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Found Family in Fanfiction
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I declare that I have worked on this thesis independently, using only the primary and secondary sources listed in the bibliography.

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Author’s signature
Introduction

“Fan fiction is what literature might look like if it were reinvented from scratch after a nuclear apocalypse by a band of brilliant pop-culture junkies trapped in a sealed bunker. They don’t do it for money. That’s not what it’s about. The writers write it and put it up online just for the satisfaction. They’re fans, but they’re not silent, couchbound consumers of media. The culture talks to them, and they talk back to the culture in its own language.”


Fanfiction, also written as fan fiction, is a term that refers to stories written by fans for fans that deal with characters and storyworlds established in certain media, such as television shows, books, movies, video games and more. Fanfiction writing is a form of creative engagement with the source text, along with fan art, fan edits, fan videos, or other fan texts. Fanfiction has been theorized as resistance to mainstream, a transgressive work, a literary criticism, it has been explored in terms of its form as a work in progress, a collaborative work and a type of performative storytelling. It has been discussed in terms of its legality. Particular attention has been dedicated to the genre of slash fanfiction (which focuses on romantic and sexual relationships between male characters) as a medium for gay representation. However, J. L. Barnes points out that there is a lack of psychological research on the topic of fanfiction (80).

Drawing inspiration from the questions that Barnes suggests for further research on fanfiction (80), in my thesis I aim to explore the appeal of creating and exploring meaningful bonds as an important incentive for the engagement of writers and readers with fanfiction. Even though that majority of fanfiction tends to focus on romantic relationships between characters, my thesis focuses on the concept of found family as a significant driving force behind the engagement with fanfiction. In the thesis, the found family is understood as a group of unrelated people with whom a person forges deep and meaningful bonds, similar to a
certain degree to those idealized between family members. I argue that writers and readers of fanfiction look for such bonds in their engagement with one another, in their engagement with the fictional characters in fanfiction works, and in the bonds which the fictional characters share between themselves. The concept of found family can therefore be analyzed as a trope that is present in popular fanfiction works. In order to do so, I draw upon existing psychological tools which define functions of family and friends, and analyze the presence of these functions in popular fanfiction works written about the characters from an American television series *Voltron Legendary Defender*.

The first chapter discusses the origins of fanfiction and its key characteristics.

The second chapter explores the concept of found family as present in the fanfiction community, in the relationship of writers and readers of fanfiction and the characters, and in fanfiction works themselves as a trope.

In the third chapter, the functions of found family are established, the series *Voltron Legendary Defender* is introduced as well as its characters, and the functions of found family are analyzed in two fanfiction works.

### 1. What is Fanfiction

#### 1.1 Origins of Fanfiction

Most academics date the origins of fanfiction to 1960s to the rise of *Star Trek* fandom and the following culture of zines and mailing lists in 1970s and 80s (Hellekson and Busse, Introduction 6). This approach restricts the term fanfiction to “rewriting of shared media” (Hellekson and Busse, Introduction 6), to “reworkings of currently copyrighted material” (Coppa 226). Fanfiction writers are then those who do not hold the copyright of the characters and storyworlds they write about. In this paper the term fanfiction is used in this meaning.
However, it is noteworthy to mention that some scholars place fanfiction into a broader context of collective storytelling and retelling, tagging, for example, *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as the earliest versions of fanfiction (Hellekson and Busse, Introduction 6).

No matter to how long ago they date the beginnings of fanfiction, scholars agree that the event that most affected not only the culture of fanfiction writing, but the culture of fans in general was the arrival of Internet and the rapid development of digital technologies (Hellekson and Busse, “Work in Progress” 2; Thomas 2). It was what turned fan activities from obscure “nerdish” interests, that were more often than not scoffed at, into popular celebratory activities at which, to a certain degree, everyone who enjoys shared media participates in. Internet allowed fans from all over the world to share their interests and thoughts instantaneously, to engage in discussions and create fan communities. Fanfiction writers can publish their works online and get immediate feedback. Fans of any kind can collaborate on various projects that transcend one single medium or form.

“The mainstreaming of fan cultures,” as Hellekson and Busse call it (Introduction 5), also increased the attention that has been given to fanfiction as a practice interesting for academic studies. Hellekson and Busse also note that Henry Jenkins and Camille Bacon-Smith, the authors of pioneering academic works on fan cultures *Textual Poachers* and *Enterprising Women* respectively, had to “find a way into the community, go to conventions, and mail-order hard-copy fanzines that collected fan-written stories and artwork” (Introduction 4). But the arrival of the Internet provided easy access and new methods of study for scholars who occupy with fan cultures and fanfiction in particular.

The Internet enabled writers to share fanfiction on various social media, blogs, journaling platforms, archives and more recently also apps. What is imperative to note when studying fanfiction is that all these have “changed modes of distribution and consumption, and with it the demographics of fan fiction fans” (Hellekson and Busse, Introduction 7-8).
The online environment where fanfiction is published is an essential influence on what fanfiction looks like nowadays, and directly correlates with other key characteristics of fanfiction which set it apart as its own genre. A genre that needs to be approached and studied with regards to its specific nature.

1.2 Key Characteristics of Fanfiction

Throughout the years of fanfiction studies scholars have identified essential characteristics of fanfiction that frame it as a transgressive repetitive and collaborative work in progress.

1.2.1 Fanfiction as Transgression

Firstly, it is important to state that academic fan culture studies have often chosen to deal with transformative fans who have active approach to the media, they do not only passively consume, they actively engage with the source text (Hellekson and Busse, Introduction 3). Hellekson and Busse distinguish affirmative fans from transformative by describing the former as those who tend to “collect, view, and play, to discuss, analyze and critique”, whilst the latter “make the worlds and characters their own” (Introduction 3). Fanfiction writers therefore categorize as the latter. Thomas writes that due to these transformative powers, fanfiction gets labeled as a transgressive force (7). Therefore, fanfiction can and has been viewed in this sense as resistance of the source material.

The transgressive aspect of fanfiction has also been linked to the nature of its writers (and readers). Barnes points out the consensus of fanfiction researchers who agree that fanfiction writers are predominantly female, and she goes on to say that this has been theorized to be caused by “the marginalization of female audiences by the source material itself” (74). She refers to Tosenberg when stating that fanfiction writing has been described as a practice through which women appropriate, transgress, subvert, and resist the source
material in order to make the stories “more female-friendly” (74). This is reflected in the themes and characteristics of fanfiction stories, and it has been linked to the fact that these stories tend to focus more on emotions and characters than the plot.

