CO-CREATING HARRY POTTER:
CHILDREN'S FAN-PLAY, FOLKLORE AND PARTICIPATORY CULTURE

by

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Abstract

A number of scholars have argued that children's traditional artifacts and play are being replaced by media culture objects and manipulated by corporations. However, while companies target and exploit children, it is problematic to see all contemporary youth or "kid" culture as simply a product of corporate interests. This thesis therefore explores children's multivocal fan-play traditions, which are not only based on corporation interests, but also shaped by parents, educators and children themselves. The Harry Potter phenomenon, as a contested site where youth struggle for visibility and power, serves as the case study for this thesis. Through the examination of an intensely commercialized form of children's popular culture, this thesis explores the intricate web of commercial, hegemonic, folk, popular and vernacular cultural expressions found in children's culture.

This thesis fits with the concerns of participatory literacy which describes the multiple ways readers take ownership of reading and writing to construct meaning within their own lives. Due to the intense corporate and adult interests in Pottermania, children have continually been treated in the scholarly literature as passive receptors of the commercial construction of Harry Potter. However, this study of child-based Potter fan-play illustrates that youths are active participants in the creation of their own culture, and have developed their own ways of generating meaning from and celebrating the series such as book and movie launch parties, Quidditch games, Wizard Rock music, fantasy and role-playing, trivia games, Internet fan clubs, fan fiction, rumours in anticipation of new volumes, media narraforms, parodies, Potter Parties, spell performances, fan art and homemade costumes.

In this thesis, I examine the misconceptions and triviality barrier surrounding children's culture; the appeal of Harry Potter as mythic hero and folktale; the Conservative-Creative (Newell's Paradox) nature of children's play; children's dialectic relationship with mass media; the activation of children's traditional competencies through fan-play; and the restoration of folk traditions through participatory storytelling such as media narratives and fan fiction. All of these emergent forms of participatory fan-play help children achieve their own sense of identity, culture and power – ultimately dismissing the all too present misconception that children are passive receptors, blindly obeying adult agendas.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1. 1   Background of Study

A number of scholars have critiqued the corporate construction of children's and teenagers' popular culture arguing, as does Douglas Kellner, that children's traditional artifacts are being replaced and manipulated by "media culture objects" (1997, 85). Turner-Vorbeck writes, "Corporate consumerism's mass marketing of manufactured cultural products… involves exercising control over the imaginations of children robb[ing them] of the free use of their own minds" (2003, 19). While merchandising companies certainly target, exploit and manipulate children's and teenagers' popular culture (Giroux 2000), it is however, problematic to see all contemporary youth or "kid" culture as simply a product of corporate interests. Even those traditions that are heavily commercialized are multivalent and multivocal, based not just on corporate interests, but also shaped by parents, educators, adult and adolescent enthusiasts, and the children themselves (Zipes 2001; Steinberg & Kincheloe 1997; Kinder 1991). The problem is in treating all commodified culture as representative of a single tradition rather than an intricate web of commercial, hegemonic, folk and vernacular cultural expressions. This study explores an intensely commercialized form of children's popular culture in an attempt to identify the simultaneous but distinct vernacular concerns that surround children's acceptance or rejection of commodified culture. The Harry Potter "phenomenon" (Zipes 2001, 170-89), as a contested site where youth struggle for visibility and power, serves as a case study.

From the release of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* in 1997 to 2014, Rowling's popular series sold approximately 450 million copies making it the best selling book series in history (*USA Today* 2014). There are seven books in the series, published over a period of ten years, including: *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997), *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (1998), *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (1999), *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (2000), *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (2003), *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (2005), and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2007).[1] The Harry Potter series has been translated into over seventy languages making Rowling's work one of the most translated in history (*Hypable* 2013). This fantasy series has received numerous awards[2] and has also broken several literary records; for example, in 1998, the first novel appeared on *The New York Times* bestseller list for 79 consecutive weeks in the top three places on the list until the *Times* created a separate list for children's books in 2000 (*Hypable* 2013); and books four to seven have consecutively set records as the fastest-selling books in history (Scholastic 2013). In addition, between 2001 and 2011, all seven

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[1] Rowling has also produced several shorter supplementary books for various charities such as *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* (2001), *Quidditch Through the Ages* (2001), which both benefited the charity Comic Relief. Her other charities include Amnesty International, Gingerbread (lone parent family charity), Multiple Sclerosis Society Scotland, Volant (helping alleviate social deprivation), and Lumos (working to end the systematic institutionalization of children across Europe), originally the Children's High Level Group (CHLG) which Rowling co-founded in 2005 (J.K. Rowling Official Website 2012). *The Tales of Beedle the Bard* was auctioned for the CHLG in 2007.

[2] Rowling has received many honours and book awards including the British Book Awards' Author of the Year (1999) and Lifetime Achievement Award (2008); Booksellers Association Author of the Year (1998 and 1999); Order of the British Empire (2001); W.H. Smith Fiction Award (2004); Prince of Asturias Award for Concord, Spain (2003); James Joyce Award (2008); Hans Christian Andersen Award (2010); Best Fiction prize in Goodreads Choice Awards (2012) (J.K. Rowling Official Website 2012). She has also received Honorary Degrees from the University of Exeter and Harvard University, and have been on numerous best book lists and editor's pick lists including the American Library Association, *The New York Times* and *Publishers Weekly*. Her seventh and final book in the series, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, sold 8.3 million copies in the first 24 hours making it the fastest-selling book in history (Scholastic 2013).

books were made into eight feature films[3] films by Warner Brothers that also broke box office records. As of 2014, the total revenue for the Harry Potter franchise (including global book sales, movie sales, DVD sales, rentals and toy sales) was almost $25 billion dollars (*Statistic Brain* 2014) making Rowling the world's first billionaire author. With continued book sales, the recent opening of "The Wizarding World of Harry Potter" (the world's first centrally themed, multi-park experience at Universal Orlando Resort in Florida, with further expansion planned in 2014 to include Diagon Alley), Rowling's interactive website Pottermore (which launched Harry Potter eBooks in 2012), the upcoming Warner Brothers film series based on Rowling's companion book, *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, and "The Casual Vacancy" mini series Rowling adapted for BBC Television scheduled to begin production in 2014, the Harry Potter world and franchise continues to expand and entice fans of all ages.

The story structure of Harry Potter can best be described as a traditional folktale exhibiting many characteristic plot, motif, character and structural devices. As well, Harry Potter's life as "the boy who lived" exhibits the characteristics of a mythic hero, as identified by Otto Rank (1952). The story of Harry Potter is that of a classic orphan boy/fairy tale prince; Harry has a secret birthright and identity that have been kept secret from him. On his eleventh birthday, Harry discovers the hidden truth that he is a boy wizard, and there is a magical world that exists alongside the real, human or "muggle" world. Harry also learns who is responsible for the death of his parents – the evil wizard Lord Voldemort. When Harry is just an infant, Voldemort murders his parents in their

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[3] The final book was made into two movies *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1* and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2*.

family home. Voldemort also attempts to kill infant Harry, but because of the protective spell cast by Harry's mother, Voldemort is weakened and sent into hiding. During the incident Harry is marked by a lightning bolt scar and, over the years, becomes infamously known as "the boy who lived."

Upon learning his past and new identity, Harry Potter is invited to attend the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry to master his craft, and eagerly leaves his abusive muggle guardians. At Hogwarts, Harry makes both friends and enemies as he learns of the growing dissension between good and dark witches and wizards. As Voldemort rises in power, Harry, with the help of his friends, is repeatedly pitted against his dark magic. As Harry's magical training progresses, he becomes part of a larger plan devised by Headmaster Dumbledore, to destroy Voldemort once and for all.

Harry Potter has been referred to as "the biggest children's publishing and merchandising phenomenon of modern times" (Heilman 2003, 1). Known popularly as "Pottermania" (Turner-Vorbeck 2003, 14), Rowling's books have prompted a massive commercial and cultural industry (Whited 2002, 2). Beyond the six-volume series, Harry Potter has inspired numerous feature films produced by Warner Brothers, a barrage of books, movie soundtracks, wall calendars, trading cards, carrying cases, video and board games, a Harry Potter iPod, magic sets, watches, action figures, candy, embossed furniture, clothing and costumes, linens and home decorations, and a huge variety of other merchandising paraphernalia (Turner-Vorbeck 2003, 17).

