of Russia could take root on the land where Russia now exists (Borenstein 2024, p. 60).

These aspirations are usually linked to dreams about a "strong" and "charismatic" leader that could unite the country and "fix" all the mistakes and tragedies of the past. These online web novels are full of repetitive plots where a time crasher arrives at a historical period, defeats the enemy and restores the order in the state. As Borenstein states: "The plots are about the restoration or affirmation of a "natural" historical order with Russia at the center, an order that, while under threat, can still be saved through the dedication and possible self-sacrifice of the patriotic Time Crasher" (Borenstein, 2024, 19). Thus, connection between a strong hero, as a leader who can save the Russia is not new for the Russophone space and nor is it a phenomenon unique to *Harry Potter* fanfiction and fandom.

While the primary works that Borenstein analyzes are online fiction and novels that feature time crashers going back to the second World War period or to the seventies USSR, which he calls a "historical" fandom, time crashers are not a genre that is exclusive to those historical periods. In fact, from my analysis, I have found that out of 145 258 *Harry Potter*

fanfiction on the Russian ficbook.net 84 111 of them have a “popadantsy” tag, which means they are about time crashers. There is no tag such as “time crasher” on the Anglophone side of the fandom at all. There are tags such as “time travel” or “time travel-fix it” in the Anglophone fandoms, yet they do not mean the same narrative as the “time crashers” of the Russophone fandom. Both from my analysis of two hundred most liked works on the “time crasher” tag and the “time travel fix-it” tag on the Anglophone fandoms, it could be said that “time crasher” tag implies someone else, who is not a canonical character as being transported into a character from the fandom. Thus, for the Russophone fandom, “time travel fix-it” tag is associated with narratives where original characters created by the fanfiction writers change the societal structure of the world that they are introduced into, while for the Anglophone fandom the same tag is used for narratives when one of the canonical characters decides to explore a different timeline and the ways it would change their individual experience.

The Russophone “time crashers” are stories of many people, mostly identifying as ordinary Russian citizens, waking up in *Harry Potter*, Draco Malfoy or any other character’s body and “fixing” the narrative into what the author thinks is a “better” story. However, “time travel fix-it” on the Anglophone side functions differently. From my analysis of the most liked two hundred works with the same tag, the Anglophone fanfics feature canonical characters, mostly Harry, going back in time to reflect on his mistakes or to make peace with some decisions. For example, the most liked fanfiction with the “popadantsy” tag on the Russophone website features an office worker from Moscow finding herself in the body of a canonical villain Dolores Umbridge, while the most liked work on the Anglophone side features Harry Potter going back in time accidentally and not being able to reverse the timeline. The instances of someone completely foreign to the canon “possessing” the characters as it happens in the “time

crasher” genre in Russophone fandom is quite rare. Besides, on the Anglophone counterpart of the fandom from the entirety of 662 235 fanfics on *Harry Potter* only 3499 are written under a “time travel fix-it” tag, which means it is not even in top ten of the most used tags. The question of the specificity of the trope as well as the difference in popularity arises.

One of the reasons for the popularity of the “time crasher” narrative is the fact that it allows a resolution to despair and distrust in the system and the world which is apparent in Russophone fanfiction works. Since the sense of distrust in institutions and authority figures is not so consistent across the Anglophone fandom as it is in Russophone fandom as discussed in chapter one, the need for a resolution and a “fix” would also be expressed the most in the Russophone fandom rather than the Anglophone one. This need for resolution and reform in the society is not unique to the fandom space as it is also a phenomenon in Russophone media space as well. Sander Brouwer in his article “From Empire to Smuta and back. The Mythopoeitics of Cyclical History in Russian Film and TV-Documentaries” presents a view on a narrative of Russian history, which is repetitive, cyclical and ruthless. He states that the tragedies in Russian history left a trauma on its narrative as “there is no way of working through the traumatic experience; instead, it is constantly relived— ‘acted out,’ in trauma theory terms. And there is also no action program for the future: if there was no real happiness etc., it can also not be restored” (Brouwer 2016, 121). The movies and TV documentaries of the post-Soviet space are full of narratives where historical tragedies repeat itself, fanfiction, which is also a part of this media space mirrors the tragedy yet attempts to break the loop in its own way for narrative resolution.

The history seems to be going in a loop, as people are trained “to see Russian history as a cycle of periods of strong centralized power followed by a Smuta” (Brouwer 2016, 127). There

is a legitimate and charismatic strong leader, who inevitably has to die of various causes after which the country is overtaken by chaos, the “Smuta.” The time travel narratives that are so popular across the Russophone fandom portray the charismatic hero who “fixes” the problems and makes sure that the new “Smuta” never happens, effectively breaking the loop, thus saving the nation and the narrative.

The fact that the myth of a strong leader is widespread across the Russophone media space does not confirm its legitimacy. As Sander Brouwer talks about “memory wars,” thus ways in which the government positions historical myth as “played out today in the press and the media, and on Internet—they are even central in the way governments try to manipulate national memory, and thus, national identity-building” (Brouwer 2016, p. 127). In this manipulation of a myth, a particularly strong one is the one about “smuta” and a strong leader who is capable of rescuing the land. It presents the whole of Russian history as a cyclical process consisting of “a series of cycles of Smuta’s, followed by a restoration of imperial order, issuing in the building of a strong power centre that all the nation (or rather the nationalities) rally around; and then the next Smuta, and so on” (Brouwer 2016, p. 128). Thus, those tragedies are seen as inevitable, and it seems as if nothing will stop the next “smuta” from happening.

This puts people in the position of complacency in the fact of the next political tragedy as “Running ahead a bit, we might already diagnose that the present administration is thus not so much presented as something good or bad, but as something inevitable. I will argue that such a presentation seems to have a much greater chance of success with the majority of the contemporary Russian public; and by ‘success’ I mean: a chance that the public will not necessarily applaud this administration but accept it and acknowledge it as appropriate for the country it administers” (Brouwer 2016, p. 128). Yet, the fact that people feel like there is nothing

to be done with the present administration does not mean that they cannot dream about it, or imagine the state free of that myth, hence why the works about “fixing” history are popular both as online web novels on Russia’s history as well as the Russophone Harry Potter fan-space as they are all interconnected in the media.

A crucial component of the “smuta” myth is a figure of a strong leader. The leader is the one who saves their people from the “smuta” times—as “there is a repeating pattern: a harsh leader, succeeded by able rulers, but without his stature, and then a Smuta, stirred by selfish, unpatriotic parasites” (Brouwer 2016, p. 131). This pattern of a harsh but a strong leader is also repeated throughout fanfictions as their leaders are encouraged to act harshly in order to save the order in the society.

To showcase the narratives and tropes of a “time crusher” fanfiction in Russophone fandom which rely on a strong leader, I will be focusing on the work titled “Кто вы, профессор Амбридж?”³⁶ which depicts a time crusher time traveling into a *Harry Potter* original narrative and changing it. I chose this work as it is ranked number six out of all the *Harry Potter* fanfiction works on Russophone fanfiction website ficbook.com when sorted by the most liked and engaged with. I will be comparing this work to a work from an Anglophone fandom titled “Evitative” (number eight when sorted by likes on Anglophone website archiveofourown.com) as it is one of the rare works that deals with Harry Potter travelling back in time and changing some of crucial plot points.