Barnes refers to Jenkins who suggests that fanfiction as written by women reflects “a more female style of meaning-making that is less emotionally distanced than the forms of analysis typically accepted within the male literary establishment” (76). Jenkins highlights that this is caused by social experience, when boys and girls are pushed towards different types of stories and furthermore, women have to consume media dominated by the male narratives, that can be “heavily encoded with misogynistic assumptions” and where women are underrepresented (116). Moreover, both boys and girls are taught to devalue female-centered stories (Jenkins 116). This further supports the notion of understanding fanfiction as resistance of the mainstream and critique of the media that marginalizes female narratives.

However, it is not only women who have been using fanfiction as a transgressive force. Abigail Derecho places fanfiction into a tradition of archontic literature due to its archival nature, as it “remains forever open to new entries, new artifacts, new contents”, which she says is according to Jacques Derrida a feature of every archive. Derecho writes that archontic literature has been a genre popular with writers “who belong to “cultures of the subordinate””. She writes that it has often been used “by minority groups and women as a technique for making social and cultural criticisms”. Even though Derecho goes on to discuss women as the group behind fanfiction, there is another group which has also been using fanfiction in such ways - the queers.

Queer writers use fanfiction as a safe space to explore sexualities and identities that belong to the queer spectrum, which is often not possible for them in real life, and also in reaction to the history of the lack of positive representation in the media. Even though significant progress has been made in this department in recent years, fanfiction is still unique
in being an open space where there is no queerbaiting – when the source material introduces a possibly queer pairing but does not go through with it and does not acknowledge it as such I the work itself – and no censorship from the part of production studies or publishers. Fanfiction is a space where writers can reimagine their favorite characters as queer and write about them as the main heroes of their stories. And the fans can do so in an accepting community of like-minded people.

There has been a controversy around the writing of slash fanfiction in particular. It has been viewed as “straight women writing gay men” (Lackner et al.), and academics have questioned whether it should be celebrated as subversive due to the fact that its women writing erotic fiction in a patriarchal society, or if it should be “denigrated as misogynistic for the absence of women characters” (Lackner et al.). Lackner et al. also note that “disagreement exists over whether or not the male characters in slash are women disguised as men, androgynous men, (straight) men the way (straight) women want them or want them to behave, or gay men”. They argue that such approach wrongly tries to fit these characters into one box, ignoring the existence of a spectrum of possible meanings and shadings. They vouch for moving away from the straight/gay binary assumption in discussions of fandom and fan fiction, since “because of historical, technological, and social changes during the past decades, different nationalities and generations of fans of many different sexual identities are visibly interacting in ways that were impossible to see even a decade ago.”

This variety is also nowadays represented in the fanfiction texts themselves. Even though the majority of fanfiction stories still tends to be slash, fanfiction writers interpret and reinterpret characters not only as homosexual but as bisexual, pansexual or asexual, as nonbinary, genderfluid, trans, aromantic, and more. Worth mentioning is also the trope called Everyone is Gay, when the writers make everyone in the main cast of characters fall somewhere on the queer spectrum.
To summarize, fanfiction has been viewed and analyzed as a transgressive practice due to its ability to appropriate, transform and subvert the source material, and has been used in such ways by women and queer writers in particular, as a tool through which they can explore the mainstream narratives which have often marginalized these groups or provided an unsatisfying representation of them. Fanfiction is a dominion of counterculture, a space where these groups can make the mainstream stories their own, and also to focus more on the emotional aspect and identity exploration, which are forms of analysis that the society dominated by male narratives has looked down on as inferior.

1.2.2 Fanfiction as a Repetitive Collaborative Work in Progress

Francesca Coppa in her work *Writing Bodies in Space: Media Fan Fiction as Theatrical Performance* likens the practice of fanfiction writing to the making of productions in theater. Fanfiction writers rely on the readers’ shared extratextual knowledge of the source material (canon), but they create their own interpretations of the characters, the world and the events of the source material, choosing to ignore, highlight, add, expand upon or criticize certain aspects of the canon. However, it is not only the fanfiction writers who actively shape the fandom experience, all fans participate on creating a “web of ever-changing, ever growing fan texts, including fiction, art, music videos, and even theory and criticism” shared on the internet (Stein and Busse 197). Through the ever-growing expansion of this “fannish intertext” (Stein and Busse 197), a multitude of versions of the characters comes into being. Coppa writes that “modern fandom takes something three-dimensional and then produces an infinite number of scripts” (225).

All fans thus “create and contribute to the formation of interpretative communities” that “define themselves around shared readings of a character, a pairing, or a particular aspect of fictional universe” (Stein and Busse 197). Simply said, fans unite over what they like and
then repeat it. They create new meanings through the variations of certain canon aspects, and they also reuse, recycle and renegotiate the fannish interpretations. Hellekson and Busse note that these multitudes of interpretations are often “contradictory yet complementary to one another and the source text”, and still they co-reside in the fandom (“Work in Progress” 7).

The fandom experience of the characters constantly expands and changes with every new fannish addition, but also with the expansion of the source text through the publication of new episode, season, book or volume. This makes fanfiction an ever-expanding work in progress. Even though the readers do not necessarily have to stay up to date with the source material and the community, or might even choose not to do so, due to their discontentment with one or the other, they might miss certain nuances, meanings or themes in the fanfiction stories, since fanfiction often reacts to the new developments in the source material and the community. This can include for example specific - aspects of a story that are not mentioned in the canon, but fans accept them as true - or new information revealed by producers or actors in interviews and on convention panels.

Headcanons are another example of the repetitive nature of fanfiction, but while these are usually small specific things about the characters, fanfiction also likes to repeat tropes, which are more general and not tied to a specific fandom. Tropes can be specific moments or plot points, for example bed sharing (when characters due to circumstances have to share one bed) or mind control, even though with fanfiction there is no actual need for a plot, so a fanfiction can be entirely about bed sharing and nothing else. There are also bigger tropes called AUs (Alternate Universe), which can be considered genres of fanfiction. For example, soulmate AU, when characters are designated as perfect matches for each other and can recognize each other by special marks or an event. More tropes can be combined in one fanfiction and they can even be subverted, for example, a soulmate AU in which the main characters are not in fact each other's soulmate but want to be together despite it.
Thomas refers to Sandvoss, who “makes the point that whereas literary texts are often valued for their ability to defamiliarize the everyday, fans seek out texts that give them the pleasure of familiarity and that fulfill rather than challenge their expectation” (14). In other words, while in literature originality is celebrated, whether as present within the genre limitations or in transcending them, the fanfiction community celebrates repetition, reusing and reinterpreting shared ideas. Fanfiction therefore offers familiarity through repetition, when readers can look for stories not only about certain pairings they like, but also certain tropes.