Spanning the world and dominating the market, the Harry Potter series and cross-platform industry has become a global phenomenon, one that children's literary critic and folklorist Jack Zipes describes as the "Harry Potter phenomenon" (2001, 170-189). He

writes that the word "phenomenon":

> … generally refers to some kind of *occurrence*, change, or fact that is directly perceived; quite often the event is striking… Whether an occurrence or a person, there is something incredible about the phenomenon that draws our attention. We hesitate to believe in the event or person we perceive, for a transformation has unexpectedly taken place. One of the reasons we cannot believe our senses is because the phenomenon defies rational explanation. There seems to be no logical cause or clear explanation for the sudden appearance or transformation. Yet it is there, visible and palpable. The ordinary becomes extraordinary, and we are so taken by the phenomenon that we admire, worship, and idolize it without grasping fully why we regard it with so much reverence and awe except to say that so many others regard it as a phenomenon and, therefore, it must be a phenomenon. (2001, 173)

Corporate consumerism surrounding Harry Potter has moved beyond all previous commercialization of children's literature, television, and movie images, including Superman, Spiderman, Power Rangers and Pokémon (Teare 2002, 331), all of which have prompted their own massive merchandising campaigns. The proliferation of Potter commercial productions and mass marketing is, however, only a small part of the Pottermania story. Potter fans also participate in a range of fan-play activities including Potter theme parties, book launch parties, movie parties, Internet fan clubs, fan fiction, fan poetry, reading circles, chat sessions, discussion boards, rumours in anticipation of new volumes, fan art and homemade costumes (Borah 2002, 344).

Due to the intense corporate and adult interests in Pottermania, children have continually been treated in the scholarly literature as passive receptors of the commercial construction of Harry Potter. Turner-Vorbeck, for example, asserts, "It is no longer safe to assume that children are able to generate purely their own reflections upon items of child culture such as literature for children" (2003, 19). As Peter Narváez writes, however, the fan "is not necessarily a helpless pawn or the victim of mass entertainment

industries" (1987, 38). In fact, children develop their own ways of generating meaning from and celebrating the Potter series. Children's expressions of fandom differ substantially from adult or corporate mediated texts. Child fandom focuses on extending the narratives beyond Rowling's novels (Bond & Michelson 2003; Borah 2002; Mackey 2001), sometimes writing themselves into the storyline, other times writing characters into the realm of the romantic, subversive and forbidden. This is called "participatory literacy," which describes "the multiple ways readers take ownership of reading and writing to construct meaning situated within their own socio-cultural characteristics" (Bond & Michelson 2003, 119).

Child fandom often includes character impersonation through role-playing and costuming, creating new literary forms and artwork shared through peer groups, and the formation of theme-based clubs and subgroups. [4] Children wrestle the text away from the commercializers through their own vernacular construction of the books, their characters, plot lines and magical worlds. Child-based fan-play while sometimes compliant with, or complementary to, industry and adult management of the tradition, is also frequently resistant to corporate domination and parental imposition, as my research illustrates. According to Henry Jenkins, fan fiction rebels against a culture owned by dispassionate corporations and attempts to restore a folk culture in which key stories and characters belong to everyone (1992). This rebellion, writes Harmon, marks "a return to the folk tradition of participatory storytelling" (1997, 1).

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[4] Youth activities inspired by fantasy literature is not a new phenomenon. For example, in the 1960s, fans of J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* demonstrated similar play behaviours and customs (Ryan 1969). Recent examples include the *Twilight* saga (2005-2008) by Stephanie Meyer and *The Hunger Games* trilogy (2008-2010) by Suzanne Collins. Both series join the Potter novels as some of most challenged books in 21st century publishing history and are cited in Chapter Six.

1.2 Objectives

As Borah notes, "Unlike the more mature fan communities that have been the focus of some critical study, the culture of younger fans has received very little academic scrutiny" (2002, 349). In general, very little has been written on children's popular culture and even less on child fandom. Nevertheless, those who have focused on what Kathleen McDonnell (1994) calls "kid culture" have found that children are not simply robotic receptors of commercial culture, nor are they less knowledgeable than adults. This thesis addresses Harry Potter fandom in the three through nineteen age range and explores the following issues:

1. The larger significance of child fan culture in relation to both adult and corporate interests in child literature. Reading, along with other aspects of child culture, is increasingly becoming an opportunity for marketing and consumerism. Thus, understanding child-based fandom in a world of massive commercialization is central to understanding children's private enjoyment of literature. Therefore, I explore the adult agendas, perceptions and misconceptions surrounding children, focusing on: parental, corporate and educational and religious groups.

2. Child-based expressions of fandom exploring children's activities as active readers, as text "producers" and as co-creators (Fiske 1989). Following on the work of Henry Jenkins (1992) and Camille Bacon-Smith (1992), I explore how fans interpret and discuss texts together, develop literary aesthetics and produce texts inspired by the original product. As Jenkins notes, "Rather than being passive receivers of consumable texts fans are active participants who share their

experiences and rework texts… the text becomes something more than it was before, not something less" (1992, 52).

3. Child reception, appreciation, rejection and manipulation of Pottermania as provided by the commercial industry, as well as parental, educational and religious management. This thesis provides examples of the child's acceptance, rejection, appropriation, negotiation, and manipulation of "pedagogically correct" fandom. I explore how children participate in and express their fandom, how their fan-play expressions create meaning for them, and what their expressions say about their identities and power struggles against and within the adult world.

4. The Conservative-Creative (Newell's Paradox) nature of children's play; the activation of children's traditional competencies through popular culture as empowerment; and the restoration of folk traditions through participatory storytelling such as media narratives. This thesis illustrates how children help express their identities and interests and concerns by using their traditional competencies (parodies, subversion, combining folk traditions with popular culture influences, and combining innovation and fantasy with tradition). All of these methods of subversion help the child achieve its own sense of identity, culture, ownership and power – ultimately dismissing the all too present misconception that children are passive receptors, blindly obeying adult agendas.

5. Play, narrative, folklore and popular culture as critical tools for making sense of the world and controlling the world. This thesis therefore explores children's use of commercial culture as play and power, suggesting that children use and manipulate popular culture in a variety of ways which help them feel a sense of

empowerment, rebel against authority, express their identity, unite them as a

group, and provide social interaction – both locally and online.

The investigation of children's culture has been highly contested throughout time

and across disciplines. Because of their age, children comprise a subculture and minority,

who are often oppressed by adults. This has affected how scholars have perceived and

approached children and their culture. While some adults believe children have no have

control over their own culture, I attempt to illustrate that children have their own culture

and are active participants in creating their culture. By focusing on children's literary

fandom of the Harry Potter phenomenon, I illustrate how children express their own

identities and fandom as forms of play and power, and that child fans, as a subculture, are

not passive receptors to the media despite adult agendas and misconceptions. Instead,

Potter fan-play activities illustrate how children appropriate popular culture and express

their identities, opinions and position in an adult society. I also discuss and reveal the

many ways children manipulate, adapt and combine popular culture and folklore, using

both creativity and tradition as expressions of their thoughts and opinions. I demonstrate

how Potter child fan activities mimic adults and mock their behaviours, subvert authority,

parody the imposed and forbidden, protest injustice, and use traditional structure in

creative ways; all the while, offering social interaction groups and traditional activities

and events for children.

1.3   Research and Methodology

This thesis presents research based on ethnographic observation of several local

events, questionnaires and interviews with seventy-one informants including children, teenagers and adults (parents, educators and sales people), as well as provides an investigation of Harry Potter fandom on the Internet. See Appendix A (Informant List) for each informant's age, hometown, date and place of interview. Interviews and ethnographic observations are complemented by children's literary fandom, folklore and popular culture scholarship.

1.3.1 Triangulation

Based on my experience, child research is done best through a process called "triangulation" as described by Gary Alan Fine. Fine suggests: "No one methodology has the monopoly on success or failure… The best research is often research that does not rely on a single methodology, but blends several techniques, a process of 'triangulation'" (Fine 1995, 138-9). In summary, child research is best served when combining various methodologies and techniques, including observation, participant observation, ethnography, interviews, photography, video recording, questionnaires, online research, attending public assembly events and reading scholarly research, all of which I have actively pursued throughout this project.