In “Кто вы, профессор Амбридж,” an office worker in her forties, who works in Ministry of Education in Moscow, wakes up in the body of Dolores Umbridge, a quite unpleasant character from the *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, who works for the

³⁶ “Who are you, Professor Umbridge?”

ministry and has a very negative opinion on anything that might go against it. Instead of panicking or trying to figure out what happened, she instantly moves into a “fix-it” mode as: “Хотя, подумала она, повертевшись перед зеркалом, ей ведь всегда хотелось иметь бюст! Вот, получила. А пресс можно подкачать, не настолько там много жира...”³⁷ (Hoshi_Murasaki, “Кто вы, профессор Амбридж,” chapter 1). This is a common trait for those time crashers in Russophone works as none of them panic or try to return to their previous life, they accept the new reality and immediately start thinking of ways of improving or fixing their position and the society they woke up in. There is no space for weakness or doubt in these kinds of stories, as those time crashers position themselves as strong and capable revolutionaries from the get-go.

Marina Nikolayevna, the time crasher in this story, immediately figures out the reason she crashed into this world of magic and starts to act in ways that will benefit the society: “тут она вспомнила такую модную у молодежи тему о «попаданцах»: какой-нибудь студент-неудачник или отставной военный неожиданно перемещался в иной мир, неважно, волшебный или с уклоном в научную фантастику, где становился непревзойденным бойцом, любовником и волшебником!”³⁸ (Hoshi_Murasaki, “Кто вы, профессор Амбридж,” chapter 1). These stories are usually not about time crashers satisfying their personal ambitions, these time crashers are here for a bigger role, they need to be revolutionaries, someone who changes the flow of the time and averts all the mistakes this world might head towards.

³⁷ Although, she thought, twirling in front of the mirror, she'd always wanted a bigger breast! There she is. And she could work on her abs; there's not that much fat there.

³⁸ here she remembered the popular theme among young people about "time travelers": some unsuccessful student or retired military man would suddenly be transported to another world, no matter if it was magical or science fiction-inspired, where he would become an unrivaled fighter, lover, and wizard!

The main character Marina Nokalyevna, positions herself as a fixer and a hero as soon as she finds herself in Dolores Umbridge's body. Interestingly, she decides to start the changes with her new body:

Стыдно в таком возрасте выглядеть квашнёй! Не многодетная ведь мать, вечно задержанная и без лишней копейки, а незамужняя женщина с хорошей карьерой! Месяц промелькнул, как не бывало: каждый день, с половины шестого утра - занятия. Сперва зарядка, потом легкий завтрак, потом заклинания, чары³⁹ (Hoshi_Murasaki, "Кто вы, профессор Амбридж," chapter 2).

As soon as she "fixes" her body with exercises and good diet, she immediately thinks of aspects in the society that need to be fixed in this way. It seems as if everything, including Dolores Umbridge's body, were a mechanism that was working wrong until the time-crasher came in to save the narrative. She seems to be the only person who notices the imperfections in the world surrounding her and she is the only one who attempts to fix it as she is the one who proposes to shield the boats with the students from the rain on their way to Hogwarts: "Ну давайте хотя бы защиту на лодки поставим, дети же приплывают мокрыми насквозь и простуженными! - Знаете, - сказала Марине Николаевне Граббли-Дёрг и принялась набивать трубку, - я так давно ждала, чтобы кто-нибудь это сказал! Удивительно, что это оказались вы"⁴⁰ (Hoshi_Murasaki, "Кто вы, профессор Амбридж," chapter 3). This notion is repeated continuously throughout the work as people notice that Marina Nikolayevna is the only person who has genius ideas and desires to improve the society.

She also changes the entire diet in Hogwarts as:

³⁹ It's shameful to look like a sourdough slob at such a young age! After all, she's not a mother of many children, always stressed out and penniless, but an unmarried woman with a good career! A month flew by: every day, starting at five-thirty in the morning, classes. First, exercises, then a light breakfast, then spells, charms.

⁴⁰ Well, let's at least put some protection on the boat, the children are arriving soaking wet and with colds! - You know, - said Grubbly-Derg to Marina Nikolaevna and began to fill her cigar, - I've been waiting so long for someone to say this! It's amazing that you managed to do it.

Видите ли, профессор Дамблдор, - ответила Марина Николаевна, прожевав кусочек цветной капусты, - правильное питание - залог здоровья. Сидевшая рядом Граббл-Дёрг покосилась на тарелку с йоркширским пудингом и решительно его отодвинула. -В самом деле, - пробормотала она, - сколько можно жрать? Не в голодные годы живем...⁴¹ (Hoshi_Murasaki, "Кто вы, профессор Амбридж," chapter 3).

It seems as if everyone at Hogwarts has been living in a senseless dream before her arrival, and she is that one hero who started to fix everything, even the smallest details in their lives. The way she implements those changes is very similar to military schools in the way that she requires a great deal of discipline as she states:

прошу педсостав проголосовать за отстранение Рона Уизли от должности старосты факультета. Директор, ваше слово? -А кого же вы, профессор Амбридж, видите на его месте? - сладко улыбнулся тот. - Может быть, Гарри Поттера? - Увольте, это же два сапога пара, - фыркнула она. - Точно такая же расхлябанность и отсутствие привычки к регулярным занятиям⁴² (Hoshi_Murasaki, "Кто вы, профессор Амбридж," chapter 6).

She insists on a very precise top-down chain of commands as she gets rid of Ronald Weasley as a prefect for not doing his job well enough and for the lack of discipline. She orders prefects to follow the first years everywhere, to keep her posted on any changes on Hogwarts and to follow the rules and discipline vigorously.

While this approach might seem excessive, it turns out that it is a blessing in disguise as it is discovered that because of the unprofessionalism and lack of discipline both among faculty and students there have been fatalities that were swept under the rug:

⁴¹ "You see, Professor Dumbledore," replied Marina Nikolaevna, chewing a piece of cauliflower, "proper nutrition is the key to health." Grubbly-Derg, sitting next to her, glanced sideways at the plate of Yorkshire pudding and decisively pushed it away. "Really," she muttered, "how much can you eat? We're not living in famine years..."

⁴² I ask the teaching staff to vote to remove Ron Weasley from the post of Head Boy. "Headmaster, what's your word?" "And who do you see in his place, Professor Umbridge?" he smiled sweetly. "Perhaps Harry Potter?" "No, they're two peas in a pod," she snorted. "Exactly the same laxness and lack of habit for regular studies."