2. Found Family in Fanfiction

2.1 Community as Found Family

When people talk about found family, even outside of its literary context where it figures as a popular trope, they are referring to people who are not blood family, but with whom a person “forges deep and meaningful bonds [...] based on things like shared values, mutual care and support, understanding, unconditional love, and positive regard” (“What is ‘Found Family’?”). It is not only a matter of fictional realms, relationships like these are formed in real life as well, oftentimes when person feels lack of such bonds with their blood relations, or simply does not have them. Keeping in mind the dangers of anonymity, it is nonetheless also possible to form such relationships via Internet. Fandom provides space where you can find “your people”, bringing together fans with common interests and passions. In fanfiction community in particular, readers and writers can communicate about the stories posted on online fanfiction archives, and their relationship can further develop from there.
Found family is also called the family of choice, highlighting the decision of a group of unrelated people to commit to one another as a crucial aspect of such bond. Similar commitment can be observed in the fanfiction community, in particular between writers and readers, when readers show their support through liking and commenting the works they enjoy, providing feedback and inspiration, giving the writers the validation that fuels them to keep writing and sharing their work. The two biggest online fanfiction archives fanfiction.net and Archive of Our Own also both provide the option to get email notifications when a particular writer publishes something new or when a certain story updates, by clicking the “follow” button (fanfiction.net)/the “subscribe” button (Archive of Our Own). Readers can in this way commit to the story, which shows their support and inspires writers to stay committed to the story too.

2.2 Characters as Found Family

Fanfiction is characteristic in being heavily focused on characters, their emotions and relationships. Barnes writes that engagement with fanfiction requires “an intense emotional investment in the source material (and specifically, the characters and relationships therein)” (76; parentheses in original). This emotional investment of fanfiction readers also extends to the practice of identifying with characters, which can become a means of self-analysis (Jenkins 112). Fanfiction writing and reading has also been described by fans themselves as having a therapeutic value; for writers it can be a method of working through personal issues, and they in turn get messages from readers expressing gratitude and describing how specific fanfiction stories helped them when they were going through hard times in their life.

Larsen and Zubernis refer to an online survey from 2011 conducted by Teresa Stern. The respondents’ answers revealed that fandom “builds confidence and self-esteem, offers a support system, and creates a space where people can explore and grow more comfortable
with their identity” (87). Larsen and Zubernis also refer to a discussion on Livejournal, where fans “emphasized the freedom of expression offered by fanfiction as a source of play, experimentation and identity exploration” (88). This freedom of experimentation and identity exploration is tied to the writers and readers of fanfiction being predominantly queer and female, and their usage of fanfiction to explore themes which are not sufficiently represented in the mainstream, as was discussed in the chapter Fanfiction as Transgression. However, Larsen and Zubernis highlight the fact that when writing fanfiction, fans do not necessarily think about it as a transgressive practice, as a critique that changes the narrative to empower marginalized voices or foreground marginalized themes and characters. Rather, fans use “the familiar characters with whom they identify to play out whatever the writer (and readers) want and need to express” (100; parentheses in original). Even though this does not change the fact that fanfiction is in its nature transgressive, the motivation of fans to engage with fanfiction can in reality be more about personal needs and desires.

Moreover, the engagement with fanfiction is a matter of personal preferences also because readers and writers of fanfiction create strong attachments to specific characters they enjoy reading about. Barnes notes that academics have drawn parallels between relationships that we can form with fictional characters and the relationships that children can create with imaginary friends (69). Barnes also writes that “some scholars have characterized fanfiction as a means of gaining control over our parasocial relationships with characters,” referring to Van Steenhuyse and Berkowitz (75). Even though these parasocial relationships are one-sided, they have many of the “hallmarks of real relationships” (77). The commitment of readers and writers to the characters in fanfiction is apparent in that they keep coming back to read or write more and more stories about them.

Overall, it can be concluded that fanfiction community as a whole can play the function of found family in the sense that it provides a place where writers and readers can
find understanding, solace, company and even consolation. However, this does not necessarily require a conversation exchange, fans can find these things in the fanfiction stories themselves, as they are focused on characters' emotional journeys and relationships. Readers can find characters to whom they relate and stories that resonate with their personal experience, and these stories can provide them the feeling of not being alone in their struggles; they can find advice in these stories written by people who might have gone through a similar experience. In relation to stories that include a group of characters who treat each other as found family, fans can experience its supporting functions through or rather together with the protagonist(s). Since fanfiction as character-driven stories can have a therapeutic aspect by functioning as a method of self-analysis, an exploration of identity and sexuality, and a tool that helps people work through their personal issues, the characters in fanfiction can function for the readers and writers as found family by providing the needed safe space, acceptance and even support and advice, which they might not be getting in real life from their biological family and friends.

The existing research about fanfiction addresses the practices linked to the character-driven quality of fanfiction such as foregrounding of side characters, moral realignment of characters, personalization of characters, romantic and erotic shipping, and emotional intensification. These techniques used in fanfiction were first identified by Jenkins (178). The researchers have also observed how fans fill in the gaps in the narrative of the canon with information about characters’ backgrounds, motivations, emotions and desires (Barnes 76). But there is a lack of research which would focus on the exploration of platonic relationships in fanfiction, on the importance of friendship as one of the key themes in fanfiction stories and the popularity of the found family trope in particular.
2.3 Found Family as a Trope

According to fanlore.org, “Families of Choice, also sometimes called found family, is a trope often associated with ensembles or team-based canons,” and “it involves two or more people choosing to treat one another as family in an emotional sense (and sometimes legally as well)” (“Families of Choice”; parentheses in original). The website tvtropes.org describes that found family is formed when characters are isolated from their blood related family, due to circumstances or a secret they cannot share with them, or when they are orphans, or when their biological family does not provide the support and love that the characters need (“Family of Choice”). These unrelated characters choose to treat and support each other as family. What is again highlighted here is the decision to commit to care for each other, which is also what according to this page differentiates the found family trope from the tropes called Fire-Forged Friends or the Band of Brothers, which are bonds made after the plot forces the characters to work together (“Family of Choice”). This paper however does not make such distinction, considering that the decision to treat each other as found family usually comes after the characters are forced to work together and subsequently grow closer to each other and bond. However, the decision to commit to take care of each other as family is still considered as a crucial characteristic(s) of the found family trope.

Found family is therefore in this thesis understood as a group of characters who commit to care for each other, love each other and support each other as a family ideally would, in the absence of the characters’ biological family or its failure to provide such support. In other words, the found family consists of a group of ideal friends who are here for each other when their biological family is not.

Found family can in particular include variations on character tropes such as a responsible adult that acts as a parental substitute, friends who think of each other as siblings,
or an honorary uncle, who is an adult friend of a character’s parent that is highly invested in the character’s wellbeing (“Family of Choice”).