1.3.2 Local, Ethnographic and Contextual Research

This thesis is based on local ethnographic and contextual research, observation and interviews with children, adolescents and teenagers across Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada including: Cape St. George, Stephenville, Marystown, Howley, Corner Brook, Steady Brook, Pasadena, Port Saunders, St. John's, Torbay and Middle Cove-

Outer Cove. Questionnaires were also issued in 2008 which included informants from

areas of Newfoundland including: Tilton, Holyrood, Mount Pearl, St. John's, Bay

d'Espoir, Newman's Cove, Avondale, Conception Bay South, Grand Bank, Corner

Brook, Appleton, Logy Bay, Churchill Falls, Blaketown, Marysvale, Salmon Cove, Sweet

Bay, Grand Bay, Random Island, Thornlea, and Harbour Breton. Questionnaires also

included informants from areas outside of Newfoundland such as Halifax, Nova Scotia,

Inuvik, North West Territories, Hong Kong and Iraq.[5] Specifically, this thesis focuses on

interviews with Newfoundland-born children between the ages of seven and twelve, and

teenagers between the ages of thirteen and nineteen. My research also includes a special

teenage demographic that I term the Potter Generation, kids who physically "grew up"

with the series and the Harry Potter characters (from child to teenager) as it evolved and

became a global phenomenon between the years of 1997 (the year novel one was

published in the United Kingdom) and 2000 (the year the novel was published in

Canada). This demographic includes kids like nineteen-year-old Zack who said, "I've

been reading Harry Potter books ever since they first came out" (2007). The Potter

Generation is special in that they had the opportunity to experience the unfolding of the

story and Harry's fate on a local and a global publishing scale. I also believe this

generational demographic to have a unique affinity for Harry Potter as their physical and

emotional development parallels that of Harry Potter and his friends. I located and

interviewed many teenagers in this demographic at public assembly events such as book

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[5] The demographic is stratified and an investigation into class structure is outside the scope of this study. In
addition, because youths have access to Potter materials outside the home (i.e., in schools and on the
Internet), there is no reason to assume that class is a distinguishing factor in whether or not someone
participates in popular culture.

launches, movie openings and live action role-playing (Quidditch) at a science fiction and fantasy convention. I also received thirty-two questionnaire responses from this age group.

Newfoundland is an island on the east coast of Canada, and according to the Statistics Canada 2011 Census, has an estimated population of 514,536. Newfoundland has been a center of folklore studies since the 1940s when scholars perceived it as a preserved vestige of traditional culture. However, despite its rich and long island history, when it comes to the phenomenon of Harry Potter, the industry has easily found its way into the lives of Newfoundland children in the form of books, movies and merchandise, all readily available for consumption via local and online stores.[6] By providing both a local and online perspective, I illustrate how children are able to experience and share in their fandom globally and locally, publicly and privately.

Observation, ethnographic research and interviews with children (as well as with adults including parents, guardians, teachers and store employees) took place between 2005 and 2011, primarily at five different private and public assembly events including: (1) an elementary school party; (2) a family gathering (in a family home with parents and children); (3) several *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* final book launch celebrations; (4) a Science-Fiction Fantasy Convention and a Muggle Quidditch game; (5) and the debut midnight movie showing of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2* at Empire Studios in St. John's.[7] The very first interviews took place at Mary

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[6] A good illustration of the extent to which this global phenomenon has invaded local practices occurred during the summer of 2007 when I witnessed a teenager reading her copy of the recently released *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* on a sandy beach in remote Barachois Provincial Park, NL.
[7] Empire Studios in St. John's changed to Cineplex Cinemas in 2013.

Queen of Peace School, a local Roman Catholic elementary school in St. John's. I interviewed five Grade Three (age eight) children who were self-proclaimed Harry Potter fans. Permission was given by the parents of the children, the teacher of the class, and the principal of the school. This interview took place on October 31, 2005, at which time the children were dressed in their Halloween costumes (four were dressed as Harry Potter characters; one was not). I spoke with the children in a group and held the interview in a separate classroom, directly across the hall from their teacher's classroom. In 2005 I also interviewed one Grade Two (age seven) boy, his twin sister and parents in St. John's, and also spoke with my nephew (age twelve) from Corner Brook, Newfoundland. For these interviews, I interviewed the children using a tape recorder, took photographs of the children (a disposable film camera), and digitally video-taped the school children performing Harry Potter magical spells.

Interviews with fans and photographs of fans also took place on July 17, 2007, the release date of the seventh and final Harry Potter book. For this research, I used a digital recorder and digital camera. On this date, I documented two book launch events; the first took place in Stephenville at the local Walmart Store where books were available. The second celebration was the same day at the Cole's Book Store outlet at the Corner Brook Plaza.

Another round of interviews occurred on April 19, 2008 at the 2nd Annual St. John's Science Fiction and Fantasy Convention. Not only was there a Harry Potter booth for Potter fans, but the organizers also held a Muggle Quidditch match, a live action role-playing game. Additional ethnographic research and interviews were conducted at Empire Studios, at the Avalon Mall in St. John's, during the debut midnight showing of

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2 on July 15, 2011. At this event, interviews were conducted with child fans and parents on digital recorder. I also took digital photography and film of the event.

Finally, between 2005 and 2011, I conducted further various interviews with children and adults, as well as online Internet research by investigating and documenting various Harry Potter fan sites (both corporate managed and child fan managed) focusing on rumours, pod casts, discussion groups and chat rooms.[8] Internet research also yielded an investigation into fan fiction websites and video sharing sites such as YouTube and Vimeo.

1.3.3   Textual Research / Literary and Structuralist Approach

In an attempt to understand the literary aesthetic or textual appeal of the Harry Potter book to its fans, this thesis also provides a literary or structuralist analysis along with the contextual analysis. A literary analysis of the Harry Potter story as folktale, with traditional structural devices and motifs, is key to understanding some of the reasons why Harry Potter as a text is so popular. This is investigated in Chapter Four, Children's Literary and Folk Aesthetics: Harry Potter as Mythic Hero and Folktale. Some textual analysis is also applied to the online Harry Potter fan fiction in Chapter Nine, Media Narraforms, Fan Fiction and Fan Art: Participatory Literacy and Hybrid Narratives. This textual analysis ultimately sheds light on how children manipulate traditional structure, story and motifs to (1) re-imagine themselves in re-written stories, (2) explore and

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[8] This study covers the years 2005-2011 when various forms of technology and social media (such as YouTube, Facebook and Twitter) were just emerging.

experience the world, (3) express their identities, (4) and subvert adult, corporate, or "big

brother" authority as active agents of their own culture.

1.3.4   Online Research

Because Harry Potter, like most popular kid's culture, acts as "common currency"

between kids (McDonnell 1994, 9), many child fans are united in a culture all their own

on a global scale, primarily through their online activities which span the world and cross

cultures. According to John Storey, globalization describes "the complex relations which

characterize the world in the twenty-first century. It refers to the relentless flow of

capital, commodities, and communications across increasingly porous territorial

boundaries" (2003, 107). A key feature to globalization is time-space compression which

is described as

> the way in which the world seems to be shrinking under the impact of new
> electronic media, like satellite television and the internet, which facilitate the
> extending of social relationship across time and space. Time and space no longer
> dictate the range of my relationships. Being near or being distant no longer
> organizes with whom I communicate. Electronic media (fax, telephone, email and
> the internet) give me access to a world well beyond my 'local' community.
> (Storey 2003, 107)

With time and space no longer dictating the range of relationships a child may

have, globalization opens up world-wide opportunities for fans to extend their

relationships and share their folk materials online. The Internet provides a playground for

children to explore their fandom through technological media means, sharing in their

fandom globally through online communication with other fans from all over the world.

Children can explore official websites, such as Rowling's official site

<www.jkrowling.com> and Warner Brother's official Harry Potter sites

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<harrypotter.warnerbros.com>, or unofficial fan sites, such as the Leaky Cauldron <www.the-leaky-cauldron.org>. They can watch or create their own videos on video-sharing programs like YouTube. Not only do these sites offer children a variety of opportunities and ways to engage with the Harry Potter world, but while online, children find the means to share their interests and unite as fans. In chat room and on discussions boards, youths have an interested and attentive audience with whom to share their common views. Chapters Eight and Nine explore the Internet as a playground for children, investigating what is available on the Internet for children, what children do with these Internet playground opportunities, and how it helps form their cultural identities. I argue that Internet play offers equal opportunities for children to locate and express their own interests, come together and unite in solidarity, while often subverting authority. New trends in online technology and personal computers, such as tablets, are increasingly provided to children along with easy access to the Internet.

According to Storey, globalization can produce "homogeneity of cultural experience or resistance in defense of a previous way of life, or it can bring about a mixing of cultures, producing forms of 'hybridization'" (2003, 108). I therefore explore how children unite in shared experiences, resist powerful institutions and produce hybrid forms of play, ranging from fan fiction media narraforms to YouTube parodies.

Paul Smith suggests that popular culture and folklore studies have for the most part "ignored the fact that a variety of media communications are open to individuals for the transmission of cultural materials" (1986, 31).

> In the past it was considered by many scholars that one of the main definitional characteristics of an item of folklore was that it was orally transmitted. …Fortunately, over the last few years the view that folklore is solely orally

transmitted and popular culture is media tied has declined. In its stead scholars
now tend to favor an approach which incorporates a multi-media approach to the
transmission and reinforcement of culture. (Smith 1986, 31)

Smith recommends a multi-media approach and reminds us that "the very nature of

folklore is that it is not static but evolves to meet the needs of an ever-changing world"

(1991, 257). Chapter Eight and Chapter Nine therefore focus on Harry Potter fandom and

fan materials as folklore transmitted over the Internet, including fan fiction, media

narraforms, video parody and imitation.