Погиб! - пискнула вдруг девочка с Рэйвенкло, Джинджер Уотс. -Неужели? - В «Квиддиче сквозь века» этого нет, но мне дядя рассказывал: на его курсе был мальчик, он ударился о вышку и... в общем, упал он уже мертвым, - выговорила она, поежившись. - Но он был магглорожденным, и... Никто и не узнал. -И мне дедушка говорил, - добавил Майкл Лекс с Хаффлпафа, - что когда он учился, одному игроку так прилетело битой по голове, даже не бладжером, что... В общем, его отвезли в Мунго, и он там так и остался. -Ну надо же, какие вскрываются подробности... - протянула Марина Николаевна⁴³ (Hoshi_Murasaki, "Кто вы, профессор Амбридж," chapter 7).

This is similar to the distrust in authorities and the belief that they do not care about individual fates that was discussed in the previous chapter, and in this case the hero who saves the situation is the time-crasher who implements strict discipline, and, in this way, she saves the students from harm and from murky authorities who might harm the students. The idea that no one is above the system is reinforced there in a way that it is the only system that can protect all individuals: "Я понимаю, что вы защищаете друга, но... -Дружба дружбой, а служба службой, мадам? - припомнила девушка. -Я рада, что вы это осознали, - совершенно серьезно сказала Марина Николаевна"⁴⁴ (Hoshi_Murasaki, "Кто вы, профессор Амбридж," chapter 11). This is the dialogue of Hermione with Umbridge, where the time crasher Umbridge is able to convince Hermione that she should trust the system and not do anything that might come in the way of it even for friends like Hagrid.

⁴³ "Dead!" the Ravenclaw girl, Ginger Watts, suddenly squeaked. "Really?" "It's not in 'Quidditch Through the Ages,' but my uncle told me: there was a boy in his year who hit the tower and... well, he fell down already dead," she said, shuddering. "But he was Muggle-born, and... No one ever found out." "And my grandfather told me," added Michael Lex from Hufflepuff, "that when he was studying, one player got hit on the head with a bat, not even a Bludger, so hard that... Well, they took him to St. Mungo's, and he never left." "Well, well, what details are coming to light..." Marina Nikolayevna drawled.

⁴⁴ "I understand that you are protecting a friend, but... "Friendship is friendship, but duty is duty, madam?" the girl recalled. "I'm glad you realize that," Marina Nikolayevna said completely seriously.

Seems like friendships and sentiments are not supposed to sway the hero from the big fix-it mission as she fires most of the faculty which she deems inefficient even at the risk of being unlikeable:

Вы н-не можете! - взывала Трелони. - Вы... н-не можете меня уволить! Я провела здесь шестнадцать лет! Х-хогвартс - м-мой родной д-дом! -Кое-кто провел здесь не меньше вашего, - пожала плечами Марина Николаевна. - И школа в первую очередь - место вашей работы, а не дом. И если вы не справляетесь со своими обязанностями, от дома может быть отказано⁴⁵ (Hoshi_Murasaki, "Кто вы, профессор Амбридж," chapter 12).

There is very little space for compassion and personal sentiments as Marina Nikolayevna is focused on making sure everyone has a purpose and is following that same professional purpose in a proper manner or else they are bound to receive a punishment.

This strict system ensures that no outside enemies would be able to get through as the work is laced with paranoia:

Врага нужно знать в лицо, - сурово сказала Марина Николаевна, вспомнив о своей проминистерской позиции. - Тем более, если врагов этих - семь миллиардов. А может, больше, кто их считает... А магов сколько, профессор? Миллион, два на всей планете? -Ох... -Разумеется, - произнесла она, - наше общество мало подвержено переменам, и, с одной стороны, это хорошо. С другой - мы сильно отстаем от маггловского прогресса⁴⁶ (Hoshi_Murasaki, "Кто вы, профессор Амбридж," chapter 13).

It is interesting how Marina Nikolayevna perceives the difference in numbers as a threat and not as peculiarities of both societies, which is a phenomenon unique to the Russophone fandom as in

⁴⁵ "You c-can't!" Trelawney howled. "You... c-can't fire me! I've spent sixteen years here! H-Hogwarts is m-my home!" "Someone has spent just as long here as you," Marina Nikolaevna shrugged. "And school is, first and foremost, your place of work, not your home. And if you don't fulfill your responsibilities, you can be disqualified from your home."

⁴⁶ "You have to know your enemy by sight," Marina Nikolaevna said sternly, remembering her pro-Ministerial stance. "Especially if there are seven billion of these enemies. Or maybe more, who's counting... And how many wizards are there, Professor? A million, two on the entire planet?" "Oh..." "Of course," she said, "our society is little subject to change, and, on the one hand, that's good. On the other, we lag far behind Muggle progress."

the Anglophone fandom the numbers of wizards and muggles are rather not compared as those two are considered to be separate worlds, but in Russophone works, there is always a paranoia and a lingering sense of threat.

In Anglophone works, the threat from muggles is mentioned far less and the time travel fix-it works are usually focused on individual character journeys. An example of an Anglophone time travel fix-it fanfiction that is number eight sorted by most liked on archiveofourown.org is “Evitative” by Vichan. In this work Harry chooses to go to Slytherin, not Gryffindor. This decision prompts Harry to talk to other students of Slytherin and he finds out that they are not complete villains, but actually nice people with complicated lives. There is hardly any mention of societal reforms or a need to fix the society in that work. In fact, the attitude towards the muggles is a complete opposite to the Russophone works, where they are treated like a threat.

In “Evitative” muggles are perceived just as a people living outside of their world, without any senses of threat as one of the Slytherin students Daphne Greengrass states: “Don’t assume we’re all anti-Muggle. I take Muggle studies because I think the Muggles are impressive. I respect what they’ve done, especially in the last century or so. Did you know they’ve actually been to the moon?” (Vichan, “Evitative”, chapter 1). The notion of Muggles’ progress in the case with the Anglophone fandom is not regarded as a threat to the wizards, but rather is regarded as something impressive and positive, even across a canonically muggle phobic faculty as Slytherin.

In comparison to that, what Marina Nikolayevna says about muggles puts it into a format of a rivalry where one developed side might eventually overtake the less developed one and it will result in bloodbath, which is why Marina Nikolayevna compares numbers and with how impressive the numbers of Muggles look, it looks like a looming threat over the wizarding world.

This notion fits Boym's concept of "restorative nostalgia" where "home" is "forever under siege, requiring defense against the plotting enemy" (Boym 2001, 64). Even if muggles are busy with making landings to the moon or making progress, in Russophone fanfictions they are always regarded as a threat looming over the wizarding world, and wizards thus need to "fix" their situation and become more disciplined and stronger.

As the time-crasher Marina Nikolayevna organizes it:

а если не взять всех разом, вскоре появится новый гнойный нарыв на теле нашего общества! [...] Если мы не спугнем это змеиное кубло раньше времени, у нас появится великолепный шанс взять всех скопом, от рядовых исполнителей до идейных вдохновителей и устроить показательный судебный процесс. И тогда уж никто не посмеет вставлять вам палки в колеса и распространять возмутительные слухи о вашей политической несостоятельности, как это делает Дамблдор и его компания!"⁴⁷ (Hoshi_Murasaki, "Кто вы, профессор Амбридж," chapter 23).