2.3.1 **Found Family as a Queer Trope**

Found family trope can be linked to the queer nature of fanfiction readers and writers. According to an *Archive of Our Own* census, “only 38% of respondents identified as heterosexual, and more people identified as genderqueer than as male”, even though these results are not reliably representative of the fanfiction community as large, as they have sampling issues (“The Revolutionary Power”). According to Jane Hu: “fanfic communities are often a safe place for young, queer writers to begin navigating their identity”, as they can make the characters go through what they are going through (The Revolutionary Power”). When it comes to the queerness of found family, the user *lonerravenclaw* summarizes it the best in her post on tumblr:

> the found family trope in fiction is an inherently queer trope because it directly involves deconstructing the heteronormative notions of what family is and involves defining what family is for oneself rather than assuming that the people you are biologically related to are always going to support and care for you. Furthermore it inherently deconstructs and challenges amatonormativity because rather than focusing on a central romantic relationship as the genesis for a family and on forming a romantic partnership as what constitutes making a family, it is focused on close non-romantic bonds. In this essay I will
The queers as a dominant group behind fanfiction influence what themes and tropes surface as popular ones in the works, and for the reasons above, found family is a really important theme for queer youth, since they might not be getting the needed acceptance and support from their biological families.

3. The Found Family Trope in Fanfiction

3.1 Functions of Found Family

For the analysis of the Found family trope in selected fanfiction works, tools used primarily in the psychological field which identify family functions and friendship functions were consulted. In particular, the Family APGAR Scale, the McGill Friendship Questionnaires and The Friendship Qualities Scale. The Family APGAR Scale, designed for assessing family function, identifies five components of family function: Adaptability, Partnership, Growth, Affection, and Resolve. The McGill Friendship Questionnaires, designed to measure friendship quality in late adolescents and young adults, identify six friendship functions: stimulating companionship, help, intimacy, reliable alliance, self-validation and emotional security. The Friendship Qualities Scale, designed to assess the quality of childrens’ and early adolescents’ relationships with their best friends, identifies five conceptually meaningful aspects of the friendship relation: Companionship, Conflict, Help (with two subscales: Aid and Protection), Security (with two subscales: Transcending Problems and Trust), and Closeness (with two subscales: Reflected Appraisal and Affective Bond).

A considerable overlap between family functions and friendship functions was observed, which correlates with the fans’ understanding of found family as a group of ideal friends, and it is also the view adopted in this thesis.
For the purposes of this thesis, with regards to all three aforementioned academic tools that were consulted, the idealized functions of a Found Family were synthesized into 6 categories. The focus is on the functions that can be measured in the interactions of fictional characters in a written text. Since the relationships between members of a found family tend to be more focused on emotional support than material, the functions of family in regards to its status as an economic unit, which were mentioned in the APGAR scale, were for the most part omitted.

1) **Stimulating Companionship** – members of a found family commit to spend time together, because they enjoy each other’s company and they like doing fun activities together

2) **Emotional Intimacy and Aid**
   
a) **Emotional Security** - members of a found family provide each other comfort and confidence, and a safe space for expressing thoughts and feelings, they trust each other and can rely on each other in the emotional sense, they are sensitive to each other’s needs and states
   
b) **Validation** – it is important for a found family members to help each other maintain confidence in themselves and their capabilities, they encourage each other’s desires and wishes, and they make sure each member knows that they are important and valued

3) **Care, Support and Guidance** - caring about each other’s wellbeing and safety, willingness to offer help when one is in trouble, helping with personal growth, offering aid, advice and guidance when it is needed

4) **Partnership** - as partners, found family makes their decisions together, discusses matters that affect the whole group, shares responsibilities and solves problems together
5) **Affection** – members of a found family feel affection towards each other, which they can express physically and verbally

6) **Transcending Problems** – the bond between the members is strong enough that they can overcome problems and conflicts, they can maintain their friendship despite disagreements

### 3.2 Found Family in *Voltron Legendary Defender*

*Voltron Legendary Defender* is an American animated web television series produced by *DreamWorks Animation* and *World Events Productions*, released on *Netflix*. It is based on the original American TV show, *Voltron: Defender of the Universe*, which was released in 1984. Since the release of the first season of *Voltron Legendary Defender* on June 10, 2016, the series run for eight seasons, with the final one being released on December 14, 2018. The series aired 78 episodes in total.

*Voltron Legendary Defender* is a sci-fi story about four teenagers (Keith, Lance, Pidge, Hunk) and one young adult (Shiro), who are tossed into space where they meet an alien princess (Allura) and her royal adviser (Coran), and learn about the evil aliens called the Galra who aim to conquest the whole universe. The heroes become pilots of five robotic lions who can combine to form Voltron, a legendary robot warrior, and they start fighting in an intergalactic war against these aliens. Voltron is the only thing that can save the universe from the evil forces.

The five pilots of the lions are called Paladins of Voltron, namely: Shiro as the leader, Keith, Lance, Hunk and Pidge. In season 3, the team composition changed to Keith as the leader, Lance, Hunk, Pidge and Allura, but in later seasons, it alternated back to the first ensemble, only to later return to the second one.

In the canon, the relationship established between the characters are as follows:
Shiro is like an older brother to Keith, he met Keith as an orphaned child and took care of him. Hunk and Lance are best friends, and together with Pidge all three are friends from school. Allura and Coran are the last of their race. Coran was the best friend of Allura’s father, and he is her royal advisor, but he also cares about her like a substitute father.

This fandom was chosen for the analysis because there have been many complaints from the community about the series, since fans were unsatisfied with a lot of the producers’ decision, including for example the handling of the queer representation, character development, the treatment of characters with issues such as low self-esteem and even PTSD, and also with the romantic pairings established in canon. This significant discontentment with the canon and the desire to address these issues resulted in a huge produce of fanfiction works for the fandom in a short period of only three years of the series existence. The fans’ dissatisfaction with the character development included complaints about the lack of a deeper development of platonic relationships between the team as a found family, which makes the Voltron fandom suitable for analyzing how is the found family trope reflected in its fanfiction works.

3.3 Analysis of the Found Family Trope in Fanfiction

For the analysis, two fanfiction works were chosen with at least 50 000 words, due to the fact that shorter works tend to focus solely or primarily on romantic relationships with little space dedicated to exploration of other relationships.

The chosen fanfiction works both belong to the most popular ones of all Voltron fanfiction stories published on Archive of Our Own, which is currently the most used online fanfiction archive. With all of 65 000 works on Voltron listed by the number of kudos, they both appear among the first 15. Kudos represent “likes” on Archive of our Own through which readers show that they enjoyed the fanfiction.
These choices have been made in compliance with the purpose of this thesis, which is not to argue against the fact that romantic relationships are the primary focus of fanfiction, but to show that amongst the most popular stories are those that dedicate space to exploration of strong platonic relationships, in particular between a group of characters that can be considered a found family.