1.4   Children, Fieldwork and Ethics

Due to their age and the imbalance of power between children and adults,

interviewing children ultimately poses a greater challenge when it comes to ethical

research, methodology and obtaining free and informed consent. According to Gary Alan

Fine,

> Because of the social, cognitive, and physiological differences between children
> and adults, the techniques of collecting from children are not necessarily identical
> to the techniques of collecting from adult informants. Unfortunately, the major
> methodological guides to folklore collecting either do not discuss collecting from
> children (Ives 1974; Dorson 1972) or only briefly cover the topic (Goldstein 1964,
> 150-54). General research dicta do not cover the special challenges faced by those
> who collect childlore. (1995, 121)

Fine does, however, help correct this absence by providing a good overview of child

research methodologies in his article "Methodological Problems of Collecting Folklore

from Children" (1995).[9] Because children have not reached the age of consent, I asked a

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[9] Fine argues that the ethical guidelines for children involve three things: "(1) no harm must be done to the
subject, physical, social, or psychological; (2) the subject must not be deceived by the researchers; (3)
subjects must be given informed consent as to the nature of their participation, giving them the freedom to
withdraw at any point if they choose" (1995, 121).

parent or guardian to provide written or verbal consent to interview their child. As well, in order to arrange interviews with children, I made contact (i.e., recruitment) primarily through a parent, legal guardian, or teacher. For example, in the case of the interview at Mary Queen of Peace school, the parents, principal and teacher of the students gave permission. And, when I wanted to interview young children at a public event such as a midnight movie showing, I asked the parent or guardian accompanying the child for permission to conduct the interview, take photographs, or video footage.

Finally, while pictures and video were taken of the children, I have withheld the names of the youths, and I have assigned first name pseudonyms to protect their identities, although names of child/teenage activists, who have had their names publically published in the media, are cited. Adult informants including guardians, parent and family members (except for a teacher, adult bookstore employees and operators) who also gave consent to be interviewed, have also been given pseudonyms in order to protect the identity of the child. So as not to confuse the adult informants from the child informants, I have presented all child informants with a single, first name pseudonym only, and all parents with their title (Mr., Mrs., or Ms.) and last name pseudonym. I also received consent from managers and organizers to conduct interviews and record observation at all of the public events at Cole's bookstore in Corner Brook, Walmart in Stephenville, the St. John's Science Fiction and Fantasy Convention and Empire Studios. These guidelines, along with explaining the nature of my project, were emphasized when I applied for and received permission to conduct my research with children from Memorial University's Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR).

1.4.1 The Childist (Child-Centred) Approach

Jay Mechling explains that in the past, many generalizations about children's folklore were "grounded in male-oriented assumptions about children's culture rather than in ethnographic studies of how children actually conduct their lives in their folk groups" (1986, 106). Understanding how children conduct their lives from the perspective of children, rather than from adults, is the key feature of the childist approach. The child-centred approach involves "ethnographic fieldwork that goes directly to children to assess their experiences firsthand" (Clark 1995, 2). It gives the child a voice of authority, while honouring and respecting their opinions, values and thoughts. Rather than simply interviewing adults about their childhood memories, using the childist approach allows the child gets to speak for his/her self. The current child-centred approach now emphasizes the "need to understand children as they perceive their situation" (Bronner 1992, 57). Therefore, the primary goal of the childist approach is to be open to the child's perspective (Clark 1995, 122).

According to Cindy Dell Clark, one way this approach is achieved is by conducting a playful form of interview such as role-playing, picture drawing or prop use; in other words, interviews that communicate on the same level as children.

> The rationale for letting an informant interview take such a fanciful direction is to provide a communicative context compatible with native systems of communication within that age set, in this case children's role-playing. The playful *form* of the interview is a way to meet the goal of being open to the child's perspective. (Clark 1995, 122)

While not all of my interviews directly involved playful forms, I did give the school children at the Halloween party an opportunity to role-play by demonstrating their "magical spell-casting abilities." I also interviewed children while they were enjoying a

science-fiction and fantasy convention, and after they played Muggle Quidditch. As well, I believe that all my interviews were a form of play because I gave the children an opportunity to discuss and explore something of which they were fans. In fact, asking kids about something that personally interested them seemed to give them much pleasure, and involved a form of banter that resembled the types of comments found between fans in online chat rooms and discussion boards. However, regardless of the type of playful form of interview, what is most important to the childist approach is the attitude of active listening to the child and taking the child's frame of reference seriously (Clark 1995, 122). According to Clark, the focused interview attempts to allow the child "to express what they have self-defined as important, rather than responding to an interviewer's definition of presumed importance" (1995, 123). The guiding principle is to "honor and understand the child's definition and understanding of the situation" (Clark 1995, 123). I believe that the child-centred approach is one of the most effective approaches for an adult researcher investigating, interviewing and analyzing children. While this approach may not be able to fully eliminate my ultimate "outsider" adult perspective, it is my hope that this methodology will result in a better understanding of the child-adult division, and an appreciation of the child's experience for what it is, outside of adult intervention and agendas.

1.5   Theoretical Approaches

1.5.1   Folklore and Cultural Studies: Participatory Culture and Active Readership

This thesis is primarily based on folklore and cultural studies theories. Cultural studies is a critical tradition that draws from fields of anthropology, communications,

history, literary criticism, political theory, sociology, and psychoanalysis. In "Folkloristics, Cultural Studies and Popular Culture" Narváez states that both folklore and cultural studies have been extensively engaged with that cultural domain of popular culture, "Thus, as many folklorists have observed, never before have traditional texts of folklore been geographically disseminated with the speed that they are today through mass media in popular culture (e.g. contemporary legends)" (1992, 16-17). Narváez points out that folklorists have conducted ample research that focuses on "The expressive uses of communications media, mass-produced goods, and mass-mediated texts in small group contexts" (1992, 20). Furthermore, he states that "Newly introduced technologies, goods, and texts may affect folkloric elements in culture by: supplanting them; altering or transforming their content and/or structure; modifying their social functions and significance. In addition, they may generate new folkloric forms" (1992, 20).

Many fan ethnographies illustrate complex social networks and traditional patterns in small group expressive responses to mass-mediated texts. Two good examples of this type of research, both published in 1992, are Henry Jenkin's *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* and Camille Bacon-Smith's *Enterprising Women: Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth*. Inspired "by the Birmingham cultural studies tradition, which helped reverse the public scorn directed at youth subcultures" (Jenkins 2006b, 8), and the shift in cultural studies toward audience ethnography, Jenkins provided alternative images of fan cultures, where fans, as consumers, were active and critically engaged (Jenkins 2006b, 8). Like Jenkins, my exploration of Harry Potter participatory culture provides an image of the child fan as active, creative, critically engaged and capable of resisting, appropriating, and re-

circulating materials inspired by the original, back into the media.

Along with Henry Jenkins, folklorist Camille Bacon-Smith also represented the rising academic interest in fandom in the early 1990s. Her book *Enterprising Women: Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth* documented a popular network of female fans devoted to the television series Star Trek. Like Bacon-Smith, I am also interested in fans and their traditional communication "with one another in small group and assembly (conference) contexts using, manipulating, and reinterpreting mass-mediated source products in a multitude of creative ways" (Narváez 1992, 21-22). As I noted above, this thesis focuses on the ways children experience their fandom at: (1) small, local, private events (school and family home); (2) large, public assembly events (book launch, sci-fi and fantasy convention, Muggle Quidditch, midnight movie launch); (3) online and globally (fan and fanfiction websites, YouTube, etc.).

My analysis also takes a cultural studies perspective. Instead of looking at folklore as functioning in some productive or stabilizing way, Narváez explains that we can learn from cultural studies by looking at hegemony and popular culture, dominance and submission. Narváez explains that cultural studies views culture as antithetical (1992, 25) and therefore needs to be addressed in terms of subculture (1992, 6). My analysis therefore incorporates cultural studies theories of active readership, antithesis, subculture and resistance, which is exactly what Brian Sutton-Smith calls for in his discussion of children's folklore rhetoric and children's folklore research in his book *Children's Folklore: A Sourcebook* (1995) (see my sections "Rhetorics of Play and Power: The Antithetical Nature of Children's Culture" and "Kid Culture as Subculture" below for further detail). This is similar to reader response theory "in which literature is understood

as that which is received by the reader rather than that which is created by the author"
(Heilman 2003, 3). Stanley Fish explains that the reader response theory centers on "an
analysis of the developing responses of the reader in relation to the words as they succeed
one another in time" (1980, 27). Furthermore, Heilman writes: "At its most extreme, this
theory suggests that the reader is really the author. This idea is consistent with
philosophical postmodernism, which emphasizes 'local knowledge' and questions the
truth of any collective authoritative interpretation or 'meta-narrative'" (2003, 3-4). A
folklore reader response analysis is applied to the subject of fan fiction in Chapter Nine,
which highlights "the ways in which readers supply important textual content by
projecting their identity, past experiences, preoccupations, and cultural orientation onto
the text" (Heilman 2003, 4).