The society first and foremost needs to get rid of the internal enemies, thus the looming threat, as the time-crasher will fix it and only after that it can move on to making progress and fixing everything that is wrong with the wizarding society.

Marina Nikolayevna fixes the issues by discipline and progressive ideas, but in a manner that is minimally invasive as Snape says: "Вроде бы исподтишка, потихоньку, но... Мне вот сразу вспоминается выражение «стальная рука в бархатной перчатке»! -Но разве это плохо? - серьезно спросила Марина Николаевна. - Дисциплина заметно улучшилась, стычек между факультетами стало меньше, травм почти нет, ученики заняты делом."⁴⁸ (Hoshi_Murasaki, "Кто вы, профессор Амбридж," chapter 17). Students are reduced to units

⁴⁷ And if we don't take them all at once, a new festering abscess will soon appear on the body of our society! [...] If we don't scare off this snake pit ahead of time, we'll have a great chance to round everyone up, from the rank-and-file performers to the ideological inspirers, and stage a show trial. And then no one will dare to put a spoke in your wheels and spread outrageous rumors about your political incompetence, as Dumbledore and his company do.

⁴⁸ It seems to be done quietly, subtly, but... I immediately think of the expression "a steel hand in a velvet glove"! "But is that bad?" Marina Nikolaevna asked seriously. "Discipline has noticeably improved, there are fewer clashes between departments, almost no injuries, the students are busy."

within their faculties, and even main characters like Harry, Hermione and Ron are “disciplined” and follow the rules given by the “time-crasher.” The phrasing of the “a steel hand in a velvet glove” is an interesting and a very precise description of what a time crasher is: they might act discreetly sometimes, yet they must always remain stern and strong. In this manner towards the ending Marina Nikolayevna and Professor Snape find Voldemort’s horcruxes and kill the villain, thus saving the society and bringing stability into the Wizarding world. Even if Marina Nikolayevna did not become a public hero as she chose to be discreet about defeating Voldemort, she still performed all the essential functions of a hero and a strong leader: implemented new rules to improve the society and defeated all the elements that threatened the society. The time-crasher not only becomes a hero by killing Voldemort, she fires and gets rid of the “suspicious elements,” and fixes the discipline within Hogwarts so that it becomes almost a military school, and she also stops the gruesome deaths of Sirius Black and other characters that were supposed to happen in the canonical *Harry Potter* series. This could be considered a happier ending for the story which had so many deaths and tragedies in the canon.

I chose Marina Nikolayevna’s story for this analysis because it is widely appreciated and talked about in the Russophone fandom community and because it contains all the usual plot tropes that other time crasher stories have such as a figure of a strong leader, reordering the social order and uncovering schemes of authority figures and creating a more reliable society. Beyond this narrative of someone reordering the society is a widespread and shared communal wish for a hero, a strong leader who would indeed save the society and put an end to uncertainty, distrust and paranoia.

Section 2.2: Destruction of Dumbledore by the Strong Leader and Restoration of Trust and Order in the Society

For a new social order to flourish, one needs to destroy the old social order that has been associated with distrust and unreliability, which is often personified in the figure of Dumbledore. This section will focus on the most popular trope for the time crusher works, where the strong leader time crusher kills Dumbledore, and by doing so saves the society from unreliability and distrust. The distrust towards Dumbledore in the Russophone fandom goes beyond dislike for his individual traits. For the Russophone fandom, Dumbledore represents this feeling of broader distrust of institutions and authority figures. It is often less about Dumbledore himself, but more about what he symbolizes. Dumbledore is disliked by the Russophone audience because he manipulates events behind the scenes, withholds information for the elusive “greater good,” exercises power without accountability and maintains a corrupt status quo. Combined with already existing sense of distrust and paranoia which were discussed in the first chapter, Dumbledore’s actions only contribute to the sense of distrust experienced by the Russophone fandom. I will argue that Dumbledore is interpreted not merely as a flawed individual, but as a representative of an ineffective, manipulative, and unstable social order. Thus, the defeat of Dumbledore by a strong leader who eliminates all the distrust and reorganizes the society is seen as a symbolic act, a grand “fix” of the social structure, which only a strong leader is capable of.

Interestingly, none of the time-crasher strong leaders even stop to ask themselves if the killing is justified of moral as technically Dumbledore in that timeline to which they moved has not done anything yet. Those uncomfortable moral questions are not raised, since most of those people take great comfort from knowing that one figure of a hero and a leader will take whatever means necessary to stop the endless cycle of tragedies whether it is Russia’s history or *Harry*

Potter's canon. This is accurate per Boym's "restorative nostalgia" framework, as these plot types are very simple and follow simplified morals and ideals, where there is an external enemy lurking around and wishing to harm the time-crasher, but the time-crasher outsmarts everyone in the end and brings peace and prosperity to the place or time they time travelled to. Thus, in the battle of evil and good, the good wins and there is no ambiguity pertaining to how evil or how good those sides are.

To analyze and showcase the Russophone fandom's dislike of Dumbledore's figure, I will analyze several works of Russophone and Anglophone fanfictions such as "Big game", "Slytherin's revenge", "Who Are You Ms. Umbridge?", "In a Battle You Will Acquire...", "Evitative," "All the Young Dudes," "Become Voldemort" and etc. I chose these works because they are widely read and liked in their respective fandoms as well as because they are the most indicative pertaining to the points that this paper is trying to make.

Dumbledore is disliked because he is considered to be manipulative, and this contributes to the narrative of distrust that the Russophone fandom already believes in. The nature of his manipulateness is showcased the best in a Russophone fanfiction called "Большая игра" (Big game) which ranks number fifteen sorted by liked out of all the *Harry Potter* works in ficbook.net. In "Big game", the main character Ada is a time crasher as she is given a chance to embody a new, not canonical character in the *Harry Potter* world, and as soon as she is born into the world, she starts figuring out a way on how to "fix" the events that are going to happen in the *Harry Potter*'s historical timeline.

It is important to consider how the mechanism of "fixing" history is exercised in this case as it is quite different from the case of Marina Nikolayevna mentioned previously. For the main character of the story Ada, a member of a strong wizarding pureblood Black family who are

neutral to politics as they mainly care about their own family and are very secluded. The time crasher Ada is different, as unlike her newly acquired family members, she intends to fix the timeline of the Civil war with Voldemort, the only way to do so is to get rid of the person “behind the curtain” who has been orchestrating the unfortunate history: Dumbledore.

By using manipulations and deception, Dumbledore kills Ada’s mother: “Все-таки дамбигад, поняла я, бессильно глядя на то, как тело Эллы упало на пол от зеленой вспышки. А потом он повернулся ко мне, и я узнала палочку в его руках”⁴⁹ (Alteara, “Большая игра” р. 10). He is also the one who manipulates Hogwarts into almost killing Harry: “И чего, по вашему мнению, Дамблдор добивался? — спросил второй Невыразимец/ — Герою нужны испытания”⁵⁰ (Alteara, “Большая игра” р. 298). He is the sole figure behind all the plot points that are usually attributed to Voldemort: “Дамблдор манипулировал вами. Он уничтожил наши жизни и взялся за наших малышей. Но на первом курсе за вами хорошо присматривали, и я никак не стал показывать себя. А потом я увидел у вашего павлина-учителя проклятую книгу, насквозь пропитанную аурой Темного Лорда. Дамблдор не мог ее не почувствовать, а значит, его все устраивало”⁵¹ (Alteara, “Большая игра” р. 304). He consciously chooses to ignore a threat of Voldemort’s horcrux at Hogwarts in order to manipulate the students and to be able to gain even more power in the future.