To include some variety in genres, one fanfiction marked as slash fanfiction and set in Alternate Universe was chosen, and one slash fanfiction set in the canon universe. In these particular works, the found family dynamics between the characters has been analyzed by focusing on how the functions of found family as discussed in the previous chapter were represented in these stories.

3.3.1 Found Family in “The Marks We Make”

Synopsis

“The Marks We Make” is a fanfiction by the user witty_name set in Alternate Universe (AU), specifically in modern setting with characters attending an American university. The work is a bit over 250 000 words long, divided into 12 chapters. The first chapter was published 1.11.2016, and it was completed on 20.3.2019. It is categorized as slash, the romantic pairing it focuses on is the relationship between Keith and Lance. It is a soulmates AU, which in this fanfiction means that they are each other’s ideal partners that are destined to meet one day. In this story, everyone has a soulmate, whether platonic or romantic, and being soulmates also means that what one writes or draws on their skin appears on their soulmates’ skin. When the soulmate is writing or drawing on his skin, a soul connection is created through which soulmates feel each other’s emotions. The story follows Keith and Lance meeting for the first time in class and then getting to know each other through becoming a part of the same friends’ group, since both of them are friends with Pidge. This
group of friends meets regularly to play Muggle Quidditch, which is an adaptation of a fictional game created by J. K. Rowling that people actually play in real life.

The tension in the story arises with Keith realizing Lance is his soulmate, and trying to come to terms with it, as he has reservations towards rushing into that kind of relationship due to his parents’ negative experience. As Keith and Lance grow closer and eventually become lovers, Lance is still not aware of the fact that Keith is his soulmate, which results in the culmination of the tension in chapter 10 when Lance finds out about this fact. This is followed by the revelation of their relationship to their friends and an eventual happy ending after the pair works through their issues.

**Relationships between the Found Family members in “The Marks We Make”**

The characters in this fanfiction are isolated from their biological families due to living on the university campus, or near it. The platonic relationships and roles of certain characters mirror to a certain degree their canon portrayal.

Shiro is Keith’s stepbrother and they are very close to each other since their mom, as well as both Keith’s and Shiro’s fathers are dead. Shiro is shown in the story to really care about Keith’s wellbeing, he asks about school and friends via text messages that are featured in the story, and even tells Keith he loves him (ch.8). There are also instances when Keith tells Shiro that he sounds “like mom” or “like dad” (ch.8).

Both Hunk and Pidge are Lance’s best friends, though Hunk was Lance’s friend long before they met Pidge at college. Hunk is also Lance’s roommate.

In this fanfiction Keith and Pidge are best friends since childhood, which much differs from canon where their relationship does not really evolve past being teammates who cooperate on missions and trust each other.
Coran and Allura are friends and co-owners of a local coffee shop, but no family relationship between them is referenced in the story, even though in canon they are very close as last surviving members of their race. In canon, Coran was also a friend of Allura's father who knew her since she was born, and came to be not only her advisor, but also friend and a sort of a substitute father.

**Functions of Found Family in “The Marks We Make”**

*Stimulating Companionship*

Even though Hunk and Lance are roommates and Lance, Allura and Coran are coworkers, they are also friends who enjoy spending time together even outside of the environment of the dormitory or work. They also are not just casual friends; they attend the same college and regularly seek out each other’s companionship between classes and work. Through the course of the story, the whole group, including all the seven main characters from the show, also meets regularly for Quidditch practice and matches, which is a fun activity that they like to enjoy together. Pidge and Keith also have a habit of watching movies together, and Lance and Hunk do face masks together.

In chapter 6, the whole group along with other members of their Quidditch team celebrate Hunk’s first meeting with his soulmate, which is in this soulmate AU a very important moment in one’s life. In chapter 7, the group also celebrates Keith’s birthday together, and in chapter 8, they all go to a zombie march, which is an entertaining event for them to enjoy in each other’s company.

*Emotional Intimacy and Aid – Emotional Security*

The emotional security and support that this found family provides for its members can be observed for example in their availability to discuss the topic of soulmates with Lance and
their awareness that it is a sensitive subject for him, due to his soulmates’ unwillingness to communicate with him through sharing words. Keith, his soulmate, only shares drawings that he paints on his skin, which appear on Lance’s thanks to their soulmate connection. Lance’s friends know that Lance likes to boast about these drawings, as they mean a lot to him as the only tangible tether to his soulmate. Already in the first chapter, we can observe Hunk, Pidge, Allura and Coran willingly complimenting his soulmarks when he boasts about them, even though Pidge also teases him for it. Additionally, Lance’s friends show this attentiveness to a topic that is important for him, despite the fact that at the same time they are annoyed by his attempts to flirt with Allura and by his silly jokes.

In chapter 3, Keith thinks about the comfort he finds in hanging out with Pidge as his best friend of many years, about how he is able to relax in her company. He muses about the fact that even though he goes to Shiro “when he wants someone strong to ground him”, only Pidge managed to make him feel normal again and helped calm him after his parents died.

Much later in the story, in chapter 11, Hunk finds Lance in a bad mood after Lance finds out that Keith knew they were soulmates but kept it a secret from Lance. Hunk reminds Lance that he is here for Lance, he says: “You know you can talk to me about whatever... right? I'm always here, man. Anytime. For anything. Just say the word, and I'm an ear and a shoulder. No judgement. You know the bro code.” Even though Lance does not want to talk about it in that moment, Hunk assures him that he will be there when Lance is ready.

When Lance does finally talk about what he has been going through with his friends, he does it by “calling a code sixty-three”, which is a pact he has with his friends, “a safety net”, which was first established on June third when Hunk came to comfort him and to provide distraction after Lance felt the overwhelming sorrow of his soulmate Keith through their soul connection, which Keith felt when his parents died in a car crash. Since then, Hunk and Lance, and later also Pidge, have been using this code as “a distress call and an emergency
lifeline” that can be “enacted at any time but only in dire circumstances”, and the others would come to keep the person company, and provide distraction in times when one of them feels overwhelmed by stress and needs an escape. This is prime example of a found family that provides safe space and comfort for its members when they need it. “They drop everything if someone calls a code sixty-three. If they can, they do. It’s just part of being best friends. Of being there, no questions asked” (ch. 11).

*Emotional Intimacy and Aid – Validation*

In the story, the members of the found family express validation of each other at the Quidditch practices and matches, as they believe in each other’s capabilities as players. For example, in the first chapter, Pidge says to Keith: “I know you’d make a better seeker than anyone we have now,” and “You’re creative and stubborn, and I have faith in you.”