1.5.2   The Folklore-Popular Culture Process Theory

The book *Media Sense: The Folklore-Popular Culture Continuum* (1986)
provides an excellent illustration of "establishing a folkloristic perspective on
contemporary popular culture" (Narváez and Laba 1986, 1). Both folklore and popular
culture as artistic forms "demand creative enactment within a wide variety of
conventionalized systems that engender and disseminate their own aesthetics and
traditions" (Narváez and Laba 1986, 1). In this case, both popular culture and folklore
have conventions and traditions. By focusing on Pottermania, I aim to uncover the
folkloric conventions and traditions within a popular culture phenomenon. For example,
one goal is to illustrate how child fans can interact with the Harry Potter phenomenon in
conventional patterns and behaviours. Fans of this phenomenon can come together on

both a global, online and local scale. Just as folklore "exhibits variation and change –

hallmarks of the folklore process" (Narváez and Laba 1986, 2), popular culture genres

such as fantasies, westerns, mysteries and soap operas have been proven to "not only

exhibit 'inventions' (dynamism) but repeated 'conventions' of form through time

(conservatism)" (Narváez and Laba 1986, 2).

My research reveals how children participate in their fandom in traditional ways

(such as costuming, role-playing, making folk art, transmitting predictions and spoilers,

and attending public events) and generate meaning from their participation, play,

activities and behaviours.   This is similar to what has been witnessed in Rocky Horror

film fans, "a phenomenon which has become a true contemporary ritual" (Narváez and

Laba 1986, 4). In this case, fans come together and exhibit "small group and mass

societal traits of artistic communication" by attending the film and dressing up and acting

like the characters and responding to the dialogue of the actors. "While this cultural

scene is perhaps best understood as a public or assembly event rather than a small group

performance, face-to-face, sensory interaction is an integral aspect of its enactment"

(Narváez and Laba 1986, 5). Potter fans also exhibit repetitive and formulaic behaviours

and face-to-face interactions at public events. By addressing both folklore and popular

culture, my analysis of the Harry Potter phenomenon can "reveal how small group and

mass contexts of communication interface and parallel each other in critical ways"

contributing toward what Narváez and Laba calls the "theory of the folklore-popular

culture process" (Narváez and Laba 1986, 5).

> Laba considers the social reference group, its networks and styles of
> communication, and its interpretive/participatory relationship to media materials
> as essential to defining the folklore-popular culture process. Specifically, he

regards those expressive activities surrounding popular culture products as folkloric, and fundamental in analyzing the meaning and import of those products. (Narváez and Laba 1986, 5)

Addressing and researching the folklore-popular culture continuum and its codes and messages can help provide an understanding of the nature of everyday life (Narváez and Laba 1986, 7). This study of Pottermania therefore explores the meanings attached to new folklore forms in an attempt to understand the nature of play and everyday life for a child.

1.5.3   The Social Practice Concept of Folklore

In his essay "Popular Culture and Folklore: The Social Dimension," Laba states that popular culture is tied to social practice and social action – people making sense of and creating meaning out of the symbolic forms of everyday life (Laba 1986, 9). "A folkloristic perspective of this concept points to an interface between 'countless variety of materials and ideas' that comprise popular culture, and the interpretation of these materials and ideas through a parallel and responsive structure of communication – human expressive behaviour" (Laba 1986, 9).

The "Social Practice" concept of folklore rests on the notion that there is a social practice in popular culture; it is not just products and obedient consumption, but behaviours that exist around those cultural mass mediated products.

> As Fiske has argued, 'popular culture is made by the people at the interface between products of the culture industries and everyday life.' For cultural studies, therefore the meaning of 'popular culture' is confined to what in folkloristics is 'the expressive use of mass-produced goods, and mass-mediated texts in small group contexts. (Narváez 1989, 25)

From this perspective, popular culture is not defined as mass culture or a culture of

commodities,[10] but rather it is defined by what happens around the mass produced

products – how people rework, re-cycle and re-produced products to meet their own

needs as a form of participatory culture (Narváez 1992, 25).

I have therefore investigated participatory events and everyday behaviours and

expressions which surround popular culture and have become customary. According to

Laba, it is the ritual of exchange that brings meaning to popular culture materials (1986,

11). Most importantly, Laba writes that culture studies in youth culture as subcultural

groups, "have demonstrated that popular culture objects can serve the identity and style of

a group, and that the group re-interprets and re-orders these objects to suit its needs"

(1986, 13). Through a social practice analysis of Potter fan behaviours, actions and

events, I explore how Pottermania is appropriated and manipulated by child fans to

express their identities.

1.5.4   Narrative Behaviour and Communication Analysis

Because many of the ways that child fans participate in popular culture involve

narrative forms of play (such as fan fiction and media narraforms), this study also

incorporates narrative behaviour and communication analysis. I attempt to understand

how children express and communicate through narrative, and how they express

themselves and communicate with one another. According to Bronner, understanding

narrative behaviour is critical to understanding children. Narrative is "an essential part of

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[10] One of the major problems in combining folkloristic perspectives with popular culture has been the equation of popular culture with "mass culture" – or simply meaningless commodities, "a concept which critics have belabored since the nineteenth century" (Laba 1986, 9). Fiske (1989) argues that popular culture is best understood as existing at the interface between cultural products and everyday life; therefore, for cultural studies, argues Narvaez, "the meaning of 'popular culture' is confined to what in folkloristics is 'the expressive use of mass-produced goods, and mass-mediated texts in small group contexts'" (1992, 25).

the child's way of forming and communicating meaning" (Bronner 1992, 49) – an acknowledgement made by scholars today which has changed their questions, approach, and assumptions. Bronner claims that scholars today don't just collect stories from children as much as they "recognize interactions that employ 'stories,' many of which may be unique and follow recognizable structures" (1992, 49). Rather than approach children's stories as historical forms as was done by some past scholars, folklorists today extract meaning by looking at and addressing "the social needs presented in certain situations and the ways that people communicate with one another" (Bronner 1992, 49). Therefore, there is a major shift to questions of behaviour in today's folklore research:

> The essential questioning thus becomes behavioral rather than naturalistic. The questioning is not about the lines of 'yesterday' into 'tomorrow,' but rather about the ways people express themselves taking cues from any number of simultaneous influences, and indeed create themselves through expression. (Bronner 1992, 49)

As Margaret K. Brady observed in her research on child and teenage Navajo stories, children have narrative competency, are highly articulate and use narratives to make sense of the cultural worlds around them (1980). Chapter Nine discusses fan fiction narratives written by kids as a means to make sense of the world in which they live.

1.5.5   Children's Folklore and Popular Culture: Traditional Competencies and Activation

The concept of tradition based on a continuity of practice rather than on a continuity of content,[11] not only theoretically aligns with many approaches taken by

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[11] One of the most problematic issues of studying the folklore-popular culture continuum is the issue of tradition. Laba explains that the tenet of tradition is problematic because it is crucial to the concept of folklore (1986, 15). Laba therefore argues that tradition must take on a new definition: "The notion of

children's folklore scholars; but, has been best illustrated by research focused on children's incorporation of popular culture into their oral traditions. Both Narváez and Laba (1986) state that childlore is "a well documented area of folklore-popular culture amalgamation" (Narváez and Laba 1986, 2). They refer to Iona and Peter Opie who, in *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren*, cite "many games, rhymes and songs which name such familiar screen celebrities as Charlie Chaplin, Shirley Temple, Betty Grable, Roy Rogers and Marilyn Monroe" (Narváez and Laba 1986, 3). "Although the Opies' young informants may never have seen any of these personalities, the lore based on these Hollywood stars has been maintained in the oral tradition of their small groups" (Narváez and Laba 1986, 3). Citing well-known, popular celebrities of the time in their lore is not uncommon for children. Many folklorists and educators have also studied the effects of mass media on children's play traditions including Opie and Opie (1959, 1985), Mary and Herbert Knapp (1976), Brian Sutton-Smith (1977), Delf Maria Hohmann (1985) Jay Mechling (1986), Simon J. Bronner (1988a), Eve Harwood (1994), Elizabeth Tucker (1999, 2008), Kathryn Marsh (2001), Elizabeth Grugeon (2001) and C.W. Sullivan (2006). What many of these folklorists have focused on is how the mass media is a critical tributary of children's folklore and how children are both conservative and dynamic in their play.