⁴⁹ It was “dambigad” (Dumblebad) after all, I realized, watching helplessly as Ella's body fell to the floor stuck by a green flash. And then he turned to me, and I recognized the wand in his hand.

⁵⁰ "And what do you think Dumbledore is trying to accomplish?" asked the second Unspeakable. "A hero needs his trials" [translation my own].

⁵¹ Dumbledore manipulated all of you. He destroyed our lives and took our children. But you were well-watched after in your first year, and he didn't do anything. And then I saw your standoffish teacher with a cursed book, saturated with the Dark Lord's aura. Dumbledore could have missed it, which meant he let it happen [translation my own].

He is the history personified as he is the single player behind all the points where history goes wrong in Ada's timeline. Dumbledore is the puppeteer behind the curtains who orchestrated all the tragic events in Ada's life.

The Dumbledore as a puppeteer is a common theme across all the highly rather Russophone fanfiction. In Ada's case Dumbledore directly ruins her life as he kills her mother and frames and imprisons her father, however it is not the case in all the works. In "Мечь Слизерина" (Slytherin's Revenge) by darketo31, ranked number eighteen by popularity, Dumbledore is again introduced as someone "behind the curtains":

Директор Хогвартса Альбус Дамблдор в это время напряженно обдумывал поведение Героя Пророчества. Поведение Гарри свидетельствовало о затяжной депрессии: отказ от общения, заторможенное поведение, погружение в себя. Все просто прекрасно. Нужно подождать, когда состояние усугубится, и затем - резкий ввод мотивирующего фактора. Нужно будет дать задание Блэку, хватит задницу отсиживать! Пора и поработать на благо общества!"⁵² (darketo31, "Мечь Слизерина", chapter 4).

Dumbledore in this work pays Hermione and Ron to steer Harry in the "right direction" and make sure that he sacrifices himself for the sake of the "общее благо" which is always used with negative connotations as it means "common good," but is always used to either denote Dumbledore's perfect vision of the world for which main characters should sacrifice themselves, or an elusive terms that makes everyone lose their close ones as they are sacrificed by Dumbledore for it.

In this work Dumbledore controls not only Harry's friends, but also his family and the entire society as puppets to make sure that everything will go according to his plan which will

⁵² At this time, Hogwarts Headmaster Albus Dumbledore was intensely pondering the behavior of the Hero of the Prophecy. Harry's behavior indicated a prolonged depression: withdrawal from communication, inhibited behavior, and introspection. Everything was just fine. He needed to wait until his condition worsened, and then abruptly introduce a motivating factor. He'd need to give Black a task! He'd had enough of sitting around! It was time to work for the good of society.

lead to common good. As Harry discovers, his parents and family are alive and controlled by Dumbledore as they are brainwashed to believe that Harry should commit the sacrifice:

За столом сидят Дамблдор, Джеймс Поттер, Лили Поттер, Сириус Блэк, Молли и Артур Уизли, Рон, Джинни и близнецы; в дальнем углу к стене прислонился Снейп. Вспышка... Снейп смотрит на собравшуюся компанию с презрением и ненавистью. Гарри отмечает, что они этого не замечают. Не видят или не хотят видеть?⁵³ (darketo31, “Месть Слизерина”, chapter 5).

In this bit all the characters who have a connection to Dumbledore such as the Weasleys and Potter are also seen as manipulators and liars, propelling the idea that Dumbledore has all the control over the society, and he is manipulating it for his own goals and ideals. The paranoia in those works is a necessary attribute of the social order as anyone can turn out to be the enemy.

Since the Russophone works are heavily shifted towards their hatred for Dumbledore, the attitude towards other characters also shifts. A good example of it are Severus Snape and Remus Lupin. In the excerpt mentioned before, the Weasleys and the Potters turned out to be liars and manipulators as per Dumbledore’s request. The only sincere character in that bit is Severus Snape. In that story Snape hates Dumbledore and the others for the deception and using Harry, yet Snape is also powerless in the face of Dumbledore who controls everything and is the most powerful being in the wizarding world. The usually negatively portrayed traits of Snape such as harshness and directness turn into positive qualities as in the face of the world dominated by Dumbledore and full of lies, the harsh truth from Snape becomes an act of salvation. In this light, honesty, even one delivered in a non-pleasant way seems like a better option as in “В борьбе обретешь ты...” Draco states:

⁵³ Dumbledore, James Potter, Lily Potter, Sirius Black, Molly and Arthur Weasley, Ron, Ginny, and the twins are seated at the table; Snape is leaning against the wall in the far corner. A flash... Snape looks at the assembled company with contempt and hatred. Harry notes that they don't notice. Don't see it, or don't want to see it?

Язва, циник и мизантроп, Северус Снейп восхищал своего крестника абсолютным равнодушием к мнению окружающих. Снейп никогда не задумывался над тем, какое впечатление он производит, не пытался подстроиться под обстоятельства, не лгал из выгоды, жалости или желания угодить. Он был очень искренним в проявлении чувств и не задумывался над последствиями своей искренности [...] Одно только это качество перевешивало в глазах Драко все реальные и мнимые недостатки Снейпа⁵⁴ (Кукулькан, “В борьбе обретишь ты...” chapter 9).

In this light, being vicious and angry as is interpreted in the Anglophone canon is much better than being elusive and manipulative like Dumbledore in the Russophone canon. In the Russophone canon, where Dumbledore is portrayed as the main villain because of his manipulations and lies, Snape is perceived as a hero as honesty and lack of schemes are traits that are valued above all. The reason for that might be sense of paranoia and external enemies possessing threat to “home” as it was stated before, thus an honest person will not lie or deceive which mean they are a lesser threat than someone who might be constantly scheming.

Interestingly, in the Anglophone fandom Snape has either a neutral or a negative image. In All the Young Dudes from the previous chapter, Snape is portrayed a vicious, evil villain who just like the other followers of Voldemort wishes to live in a wizarding world full of purebloods and their traditions. When he sees Lupin, who is a werewolf, he states: “Oh my, have you actually learnt some magic, Lupin? I’m impressed. Mind you, I’ve heard they can train some monkeys to perform basic tricks, so I suppose it’s no real achievement” (MsKingBean89, All the Young Dudes, p. 74). He is portrayed as a blood purist and a person who is full of rage and viciousness, while Dumbledore is the positive hero who allowed Lupin to get an education at

⁵⁴ A bitter, cynical, and misanthropic man, Severus Snape delighted his godson with his absolute indifference to the opinions of others. Snape never considered the impression he made, never tried to adapt to circumstances, never lied for convenience, pity, or a desire to please. He was utterly sincere in his expressions of affection and never considered the consequences of his sincerity. [...] This quality alone outweighed all of Snape's real and imagined flaws in Draco's eyes.