Throughout the story, the characters also validate Lance’s desire to talk to his soulmate and encourage his efforts to do so. For example, in chapter 4 Allura assures Lance that asking his soulmate if he is alright and letting him know that Lance was here for him if his soulmate needed it was not too much and it was really sweet of Lance. In chapter 8, Pidge encourages Lance to talk to his soulmate, arguing that things between him and his soulmate have been getting better lately, and he should try again, reasoning that if the soulmate does not answer, it is not Lance’s fault, he can be busy or it can be overwhelming for him to respond.

*Care, Support and Guidance*

The members of the found family in this fanfiction care about each other’s well-being, which is exemplified in chapter one when Keith is concerned about the amount of coffee Pidge drinks, and Pidge is trying to get Keith to socialize, and they subsequently call each other out on acting “like a mom”. In chapter 3, Pidge asks about how Keith’s classes are
going and he tells them that they sound like Shiro who was also asking about it. Pidge argues that “Shiro isn’t the only one who cares about how you’re doing” and says that they have the right to bug him about his life as his “best friend and honorary sibling”.

Shiro also asks Keith how did Quidditch practice and meeting Pidge’s friends go in chapter 2. Pidge again echoes this concern about Keith’s tendency to keep to himself, when they say in chapter 4: “I just don’t want you to be alone anymore, Keith.” Keith answers that he is not, thanks to their efforts to include him in their friend group.

In chapter 3, Pidge voices their wish about Keith and Lance getting along, because they are both very important to them. Later in chapter 6, everyone shows their concern when Lance is avoiding Keith: “Hunk watches Lance with pity in his eyes, lips pressed into an understanding frown. Pidge just narrows their eyes, curiosity piqued as the gears turn in their mind. Allura watches him with worried frowns and smiles that are a hair too bright. Coran speaks to him with soft voices and halfhearted jokes.”

As his older brother, Shiro often offers guidance to Keith, for example by advising him on how to apologize to Lance in chapter 1. In this chapter, Allura also echoes Shiro’s catchphrase “patience yields focus,” which is carried over from the canon, where Shiro says it repeatedly, and Keith uses it to ground himself. In the fanfiction, Allura uses it at a Quidditch practice.

Moreover, similar to how Pidge advises Lance to talk to his soulmate (ch. 3, 8), they also encourage Keith to give his soulmate a chance and not to shut him off completely just because he is scared. Shiro echoes the same advice, assuring Keith that he can take his time, but also actually convincing him to go see who his soulmate is when the opportunity presents itself, in order to give himself time to process it. In chapter 7, when reacting to Keith’s fears of messing things up with his soulmate, Shiro says he believes in his ability to fix things, and he
likes the comfort he finds in knowing that his choices matter. He says to Keith: “You can choose to make it work with Lance.”

Another character who offers guidance and wise advice in the story is Coran, who is, like Allura and Shiro, older than Keith and Lance, who are the ones in need of it.

In chapter 6, Coran tells Lance not to miss out on experiences just because he is waiting for his soulmate, and in chapter 11, he nudges Lance to really think about the experience that his family members had with their soulmate, making Lance realize that nobody’s relationships are ever easy and without any difficulties.

To summarize, the advice and guidance in the story comes mostly from the older members of the found family, who can act in certain moments as substitute parents, sharing the lessons they already learned with the younger members.

*Partnership*

As to decision sharing and discussing matters that affect the whole group, the dynamics of the group as a team who fights evil in the canon is translated in the story in their cooperation as a team that plays Quidditch together.

The roles of the members in the team are administered as follows: Pidge and Hunk run the team in terms of all the organization, scheduling, administering tasks. On the field, the teams look up for leadership to Shiro and Keith. Besides their positions on the field, Allura is described as “the heart that keeps them looking forward,” and Lance as “the energy that binds them”, who makes sure that everyone feels welcome, he lifts their spirits by his enthusiasm and keeps them hopeful (ch.8). Everyone has to do their part of the employed strategy and put aside their differences and arguments in order to cooperate as a team.
**Affection**

The members of the found family express their affection towards each other physically as well as verbally. It is apparent that they have no reserves in touching or hugging each other: in the second chapter, Pidge hugs Keith when he comes to Quidditch practice, they also scale up Hunk’s body to sit on his shoulders when giving instructions for the game, Hunk keeps Lance tackled on the ground even if it is not necessary for the game anymore, and Lance leaps at Coran who then holds him in his arm “princess style”. After winning a game, Keith wraps an arm around Pidge’s neck and rubs their hair with his knuckles. Keith and Shiro hug repeatedly in the story, and in chapter 6, Keith, Pidge and Hunk sit on a couch with Lance stretched out over top of them.

Throughout the story, the characters call each other “mom” or “dad” when one of them is too invested in the other’s well-being (ch.2, 4, 8), which expresses both their annoyance but also the closeness they feel to each other. Lance describes this closeness, when he feels it towards Keith, as a feeling of warmth and contentment, “a feeling he gets a lot around Hunk and Pidge, Allura and Coran. The feeling of being cared about by someone he holds dear” (ch.6). In chapter 5, Coran refers to their group as “our little family”.

In the final chapter of the story, what is important for Lance is not only happiness about being with his soulmate, but also that he is surrounded by his friends, who he describes as people who make him feel safe and at home, as “People he likes. People he cares about. People he trusts. A family away from home.”

**Transcending Problems**

Another important function of a Found Family is the ability of its members to transcend problems, to admit their mistakes, to apologize, to work through their disagreements because they want to maintain their friendship.
In chapter 3, Pidge and Keith have a disagreement about their relationships with their soulmates. Keith feels betrayed when Pidge tells him they asked for their soulmate’s email, since as children they both agreed to get to know their soulmates only after they meet them naturally, when they are older. But they talk about their different views and in the end, Keith assures Pidge that he is not mad at them.

In chapter 5, Pidge feels guilty for pushing Keith to talk about his soulmate, since it made him mad and he left their company. However, Keith later apologizes that he was in a bad mood that day and took it out on Pidge, and Pidge apologizes for pushing him.

In chapter 11, Shiro apologizes to Lance for keeping Keith’s soulmate connection to Lance a secret on Keith’s behalf. The fact that Keith kept this from Lance is in reality the biggest conflict in the story. They manage to transcend it after coming to terms with it on their own and then openly talking about it.