'tradition' then must take on a broader meaning and application to come to terms with those causal types of groups" (Laba 1986, 15-16). Laba clarifies the causal group, and emphasizes *the continuity of practice*, rather than *the continuity of content*. I therefore suggest that the behaviours and events that fans participate in is a pattern of response that becomes traditional to those fans. The concepts of "traditionalization" (Dell Hymes 1975; Bauman 2004) and "invented tradition" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) are also useful in redefining tradition. Hobsbawm defines "invented tradition" as a set of practices normally governed by rules and ritual that "attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past" (1983, 1). In the act of "traditionalization" performers reference the past in an attempt to bring authority and validation to their own performance (Bauman 2004). Through the process, traditional models, or "old models" are adapted for new purposes (Hobsbawm 1983, 5) and offer a symbolic connection between the past and present.

This conservative/creative nature of children's culture and play was first discussed by founding folklorist W.W. Newell in 1883 and later expanded upon in detail by Gary Alan Fine (1980) who called it, "Newell's Paradox" (this subject is discussed further in Chapter Two and Ten). However, it is John H. McDowell (1995) who defines children's folklore and its process of transmission as traditional competences that are activated by popular culture. Rather than viewing the process as a process of transmission, it is viewed more as a process of activation (1995, 60). McDowell's theory is critical to my study as it gives the child agency, and helps explain how children take control of and feel powerful over adults and adult institutions such as mass media.   The "traditional competencies and activation" theory is also aligned with Laba's definition of tradition as a continuity of practice, rather than the continuity of content. By focusing on child fans of Harry Potter, the activation of children's traditional competencies via popular culture is illustrated and explored. McDowell's theory is discussed in detail in Chapter Ten.

1.5.6   Rhetorics of Play and Power: The Antithetical Nature of Children's Culture

In *Children's Folklore: A Source Book*, Sutton-Smith argues that the rhetorics of childhood in folklore are much different from the rhetorics of other disciplines such as psychology and sociology where emphasis is often placed on normative schemes of child development (1995a, 4). Such approaches typically ignore the everyday life of children, their antithetical character and play. Sutton-Smith therefore provides a long list of child folklore and play behaviour that illustrate the need for a rhetoric that unites the irrational elements with normal childhood socialization theory (1995a, 5). In other words, we need to combine the fact that children are disruptive, irrational, antithetical with child

socialization theories that emphasize conformity and deviance. "We constantly subsume present activities to their utility for sober and sensible (hence conservative) adult outcomes" (Sutton-Smith 1995a, 6). Sutton-Smith writes that the research demonstrated in his edited collection, *Children's Folklore: A Source Book* (1995), emphasizes that "what children find most enjoyable is often ecstatic or subversive: It is a revelry of their own youthful actions that no longer seem profound or moving to adults or it is an antithetical reaction to the institutional everyday hegemonies of the life about them" (1995a, 6).

Sutton-Smith argues that while we need to listen to and address the antithetical nature of children, it is not to say that children are not "remarkably conservative, ritualistic, and governed by routine" (1995a, 7). He writes that children also manifest "moments of high fantasy and silly innovation" (Sutton-Smith 1995a, 7) illustrating their conservative (traditional), and dynamic (creative) selves. Therefore, in order to account for the rational/irrational, normative/disruptive, conservative/dynamic nature of children, children's folklore research requires an approach that embraces both the rhetorics of play/fancy and the rhetorics of power and subversion characterized by that dialectic mimicry and mockery, performance and parody. This is the approach I have taken with my analysis of Harry Potter child fans.[12]

1.5.7 Kid Culture as Subculture

Scholars across various disciplines have therefore approached children as a

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[12] Although one could examine various age groups and tie it to psychological and sociological developmental stages, it is beyond the scope of this study. However, parodies and scatological materials for elementary school aged children are discussed in Chapter Eight.

subculture, particularly those scholars who study children's popular culture. One such example is Kathleen McDonnell who wrote *Kid Culture: Children and Adults and Popular Culture* (1994). McDonnell defines children's culture in relation to popular culture, calling it "kid culture."[13] Kid culture is a subculture united by popular culture, in fact, popular culture acts as their "common currency" (McDonnell 1994, 9). Youths are a subculture because they share popular culture and kid culture together, "Pop culture has become a kind of common currency among children, an adhesive that binds them together in a subculture of their own – one that is becoming increasingly global in scale" (McDonnell 1994, 9).

McDonnell explains that children's culture, like gay culture, "has for generations existed underground, devalued and ignored by the mainstream" (1994, 27). Therefore, children, like gays and lesbians, are therefore left to their own devices to develop their collective identity without outside interference (McDonnell 1994, 27). The gay subculture also resembles kid culture in their "subversive sense of humour, a delight in mocking and actively undermining the powerful, oppressive majority" (McDonnell 1994, 28). Kids, as minorities, love to hate things adults like, delight in making fun of their adult authoritarians. Resistance and subversion are therefore common to child culture and examples of this are highlighted in the following chapters. To analyze kid culture is to analyze play, folklore, popular culture and narrative and how it functions for children. In this thesis, I explore youth culture, the nature of kids' play, and children's relationship with folklore, popular culture, narrative and mass media.

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[13] Kid culture, as Kathleen McDonnell calls it, has not been fleshed out like that of adult subculture. McDonnell refers to kids having a culture of their own, not just a mini version of adult culture. She notes that childhood culture has its own distinct character and traits (1994, 27).

1.6   Personal Contribution

The majority of my interviews prior to my Ph.D. studies had been conducted with adults. With an MA thesis primarily based on adult, male, occupational narratives, I had limited experience interviewing children and had written only a handful of undergraduate papers and local newspaper articles about children's folklore prior to my doctoral studies. Upon reflection, I realized that interviewing children was one of the most difficult challenges I have had as an interviewer to date, but in many ways, it was also the most rewarding. Interviewing and researching children involved learning a whole new set of skills, an etic/emic reinvestigation into my role as an "outsider" adult researcher to an "inside" group of children, and an understanding of the child's perspective and the many adult misconceptions and agendas facing children. As I began reading scholarly child-based research across various disciplines, I was immediately overwhelmed by how many misconceptions adults have about children, their folklore, popular culture, imagination, fantasy, play, and relationship with mass media. I therefore became acutely aware of the need for child-centred research to help dispel some of these continuing misconceptions.

As Sutton-Smith writes, "children's folklore is primarily about children, and is therefore heir to all the difficulties the concept of 'childhood' has encountered in this century" (1995a, 4). Most shockingly, I've learned that many of these decades-old misconceptions continue to exist and dictate adults despite there being evidence to the contrary. I soon came to truly appreciate Sutton-Smith's coining of the phrase "the triviality barrier" (see Chapter Three), a barrier that has plagued what is often considered the "nonserious" or "unimportant" study of children, childhood and children's folklore

and popular culture for decades. I realized that a Ph.D. thesis in children's folklore and popular culture and play, particularly one about Harry Potter fans, would be a type of underdog thesis: a study that must fight against all the preconceived notions, and attitudes of triviality and unimportance, and champion folklore, play, narrative, popular culture, and most importantly, kids and the free use of their play time and leisure. I therefore hope that my personal contribution to this field dispels some of the misconceptions and trivialization, not with a little hocus-pocus and Harry Potter magic, but with grounded child-centred research, interviews and ethnography.

In this thesis, I define fan-play and highlight the methodologies and approach folklorists need to research youth fan-play. I provide an ethnography of participatory fan-play activities deserving of study (including Potter parties, book launches, movie launches, live-action role-playing [Quidditch], Wizard Rock, Halloween school parties, rumours in anticipation of new volumes, Internet fan clubs, fan fiction, media narraforms, fan art), identify the traditional competences that are activated in fan-play (costuming, parodying, mockery, imitating, role-playing, fantasy play, games, storytelling), and discuss how these new emergent customs reflect the contemporary concerns and lives of children. I provide a child-centred case study for folklorists who wish to investigate the meaningful connections between folklore and popular culture in children's play. As Simon J. Bronner writes: "Still lingering is the sticky problem of weighing the interplay between folk and popular culture in children's creativity. Separating the two is often difficult or misleading, since they commonly appear inexorably entwined" (1999, 269).