Hogwarts despite him being a werewolf, a condition he cannot control, and this is portrayed as Dumbledore being kind and helpful.

In the Russophone fandom, the situation is reversed as Dumbledore's kindness towards Lupin is seen as an act of incompetence and corruption. In "Кто вы, профессор Амбридж?" (Who are you, Professor Umbridge?) discussed above, Marina Nikolayevna discovers Lupin being a werewolf and orders for him to leave the school:

Мистер Беркли, - проговорил Дамблдор [...] уверяю вас, это недоразумение. Ни один из этих людей не покушался на безопасность Хогвартса и тем более учеников, могу ручаться! - У меня имеются данные, господин директор, - холодно отозвался Беркли, - согласно которым присутствующий здесь оборотень Люпин уже **подвергал опасности жизни детей и коллег**, вследствие чего его присутствие в Хогвартсе является абсолютно неприемлемым. - Мистер Беркли, поймите, Ремус... **- Вне школы вы можете хоть в десны целоваться с вашим ручным оборотнем, - перебил аврор и встал. - Но у меня приказ: никаких посторонних лиц в Хогвартсе.** Это не обсуждается, господин директор⁵⁵(Hoshi_Murasaki, "Кто вы, профессор Амбридж," chapter 41).

Dumbledore giving a second chance to Lupin and hiding his issue from the outside world is perceived as private leniency and corruption. This act disrupts the discipline and adds to the feeling of paranoia that the Russophone fanfiction texts are so anxious about, which is why Dumbledore "endangering" kids by making his own judgement is perceived very negatively on the Russophone side of the fandom. In Snape's case in the Russophone fandom, he serves as someone who has no choice but to submit to Dumbledore, but because he does not make elusive remarks or lies, he is perceived as a positive character, as honesty even delivered in a rude

⁵⁵ "Mr. Berkeley," Dumbledore said [...] "I assure you, this is a misunderstanding. None of these people have ever attempted to endanger the safety of Hogwarts, much less the students, I can guarantee that!" "I have information, Mr. Headmaster," Berkeley responded coldly, "according to which the werewolf present here, Lupin, has already endangered the lives of children and colleagues, as a result of which his presence at Hogwarts is absolutely unacceptable." "Mr. Berkeley, understand, Remus..." "Outside of school, you can kiss your pet werewolf on the gums," the Auror interrupted and stood up. "But I have orders: no outsiders in Hogwarts. This is not up for discussion, Mr. Headmaster."

manner, is perceived more positively than deception and lies and possible secret control over everyone.

In many cases Dumbledore's notion of "common good" is simply the state where he is the ruler above everyone else as he is the one who decides what is good and what is bad for everyone. Thus, his aspirations are of individual gain and interest, which makes his character even more negative in the Russophone fanon. In Russophone fanfiction "В борьбе обретишь ты..." (In Battle You Will Acquire...) by Кукулькан, ranked number seventeen by popularity, Dumbledore is portrayed as a manipulator who is even willing to bring Voldemort back to life if it means that he will remain in power:

Но, готов поклясться, Дамблдор поможет Тёмному лорду вернуться. Наш дорогой Альбус крайне заинтересован в возрождении какой-нибудь страшной твари». Малфой говорил, что Дамблдор наверняка попытается взять тварь на поводок, чтобы как следует всех запугать, а потом, после долгой борьбы и неизбежных жертв, победить её и по праву победителя перекроить жизнь в магической Британии [...] Будут показательные суды и массовые казни, старых семей не останется⁵⁶ (Кукулькан, "В борьбе обретишь ты..." chapter 12).

In the Russophone fandom, the entire existence of Voldemort, the original villain in the *Harry Potter* series, is tied to Dumbledore's ambition of having an immense power over the wizarding world. In a sense, Dumbledore is presented as a power-hungry villain, who uses deception and manipulation in order to achieve his agenda.

As a way of "fixing" this type of a society that has been plagued by Dumbledore's manipulations, the Russophone body of fanfiction brings forward the time-crashers, the strong

⁵⁶ But I'm willing to swear Dumbledore will help the Dark Lord return. Our dear Albus is extremely interested in the resurrection of some terrible creature." Malfoy said that Dumbledore would certainly try to tame the creature, to thoroughly intimidate everyone, and then, after a long struggle and inevitable sacrifices, defeat it and, by right of the victor, reshape life in magical Britain [...] There will be show trials and mass executions, and the old families will be gone.

leaders, as they must bring peace and defeat the main enemy who was behind all the trouble. They need to “fix” the canonical storyline and they are presented as the only capable people who can do that.

The most indicative work when it comes to a trope of time crasher defeating the evil Dumbledore in the Russophone fanfiction is Aniklin’s work “Стать Волян-де-Мортом” (Become Voldemort). There, a time crasher in Harry Potter’s body is reborn as Voldemort and gains a chance to uncover the truth where Voldemort is merely a victim of Dumbledore’s manipulations. Then he is reborn as Harry Potter again in order to see that after he kills Voldemort, Dumbledore raises from the dead and takes over the entire wizarding world and turns it for the worse, ultimately leading to its destruction. As Harry remembers “Великий светлый маг Альбус Дамблдор, восставший из мёртвых вскоре после победы над Волян-де-Мортом, пришёл к власти и быстро навёл порядок. «Общее благо» оказалось весьма и весьма избирательным”⁵⁷ just as the other works in the Russophone space have predicted, the “common good” in Dumbledore’s vision was disastrous (Aniklin, “Стать Волян-де-Мортом”, chapter 1). The word “избирательным” (selective) is used which confirms that Dumbledore was not fighting for a better world for everyone, but a selective few: himself and his followers. This destroys Dumbledore’s image of a hero who cares about the Wizarding World and brings forth his hunger for power and manipulative nature.

Dumbledore’s hunger for power is presented as something that will ruin the Wizarding society as his desire to manipulate and rule the society led to a scenario where wizards were discovered and exterminated by muggles:

⁵⁷ The great light wizard Albus Dumbledore, who rose from the dead shortly after the victory over Voldemort, came to power and quickly restored order. The "common good" proved to be very, very selective.

В полном ужасе маги забились в древние родовые поместья и волшебные школы, но и тут им не было спасения. За большую сумму магловскому правительству удалось купить информацию — предателями, кстати говоря, оказались незабвенные Рональд и Уильям Уизли, которые выдали одну из главных тайн современного магического мира. В результате маглы нашли и сломали защитные артефакты, установленные на магловских антеннах [...] Волшебники оказались абсолютно беззащитны, задавленные числом и военной мощью маглов⁵⁸ (Aniklin, “Стать Волан-де-Мортом”, chapter 1).