3.2.1 Found Family in “What a Healing Pod Can’t Repair”

Synopsis

“What a Healing Pod Can’t Repair” is a fanfiction by the user Remember_Me set in the canon universe. It is a bit over 55 000 words long, divided into 12 chapters. The first chapter was published 3. 7. 2016, and it was completed on 4. 10. 2016. It is a slash fanfiction with the focus on a romantic relationship between Keith and Lance, and the story takes place after the events in episode 11 of the first season of the show, when the robotic lions with their respective paladins in the cockpits are sucked into a wormhole which lands them in different corners of the universe. At this point of the story in the show, the main group of characters has only just gotten together and started to learn to work as a team, but they do not know each other well enough yet to consider each other a found family. However, in this fanfiction, the
traumatic events of losing each other in space, and then coming together to save one of the still missing paladins - Lance - slowly brings them closer.

They succeed in finding him and bringing him back to their spaceship, but when he wakes up from the coma, they found out it is not really him, but the consciousness of his sentient robotic lion possessing his body. They call the lion Blue, and reluctantly follow her advice to start looking for a new paladin, since Lance’s consciousness is very weak, and they have doubts about if he will recover and return to his body. In the meantime, Keith realizes he has feelings towards Lance. Lance finally returns to his body in chapter 10. The last two chapters of the story are an epilogue, focused on the characters’ emotional recovery.

The relationships in the story pick up on what was known about them in season 1, with Hunk and Lance as best friends, Hunk, Pidge and Lance as friends, and previously classmates, and Keith being kind of an outsider, though he is close with Shiro.

Stimulating Companionship

In the fanfiction, the characters are not shown engaging in fun free time activities, since the plot is focused on finding and saving Lance. However, they all live in the Castle of the Lions together, and see each other for meals, and even when they are working on their own at their respective tasks, they occasionally come to seek each other’s company to talk for a bit, and these discussions are not necessarily about their missions. In chapter 11, after Lance has recovered, Keith thinks about the warm feeling he gets when they just sit on the deck with Lance, “talking about nothing important or not talking at all”, and occasionally they are joined by Hunk, Pidge or Shiro. This shows that they do really enjoy each other's company. Moreover, in chapter 12, they have a “team bonding day” when they are joined by Coran and Allura as well, and they do not train, but focus on bonding as a team, getting to know each other better, and becoming closer as friends. Moreover, just like in canon, they do a bonding
exercise when they put on helmets that let them share their thoughts and memories, which means they know each other very closely and they trust each other. Pidge describes this exercise as a “strangely calming experience” (ch.12).

*Emotional Intimacy and Aid - Emotional Security*

The emotional security these characters can find in each other can too be exemplified mostly in chapters 11 and 12, when the whole team is together, and they are not all focused on saving Lance anymore.

In chapter 11, Lance attacks Shiro during training because he is reminded of his traumatic experience when he was fighting alone. Keith tries to comfort him; they discuss how Lance is having these traumatic flashbacks. This experience unsettles both Lance and Shiro, but even though Shiro is their leader and does not want to show any weakness, he too confides in Keith. He also talks to Keith about his own traumatic experience from the time when he was held captive by the enemies. Keith is however concerned that Lance is not opening enough to him, that he is bottling his trauma, and tries to convince him that he can share his problems. Lance finally understands that he can lean on his friends and find emotional support in them at the very end of the story.

In chapter 12, Hunk and Lance also share an emotional moment when Hunk talks to him about how he misses his family. Lance talks to Hunk in turn about his despair when he did not believe that he would see his friends again after they were separated. They share with each other how scared they were when it did not seem like Lance would make it, they hug and go on to spend the rest of the day in each other’s soothing company.
Validation

The character that most needs validation in the story is Lance. Shiro recalls a moment from before they were separated in space and then reunited, when Lance confided in him, saying that he did not feel worthy of being a paladin, how he did not feel like having any special skills like the others did. Shiro readily assured him that “he was a vital member of the team—the glue that held everyone together” (ch.11). This means a lot to Lance coming from Shiro, since he is someone Lance looks up to.

Shiro is not the only one who has confidence in Lance’s skill, Hunk for example voices it when he compliments Lance’s shooting skills during a training in chapter 11. In the same chapter, Keith tells Lance how brave he was all those months when he was alone, fighting against the enemy and helping people. He says: "Saving all those aliens and those planets, even when it probably seemed impossible.. that's... really admirable."

Keith is also the one who expresses support for Pidge’s efforts to find her brother and father, who were kidnapped by aliens. He tells her: "You'll find what you need, Pidge. If anyone can, it's gonna be you" (ch.11).

Keith in turn gets the needed validation from Hunk, when Lance teases him about his struggles to connect with his lion. Hunk chastises Lance, assuring Keith that he did his best, considering that he has it the hardest out of all of them, since his lion is very temperamental (ch.12).

Care, Support and Guidance

Care and concern for each other’s safety and wellbeing is arguably the main theme of the story.

In the first chapter, Shiro rescues Keith from his crashed lion, and takes care of his wounds, trying to keep him calm. Keith wants to get up and go find his teammates despite his
injuries, worrying if they are safe. Shiro refuses to leave his side, since they are both injured, and he wants to make sure he keeps at least Keith safe. Eventually, Allura and Coran arrive to rescue them.

In the second chapter, Pidge brings Shiro food when he wakes up after healing in the medical bay. Keith wakes up too and he immediately asks if the others are okay.

Throughout the whole story, all of the team members are worried about Lance who is stranded somewhere alone. They keep searching for him.

Shiro comforts Hunk and lets him hold onto Shiro when he has a nightmare, since Hunk is most shaken by losing Lance. Even though he knows Pidge and the others are there for him, he misses his best friend.

In chapter 6, when they find Lance, Keith executes a dangerous maneuver as he jumps out of his lion to land on Lance’s, while they are both rocketing through space. He disobeys Shiro’s orders to get to his non-responding badly hurt friend. Later, Shiro feels ashamed for it, he tells Keith he did the right thing.

The whole team waits for Lance to wake up from the healing pod in chapter 7, until Shiro tells them to get some sleep. However, when he does open his eyes, the team finds out that it is actually the consciousness of Lance’s blue lion talking to them. Lance is still in there somewhere, but he is too weak, and the lion thinks he will not make it. Throughout the time when the team has to cooperate with the Blue lion in Lance’s body, everyone is worried and stressed.

In chapter 11, Keith offers guidance to Lance when he is trying to make him realize the weight of what he has been through and to stop comparing himself to Shiro. Lance believes Shiro’s traumatic experience is a good enough reason for him to be “ messed up ”, but he does not grant his own traumatic experience such weight. He reasons with Lance, telling him: "You went through something no one should ever have to go through. But you did, and you made it
through, and now you're here. [...] No one, not even Shiro, could just pop back up from something like that like nothing happened. You're allowed to be messed up too. We'll work on it, okay?” (ch.11). Lance has some issues he has to work on, but his friend is making him realize that he is allowed to admit weakness and offering his help.