It is my hope that this thesis will help researchers more accurately understand children's fan-play, folklore and popular culture in its own right; and, help dispel the

misconceptions about children, looking into ways that children can contribute to the creation of their own culture and support their participation. I am contributing to an approach that is more appropriate to researching and understanding children's culture, a childist approach that listens to the child on both a local and global scale. As an interdisciplinary approach to a children's popular culture phenomenon, I believe that my research can help other folklorists and children's culture scholars approach the subject matter more holistically, from as many different approaches as possible, while always considering the voice of the child. I believe that my work will help researchers navigate through the numerous adult agendas, institutions and misconceptions facing children today, and offer a unique approach for folklorists wishing to study youth play activities and popular culture.

Chapter 2

The History and Development of Children's Folklore Studies

2.1   Introduction

This chapter provides a literature review of children's folklore studies with emphasis on the changing historical perceptions of children and childhood. I discuss some of the major collections and contributors to the field of children's folklore, and highlight the social shifts and ideological trends affecting their approach, study and perception of children and childhood. Most importantly, this chapter lays the historical foundation to understanding how and why adults today continue to believe many misconceptions about children, their play, folklore and popular culture.

Many scholars who have written about the history of children's folklore study have commented on the influence of the first folklorists of childhood, William Wells Newell and Lady Alice Bertha Gomme (Bronner 1992; Tucker 2008). There are several reasons why; not only does their work mark the first serious investigation into children's folklore research, but their collections were based on certain theories and approaches that help reveal how children's folklore scholarship began and how children were viewed during the "Gilded Age" era. Beginning with Newell and Gomme, I trace the major scholarship that developed from the late 19th century into the 21st century. By following the progression of children's folklore scholars and the social and political climate, we can come to understand how research, theories, approaches, and views of children changed over time and what it has come to be today. In the following chapter, I therefore address:

how some early ideologies and biases affected what child scholars thought was worthy of study (a primary focus on rhymes, games, songs, autograph lore, and other easily described folkloric products); what they thought children to be (savages and exotic peoples); how scholars collected children's lore (often from adults' memories of their childhood); and their approach to children's folklore (from romanticism, nostalgia and the historical search for origins to the search for meaning including performance, contextual and behavioral analysis).

2.2   Early Child Folklorists: W.W. Newell and Lady Alice Bertha Gomme

Sylvia Ann Grider dates the serious study of children's folklore (1995, 11) to two nineteenth-century collections of children's games: *Games and Songs of American Children* (1883) by William Wells Newell and *The Traditional Games of England, Scotland, and Ireland: Tunes, Singing-Rhymes and Methods of Playing According to the Variants Extant and Recorded in Different Parts of the Kingdom* (1894-98) by Lady Alice Bertha Gomme. Many other folklorists have also made this observation (Bronner 1988 and 1992; Tucker 2008) illustrating the importance of their work to the field of children's folklore.

Not only was Newell one of the founders of the American Folklore Society, but his work brought attention to the games and songs of children in the United States. While there had been some attention placed on children's games in England, prior to Newell in 1883, little attention has been given to children's games in the United States (Bronner 1988, 11). Through historical research and cross-cultural comparison, Newell presented a

large collection of children's games[14] and songs illustrating these games were part of an

international tradition that had moved across linguistic and geographic barriers (Bronner

1988, 11). Many early collections of children's folklore, like Newell's, reflected what

scholars at that time believed was worthy of study. The genres folklorists attempted to

collect were tied to the very definition of folklore. Julia C. Bishop and Mavis Curtis

argue that as far back as William Thoms, "it is clear that childhood traditions formed part

of the definition from the start" (2001, 3). Thoms' definition of folklore places emphasis

on "cultural products – forms of behaviour, such as observances, and genres, such as

ballads – especially in the areas of traditional custom and belief, and traditional language

and song" (Bishop and Curtis 2001, 4). According to this definition of folklore,

children's lore was viewed as a cultural product and, as a result, emphasis was placed on

the collection of these cultural products, specifically that of games, rhymes, songs and

play traditions.

> Such items were regarded as folkloric because they were passed on by word of
> mouth (oral transmission) and informal watching, listening and copying others
> (customary example). These most basic means of human communication are so
> commonplace as to be often overlooked or unremarked by adults… (Bishop and
> Curtis 2001, 5)

As a teacher, Newell observed and collected children's street games, but did not

collect many games and songs directly from children themselves; in fact, the majority of

his collection was gathered from adults strolling down memory lane – "persons of mature

age who remember the usages of their youth" (Newell 1963 [1883], 1). He, like Gomme

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[14] Newell also arranged his games according to their category of use such as love games, guessing games,
playing at work, humour and satire, and the pleasures of motion which reflected an early approach to
functionalism (Bishop and Curtis 2001, 11). It was later observed that this type of classification is
problematic because children will sometimes use games and songs for different purposes (Bishop and
Curtis 2001, 11).

and many other "Gilded Age" folklorists, compiled most of their collections from adult interviews, reminisces, autobiographies and memoirs, resulting in collections with little to no context or analysis. It has been suggested that Newell may have done this because he was under the assumption that children's lore was dying and would soon be extinct (Bronner 1988a, 12). The belief that folklore was dying was common to many early folklore collectors and scholars and was even described as "fast vanishing" in the first issue of the *Journal of American Folklore* in 1888 (Brunvand 1998, 4). In the introduction of his book, Newell states that the "vine of oral tradition" is "perishing at the roots" (Newell 1963 [1883], 1).

The idea that children's folklore and their play traditions are "perishing" is a misconception that is still held today in some academic scholarship and the popular press (Tucker 2008, 5), and has major repercussions on adult agendas and children's playtime today. This misconception exists despite the fact that numerous collections of children's folklore that followed Newell's work illustrate children's active and continued use of folklore. This misconception is discussed further in Chapter Three. Romanticism also influenced early childlore collections. According to June Factor, Newell was simply expressing Romantic views of the time (2001, 26). Romantic views also led to nostalgia and the representation of childhood as "imaginative, idyllic, and innocent" (Sutton-Smith 1995b, 20-21). The misconception of children as innocent, or the "childhood innocence myth", and the effects of adult nostalgia on children are also explored further in Chapter Three.

Despite the fact that Newell failed to collect from children or provide context or analysis, one of the most significant contributions Newell made to the study of children's

folklore is his observation of children's paradoxical nature, specifically their conservative (traditional) and creative (inventive) nature. However, while Newell acknowledged the creativity of children, his preference for and presentation of children's traditional forms of folklore give the impression of "stability and distribution over generations" (Bronner 1992a, 48). The selections made by early folklorists therefore reflected a biased "picture of cultural stability over an extended period of time" (Bronner 1992a, 48). While Newell's work is still highly valued today, Newell did not go on to comment or write on childlore much after this book.

Numerous collections since Newell's work in 1883 helped dispel the false assumption that children's lore was dying out. For example, Lady Alice Bertha's Gomme's *The Traditional Games of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, a two-volume work issued in 1894 and 1898 (twice since: 1964 and 1984), helped demonstrate that traditions weren't dying off, but just changing (Bronner 1988). Gomme collected children's games in England, Scotland and Ireland in the 1890s.[15] This work was meant to be the first part of a dictionary of British folklore that was planned by her husband, who never finished it (Bishop and Curtis 2001, 4). "It contains detailed descriptions of around 800 games and their variants, based on data from 76 correspondents and relating to 112 locations" (Bishop and Curtis 2001, 4). Like Newell, Gomme collected from adults rather than from children, gathering "her data from a network of retrospective adult correspondents rather than from direct fieldwork" (Grider 1995, 11). However, Gomme, like many other scholars at that time, was influenced by the theory of unilinear cultural evolution and

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[15] Lady Alice Gomme also published other works on children's games including *Old English Singing Games* (1900), *Children's Singing Games* (1909-1912) *and British Folklore, Folk-Songs and Singing Games* (1916) collaborated with Sir George Gomme (Grider 1995, 12).

theory of cultural survivals – the idea that many contemporary manifestations of children's folklore were remnants of an ancient past, the relics or fossilized remains of earlier adult customs and beliefs (Bishop and Curtis 2001, 4). In *Traditional Games*, for example, Alice Gomme traced a link between children's games of chance and skill and ancient harvest and funeral rites (Bishop and Curtis 2001, 4).

As Newell's and Gomme's work illustrate, the theory of the day, Darwin's evolutionism, was instrumental in influencing the notions of children's culture and the perception of children themselves. Jay Mechling (1986), Simon J. Bronner (1988a, 1992a), Rosemary Zumwalt (1995), June Factor (2001), Elizabeth Tucker (2008) and many others have all commented that many early child scholars were evolution-oriented in their approach to children "viewing children as preservers of earlier cultures and developers of creative variations" (Tucker 2008, 6). They "believed that society moved forward through three stages: savagery, barbarism, and civilization. According to this approach, adults maintained current civilization, but children reflected civilization's earlier achievements" (Tucker 2008, 6). Charles Darwin (1871; 1859), Herbert Spencer (1977 [1876]) and Edward Burnett Tylor (1929 [1871]) were influential in the Social Darwinism theory as it pertains to children (Zumwalt 1995).