By Dumbledore’s orders wizards were introduced to the muggles and muggles did exactly what the previous Russophone fanfictions were afraid of—they started to experiment on wizards and eventually exterminate them. The traitors in the story are wizards themselves, who were loyal to the Dumbledore and the Order of the Phoenix, showing that anyone who follows Dumbledore has no morality. This aligns with the Russophone media’s paranoia of an enemy lurking within and outside and being eager to destroy their world which was discussed earlier in chapter one.

However, there is a way to erase this past and to never let it happen, which will “fix” the entire history in the world of that fanfiction and Harry Potter as a time-crasher is exactly the hero needed for that. He travels back in time and kills Dumbledore to make sure this horrible future never takes place: “Когда Гарри только попал сюда, он хотел этого — простой обычной мести, убить того, кто разрушит мир. Это была его первая мысль. Но он не хотел снова пачкать руки кровью. И вот пришлось. [...] Нужно было быстро придумать, что делать с телом директора”⁵⁹ (Aniklin, “Стать Волан-де-Мортом”, chapter 16). Although time-crasher Harry, as a positive hero does not want to make an act of the killing, to “fix” the history he

⁵⁸ In utter terror, wizards retreated to ancient family estates and wizarding schools, but even there they found no refuge. For a large sum, the Muggle government managed to buy information—the traitors, incidentally, turned out to be the unforgettable Ronald and William Weasley, who had revealed one of the greatest secrets of the modern wizarding world. As a result, the Muggles found and destroyed protective artifacts installed on Muggle antennas [...] The wizards found themselves completely defenseless, overwhelmed by the Muggles' numbers and military might.

⁵⁹ When Harry first came here, he wanted this—simple, ordinary revenge, to kill the one who would destroy the world. That was his first thought. But he didn't want to stain his hands with blood again. And so he had to. [...] He had to figure out quickly what to do with the headmaster's body.

should, so he takes that responsibility upon himself and saves the wizarding world from the utter destruction, as a strong leader should.

Everything works out for the time-crasher's favor as after the death of the Dumbledore he is finally able to live a peaceful life and the wizarding world no longer has a threat looming over them: "Что ж! Настало время идти дальше и начать жить! Он сделал всё что мог и хотел. Настоящего Альбуса нет, и его безумных идей, погубивших мир, — тоже. Гарри Поттеру пришла пора вернуться в волшебный мир, а «Альбусу Дамблдору» умереть от старости”⁶⁰ (Aniklin, “Стать Волан-де-Мортом”, chapter 16). Thus, the time crusher in Aniklin's fanfic is a hero, a grand figure, who has a knowledge of the future and single handedly saves the entire world of the wizards from the destruction by defeating the villain. The act of killing Dumbledore in this case is not only an act of defeating a single villainous figure. It is a symbolic act of defeating decades of manipulations, deceptions, and corruption. Only after killing those vices, the wizarding world can start to live prosperously under the rule of a strong leader who will bring stability to the society.

Section 2.3: Happy Ever After and the Nature of Time-Crusher Stories and Their Appeal

The promise of a “happy ever after” is especially appealing in Russophone fanfiction. Rather than merely changing individual fates, these time crusher stories seek to repair broader social and institutional failures. The ability to return to the past and fix it becomes a way for restoring order, rebuilding trust, and imagining a prosperous future. The appeal of time crusher narratives extends beyond mere entertainment, it is a vital reassuring narrative repetition. This

⁶⁰ Well! It's time to move on and start living! He's done everything he could and wanted. The real Albus is gone, and so are his crazy ideas that destroyed the world. It's time for Harry Potter to return to the wizarding world, and for "Albus Dumbledore" to die of old age.

section will explore the popularity of the time crasher narratives in the Russophone fandom and explain it through the perspective of fandom study scholars such as Kelley, Zubernis, Larson and others. I will argue that time crasher stories can also function as a form of self-insert fantasy within Russophone fanfiction community. The time crasher is not only a tool for correcting institutional failure, but also a vehicle for personal narrative fulfillment, where the writer achieves competence and recognition. In this sense, the ultimate social order and happy ending produced by these fix-it narratives operates on two levels. Primarily it resolves broader anxieties about institutional distrust and instability, however on a smaller level it is also a tale of personal self-insert narrative fulfillment, where one succeeds in altering historical outcomes and securing a stable and prosperous future for themselves.

Most of the characters in the time crasher stories are ordinary people in their original lives before time crashing. An unremarkable personality in the previous life makes it easier for the writer and the reader to associate themselves with the time-crasher, who later on will become a strong leader. In a time-crasher work “Гарри Поттер, неучтённый фактор и всё остальное” (Harry Potter, the Unaccounted Factor and Everything Else) by РавиШанкаР, seventy sixth work on the ficbook.com when ranked by popularity, the time-crasher is an ordinary figure just like in “Кто вы, профессор Амбридж?” discussed earlier, who wakes up in Harry Potter’s body yet remembers her previous life: “К моменту моей смерти мне исполнилось пятьдесят три года, и большую часть своей жизни я проработала обычной школьной учительницей”⁶¹ (РавиШанкаР, “Гарри Поттер, неучтённый фактор и всё остальное,” chapter 1). This characters who presents herself as an “ordinary teacher” becomes the strongest politician in the Wizarding World and goes on to destroy Dumbledore and establish a prosperous order.

⁶¹ At the time of my death I was fifty-three years old and had spent most of my life working as an ordinary school teacher.

If the time crasher is to become a strong leader, then a question of why the Russophone writers choose to present them as ordinary and powerless people in the beginning arises.

Borenstein in his book on online web time crasher novels argues that this allows the authors to play a role of someone important when in reality they do not have power over their society and surroundings.

Borenstein in his work on time-crashers on Russian online web novels states:

What looks like simple nostalgia proves to be much more complicated; the accidental time traveler's relationship with both his home time period and the world in which he arrives is one of profound estrangement. Both in the present and in the means by which he travels to the past, he exerts little agency over his own life. Only in the historical fantasyland that greets him does he get to play the hero. If the circumstances of the present are beyond his control, those of the past are not (Borenstein, 2024, 18).

Borenstein argues that time crashing is a means for writers to exercise agency over their reality and feel like the hero which they cannot accomplish in their real lives.

The appeal of this type of self-insertion into the narrative can be explained from fan studies perspective. This notion of inserting a character that they relate to into the narration can be explained through "identification with narration" as Cohen states, "Unlike the more distanced mode of reception—that of spectatorship—identification is a mechanism through which audience members experience reception and interpretation of the text from the inside, as if the events were happening to them" (Cohen, 2001, p. 245). Thus, in those works the people who identify themselves as those ordinary clerks, receive a chance to live through grand heroisms and strong relationships through other characters. As scholars in fan studies state, this experience might even be preferred for some people as it creates a sense of a displacement. As Zubernis and Larsen state writing through fanfiction gives people a "sense of safety through displacement" (Zubernis & Larsen, 2012, p. 102). Displacement here refers to the fact that those authors are not

writing about themselves per se, they are writing about an ordinary character that they can relate to, which in turn gives them comfort to change this character into a figure of a strong leader and then associate themselves with that character.