Even though Lance’s ordeal in the story was really difficult, it also allowed him to gain skills in closely bonding with his lion, which is something he then starts teaching his friends, and by that he can help them to become better paladins (ch.12).

After this lesson, Shiro is the one who feels exhausted, and the team can see him wobbling as he leaves the room. However, when Pidge and Coran leave right after, Lance thinks about how great it is that this team has “such a great support system”, knowing that they were going after Shiro to offer their help.

**Partnership**

In the story, the team has to work together to rescue Lance. On missions, Shiro is the leader of the team, giving out commands that the others follow. The team has to really trust each other and be on the same wavelength in order to form Voltron, just like in the canon. After his recovery, Lance has to relearn how to fight as a part of this team again. This is described in chapter 11 when the whole team train using a simulation: “When Shiro would watch Hunk’s flank, and Pidge would watch Keith’s, Lance would cover them, ducking and weaving away from any approaching bots.”

Being good partners in combat is essential for this team in order to stay alive, to be able to defeat their enemies, and to be successful on their journey to liberate the universe from evil forces.
**Affection**

Displays of affection are mostly visible in the last three chapters of the story, which are not as plot heavy as the previous ones but focus more on personal interactions between characters.

Physical affection is mostly exhibited between Hunk, Lance, and Keith. In chapter 10, Hunk greets Lance when he gets out of the medical bay by lifting him up in a tight hug. In chapter 11, Lance sits back to back with his best friend Hunk, and nudges Keith, his boyfriend, with his feet. In chapter 11, Lance sleeps on the sofa cuddling with Hunk, who then changes places with Keith.

The characters in this fanfiction do not often express their affection verbally, though in the first chapter, Shiro says to Keith: “I can't lose you,” which makes it obvious that Keith is very important to him. Additionally, in chapter 11, Keith thinks about team Voltron as his family, including Allura and Coran, he knows that “losing even one of them was almost too much to bear?”.

**Transcending Problems**

The Voltron team is a found family whose members can also have disagreements, but they are always able to overcome them and come together again.

In chapter 8, Keith is angry with Blue who is possessing Lance’s body, he accuses her of hiding something, losing his temper and yelling. Shiro steps in and shoves the two apart. Even though Keith is still angry, he lets it go, since he is in fact just worried about Lance.

In chapter 10, Lance freaks out and turns against Shiro during a simulation training, because he gets a flashback to the time he was fighting alone against the enemies. Afterwards, their relationship is strained, but later Shiro apologizes to Lance, who in turn insists that he
should be the one apologizing to Shiro. In the last chapter, they agree to keep training together in order to learn to overcome the traumatic memories that are affecting them.

The relationship between Keith and Lance is not always smooth either. Lance withholds things from Keith, like the fact that he has nightmares. Even though Lance apologizes for doing so, he still does not talk to Keith about his traumatic experience. This leads Keith to try to find out on his own, by watching log records that Lance made when he was stranded alone. This makes Lance angry when he finds out, he sees it as an invasion of his privacy, even though Keith argues that “not talking about what happened isn't healthy!” (ch. 12). However, the whole story ends with Lance realizing that if he wants to actually move on from what happened, he needs to start talking about it to his friends, to his found family.

**Conclusion**

The concept of found family – a group of unrelated people with whom a person forges deep and meaningful bonds that are similar to a certain degree to those idealized between family members – is an important appeal behind the practice of fanfiction reading and writing. This appeal was linked to the predominantly female and queer fans behind fanfiction, and to the nature of fanfiction stories as character-driven and heavily focused on emotions. The concept of found family is present in fanfiction as the attachment of fanfiction readers and writers towards fictional characters and as the bond between the members of the fanfiction community, but moreover, it is present in the fanfiction works themselves as a popular trope.

After identifying following 6 functions of found family that the characters in fanfiction works can be observed to perform: stimulating companionship; emotional intimacy and aid; care, support and guidance; partnership; affection; and transcending problems, it has been found that all of these functions are to a certain degree present in the analyzed fanfiction
works “The Marks We Make” and “What a Healing Pod Can’t Repair”. Even though these two fanfiction works are not representative of the whole fanfiction community, the found family trope does appear as an important theme in works of the *Voltron* fandom whose fans were unsatisfied with how the bonds between the main characters were handled in canon. The exploration of the found family can therefore be understood as one of the motivations of fans that makes them engage with fanfiction. Further quantitative research is still needed, but even though fanfiction is to a high degree repetitive, due to the specific characteristics of fanfiction as a work in progress, it is difficult to conduct a general research that would account for its ever evolving and changing nature.
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Summary

The aim of this thesis is to analyze the found family trope by looking at functions of found family in two fanfiction works and to argue that found family is for fanfiction readers and writers an appealing concept that draws them towards engagement with fanfiction. The analysis confirmed that in both selected works, exhibitions of all six functions of found family: stimulating companionship; emotional intimacy and aid; care, support and guidance; partnership; affection; and transcending problems, were present.

The Fanfiction “The Marks We Make” was more focused on the characters as friends who spend time together doing fun activities such as Quidditch practice, and the problems and emotional support between character usually revolved around the topic of soulmates.

The fanfiction “What A Healing Pod Can’t Repair” was more plot heavy and focused on rescuing Lance. The main theme in the story was the characters concern about the wellbeing of Lance, who has had a traumatic experience. Only the last two chapters of the story were more focused on a stress-free team bonding.

Nonetheless, in both of the works, all six functions of found family were present, making found family an important theme that fans explore in their engagement with fanfiction.
Resumé

Cílem této práce je analýza tropu tzv. „found family“ ve dvou dílech fanfíkce a prokázat, že „found family“ je pro čtenáře a spisovatele fanfíkce konceptem, který je k fanfíkci přitahující. Analýza potvrdila, že v obou vybraných dílech se projevuje všech šest funkcí „found family“ a to stimulující společnost přátel, emocionální intimita a pomoc, péče, podpora a poradenství, partnerství, náklonnost a překonávaní problémů.

Fanfíkce The Marks We Make se více zaměřila na postavy jako na přátele, kteří tráví čas společně zábavnými aktivitami jako je famfrpálový trénink, a na problémy a emocionální podporu mezi postavami, která se obvykle dotýká tématu spřízněných duší. Fanfíkce What a Healing Pod Can’t Repair byla spíše zaměřená na děj a na záchranu Lance. Hlavním tématem příběhu bylo, že postavy se zajímají o blaho Lance, který prožil traumatizující zážitek. Pouze poslední dvě kapitoly příběhu byly více zaměřeny na sbližování se a utváření silnějších pout mezi členy týmu.

Nicméně, v obou příbězích bylo přítomno všech šest funkcí „found family“, což značí, že „found family“ je pro fanoušky důležité téma, kterému se ve světe fanfíkce věnují.