Thus, they can imagine themselves to be heroes who can “fix” the plots that they seem tragic in the original storyline and through this they can feel a sense of accomplishment.

Borenstein states that in those cases the “personal” becomes global as:

Trying to fix world or national history by hijacking one’s own personal history is the assertion of a particular type of cosmos, in which the micro is a synecdoche for the macro. The personal is not just political; it is integral to the fate of the nation. This is narcissism on a cosmic scale, beyond even the “great man” theory of history. The hero/authorial stand-in (often an office or IT worker, both of which are common day jobs for F&SF writers) just happens to be the person who can save everything. Office drones to the rescue!” (Borenstein, 2024, 21).

Borenstein argues that the time crasher stories of ordinary people who then become strong leaders is a narcissistic fantasy of one person being able to save the entire nation. This shows that regardless of how absurd people might think time crusher stories are, they also show that the fantasy of a nation’s fate being determined by actions of a one strong leader is still strong in people’s minds. Public consciousness is still stuck on an idea that one strong leader is capable of resolving institutional distrust and corrupted government and regardless is the character is a self-insert or not, the myth of a strong leader continues to live on. In both of those cases the fate of the nation and the fate of the individual are essentially the same.

Although the fantasy of a self-insert greatness might seem narcissistic or illogical, nevertheless this fantasy is very appealing to the public as Borenstein states that we “cannot ignore them. Time Crasher stories appear to be the fastest growing variety of F&SF in Russia. Even excluding accidental travel to nonhistorical destinations, the genre is too large to keep track of. The twenty-fourth edition of the online Complete Encyclopedia of Popadantsy to the Past

(Viazovskii and Garik, Polnaia entsiklopediia, 24th ed.) has 2,100 entries, including 222 works that were not listed in the previous edition posted only five months earlier” (Borenstein, 2024, 17). This amount also translates to the number of time-crasher stories produced for the Russophone Harry Potter fandom monthly as in the weekly popular lists of works on the website, the stories with time-crashers take at least seven positions out of twenty, which is thirty five percent of the entire list. This shows that time crasher stories are well read, appreciated by the online public and their popularity will only continue to grow as the time goes.

The popularity of the time crasher stories could be explained through various perspectives. One perspective is that narrative repetition of a happy end and order provides an affirmative story on a personal level that is appealing to the audience. Although the “time crasher” stories oppose the canon and distort the original narrative, the need for such narratives in the Russophone fandom could also be explained through the innate need for affirmative and positive narrative repetition. Kustridz discusses the repeating of the fix-it narratives across Anglophone media: “Psychoanalysis and cognitive psychology also invest in the potential therapeutic and liberatory power of narrative repetition [...] to transform the chaos of life into a coherent and affirmative story” (Kurstitz, 2018, p. 510). The feeling of hopelessness and living in the loop of “smuta” might be elevated for a little bit by identifying with the story where the strong leader saves the entire world by taking all the right actions, and not making any mistakes.

The time crasher tag is a growing and a very popular tag across all the fandoms, not only *Harry Potter* in the Russophone space and its popularity could be partially explained by people’s desire for happy endings. The literature on narratives and fan studies suggests: “In our own time happy endings have come to seem trivial and frivolous, appropriate only to Hollywood movies, light fiction, or children’s literature” (Pape, 1992, p.180). Even if the *Harry Potter* series is

considered as children's literature, it still has tragic elements that make fanfiction writers want to "fix-it" such as Cedric Diggory's death, Harry's godfather Sirius Black's death and the decay of the old pureblood families. So, in this case, fanfiction takes it upon itself to be the "frivolous" literature, that nonetheless creates a happy ending that thousands of people are so eager for. Pape's research states that the desire for happy endings is natural for human beings: "Both children and adults have a desire to impose structure on the world's chaos [...] both long for happiness [...] strongly palpable instinct working toward a happy ending" (Pape, 1992, p.181). And as Pape concludes, "The literary happy ending serves to confirm the reader in the belief that, despite all the misfortune and unhappiness in the world, the man of reason finally achieves happiness" (Pape, 1992, p.182). In the familiar manner, those works of fanfictions believe that with the right knowledge and leadership one can "fix" entire communities and avert biggest tragedies.

The desire for a happy ending is universal, yet it is up to various communities to choose a way towards it and this choice can tell one a lot about the myths a community might still believe in and in the case of the Russophone media space it is a myth about a strong leader that can save a nation and stopping the cycle of historical tragedies.

Conclusion

This study shows that, despite originating from the same canonical text series, the Russophone and Anglophone Harry Potter fanfiction differ dramatically in their narrative and character interpretations. The Russophone fanfiction body is unique in its sense of distrust, paranoia and belief in corruption among authorities and institutions. This kind of interpretation is an influence of a turbulent history experienced by the Russophone space and mentioned all over

the Russophone media as people's loss of trust in institutions after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the nostalgia for the past and attempts to reconstruct it have left traces in all the ways people interpret narratives and storylines. The overwhelming pressure and a sense of dread that comes from that worldbuilding is then relived and "fixed" through stories about time-crashers, another phenomena unique to the Russophone fanfiction body, which allows people to come to escape the turbulent wheel of the history and past traumas connected to fall of the systems. The "fix-it" stories serve as a way for the author and the reader to "make things right" and the ways in which those Russophone fanfiction authors decided to do it shows that the belief in a "strong leader" who can save the entire nation which can be traced all the way back to Peter the Great and even further Ivan the Terrible, is still strong in people's minds and beliefs.

Media spaces are very interconnected and the Russophone space, even the fandom parts of it, are also a part of one big system and analyzing fanfiction in the context of political decisions, media occurrences and public opinion can show us what narratives are straying in people's minds and which one are not. As stated in the beginning, fanfiction is a "microcosm" of a society it is written in, so in this case Russophone fanfictions has showed us that the Russophone society is still recovering from the Soviet Union's fall and the destruction of the authorities, and as a result there is still a lingering sense of paranoia, distrust, and a desire for a strong leadership.

Regarding the limitations of this study, while I have analyzed two hundred fanfictions which allowed me to identify recurring narratives and themes, it still cannot represent the entirety of the Russophone and Anglophone fanfiction body. It also cannot be uniform across all the fandoms, as Borenstein earlier discussed how unique and important *Harry Potter* series are to the Russophone space. The trends and narratives might differ slightly when analyzing other

fandoms, as each fandom has its own unique narratives and storylines. Thus, since the study focuses exclusively on *Harry Potter* fandom fanfiction, some identified trends may be influenced by the structure of the original canonical work itself.

The future research could delve into the Russophone fandoms across different fandoms, or it could also work within the time frame of pre-2022 and post-2022 as the Russophone world goes through big societal changes in media at this period. A direction for future research also could be an exploration of themes of queer relationship as well as gender dynamics, or one might delve into the difference in portrayal of poverty through Weasley family across Russophone and Anglophone fandoms. This thesis explored the fanfictions through the angle of opinions on institutions and attitudes towards authority, yet there are many other directions that could be explored in the future.

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