> Following the evolutionary scheme of Darwin and Spencer, man, woman, and child could be arranged hierarchically: Man is rational, physically and emotionally strong, civilized. Woman is irrational, physically and emotionally weak, and childlike. The child is weak and unformed, with a need to be emotionally nurtured by the mother and physically strengthen by the father. The child, then, is the living link with the savage past. (Zumwalt 1995, 25)

Based on this theory of progression and natural movement from simple to complex forms (from children's rhymes to adult narratives for example), children were considered small

savages, 'exotic' or 'primitives' (Factor 2001, 26).

One of the biggest problems with the cultural evolution theory is that it completely denied the complexity of children's folklore, ultimately equating children with simplicity (Zumwalt 1995, 26). While the literal interpretation of children's lore as a survival is no longer accepted as part of contemporary interpretation, Zumwalt argues "the fundamental equation between child and savage remains, at least as a metaphor, in much work on children's folklore. The child has become the savage in our midst" (1995, 28). For example, the Opies viewed children as "a thriving unself-conscious culture" (1959, 1-2), while Sylvia Ann Grider writes that one doesn't need to go to the outback of Australia to locate aborigines, "because a cooperative group of informants can be found on the playground" (1980, 162). Zumwalt explains, "Thus for the Opies, the child is like the aboriginal in the hinterland. For Grider, the child offers the exotic of the outback, but has the advantages of not really being savage" (1995, 28). It is therefore argued that scholars need to examine the assumptions underlying the cultural evolutionary theory, scrutinize the concept of simple, and recognize the child as a complex individual (Zumwalt 1995, 29).

The child as savage or the child as exotic has also been used to justify studying children's folklore (Zumwalt 1995, 30). According to Mechling, because of this equation between children and savagery, and the view of childhood "as a simple, incomplete, uncivilized state, preparatory to civilized adulthood," scholars have also tended to trivialize childhood (1986, 92). "Childhood is trivial, in this view, to the extent that it is merely an indication of the past or a potential for the future, not something whole or meaningful in its own right. This 'triviality barrier' continues to plague the inquiry into

the nature of children's folklife," (Mechling 1986, 92).

2.3   International Childlore Collections

Even though Gomme's and Newell's books were important studies in childlore, they were not the first, notes Sylvia Ann Grider (1995, 13). Grider cites other predecessors including Robert Chambers who wrote *Popular Rhymes of Scotland* (1826); James Halliwell, *The Nursery Rhymes of England* (1842) and *Popular Rhymes and Nursery Tales* (1849); and G.F. Northall, *English Folk-Rhymes*, (1892). As well, at the time of Newell, other scholars were pursuing children's folklore in their own countries (Bishop and Curtis 2001, 5) such as Henry C. Bolton (1888) in America, and Franz Magnus Böhme in Germany (1897). These works encouraged more collections in the twentieth century including William George from Wales, and Robert Craig Maclagan who wrote *Games & Diversions of Argyleshire* (1901), which he considered to be an appendix to Gomme's book.[16] These were later followed by English publications such as Herbert Halpert (1946), Paul G. Brewster (1952; 1953), and Mary and Herbert Knapp (1976) in America; Brian Sutton-Smith in New Zealand (1981); Edith Fowke in Canada (1969, 1988); J.T.R. Ritchie in Scotland (1964; 1965); the Opies in Britain (Opie and Opie 1959, 1969, 1985, 1997; Opie 1993) (Bishop and Curtis 2001, 5).

In the first half of the 20th century, publications on children's games and songs were in full swing. Many recreation books designed for children were published,

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[16] Other notable scholars who made a contribution to children's folklore in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries include Henry Carrington Bolton (1843-1903) and Robert Steward Culin (1858-1929). Bolton wrote *The Counting-Out Rhymes of Children: The Antiquity, Origin, and Wide Distribution* (1888), which included 877 rhymes in nineteen languages and dialect (but most from German and English). Culin wrote *Games of the North American Indians* (1907); he also studied Asian games and wrote an article on street games played by boys in Brooklyn (Bronner 1988a, 15).

however, writers did little more than present texts without contextual information or historical perspective (Bronner 1988a, 15). Another example of work which contained little contextual data was Frank Clyde Brown's (1870-1943) collection of folklore that included children's games, which he and his students collected. Brown's collection was published in seven volumes from 1952-1964 and is considered to be an excellent wide-ranging collection (Bronner 1988a, 15).

Other notable games and song collections were published by Leah Rachel Clara Yoffie, Paul G. Brewster and Bess Lomax Hawes. In 1947 Yoffie wrote "Three Generations of Children's Singing Games in St. Louis," which was published in *The Journal of American Folklore*. This collection is important because it is a study of changes in games played by St. Louis children over a fifty-year period.[17] Paul G. Brewster, known as an important twentieth century scholar of children's games, wrote *American Nonsinging Games* (1953), which contained 150 children's games. This collection is considered significant according to Simon Bronner because it: 1) is the first major nonsinging game collection; 2) is based on extensive fieldwork, but not all done by Brewster; and 3) provides good annotations (1988a, 17). However, various criticism of this collection include that it was collected by correspondence; it failed to identify informants or give dates of collection; it failed to comment on local changes in games (Bronner 1988a, 17). *Step It Down: Games, Plays, Songs, and Stories from the Afro-American Heritage* (1987) by Bess Lomax Hawes, is noteworthy because it is one of the

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[17] According to Yoffie "the children of fifty years ago played more of the traditional games of English than children do to-day" (Bronner 1988a, 16). She writes that schools helped preserve some of the older games, but fell into disuse or were forgotten; and that new song-games either came from older ones, or newly created, reflecting the changed environment.

few major works on Afro-American children's lore (Bronner 1988a, 17). In addition, her

film *Pizza Pizza Daddy-O* documents African-American children's singing games.

Most counting-out rhyme books, such as Emelyn Elizabeth Gardner's (1882-

1967) *Folklore from the Schoharie Hills, New York* (1937), were collections rather than

analytic works. Gardner's main contribution is her brief article on counting-out rhymes

in Michigan which were gathered mostly by her students (Bronner 1988a, 18). One of the

most extensive collections of rhymes is *Counting-Out Rhymes: A Dictionary* (1980),

edited by Roger D. Abrahams and Lois Rankin. Abrahams also wrote *Jump Rope*

Rhymes: A Dictionary (1969) including 619 rhymes from the nineteenth century to the

late 1960s which are catalogued alphabetically by keyword.[18]

2.4   Notable Children's Folklore Scholars and Influential Work

While game, song and rhyme collections flourished during the late nineteenth

century, Tucker explains that the upheavals of World Wars I and II and the Great

Depression of the 1930s caused such publications to become sporadic (2008, 6-7). Such

tumultuous times "did not encourage contemplations of children's expressive culture"

(Tucker 2008, 7). However, by the 1940s husband-and-wife team Peter and Iona Opie

"demonstrated the importance of studying children's traditions through a dazzling array

of publications" (Tucker 2008, 103).

Known as the world's foremost authorities on childhood traditions, the Opies'

"works are consulted by specialists from museums, libraries, and universities regarding

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[18] According to Simon Bronner, until the 1920s, jumping rope was performed almost exclusively by boys, but has since then been taken over by girls (1988a, 18).

details about children's books, toys, games, and beliefs" (Grider 1995, 14). Their books present many genres of childlore including riddles, epithets, jokes, pranks, codes, superstitions, beliefs and rites. For example, the Opies were on the scene publishing the games, songs and rhymes of children who lived through WWII, including the imaginative play of children who were held at concentration camps in Nazi Europe. Their first publication was *I Saw Esau: Traditional Rhymes of Youth* (1947), and they later wrote the nursery lore book *Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes* (1952). However, they are most known for their canonical work *Lore and Language of School Children* (1959), collected from children in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales.

The Opies' work is of great significance to the study of children's folklore for several reasons. They were among the first scholars to acknowledge that children have a culture of their own, independent from adults. In *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren*, they suggest that children don't just learn from adults, they learn from each other: "Children's lore is thus to a great extent independent of the teachings and wishes of parent and their surrogates," (Opie and Opie 1989, 169).[19] The Opies later wrote *Children's Games in Street and Playground* (1969) in which they classified and analyzed children's games. According to Elizabeth Tucker, "Folklorists have benefited greatly from the wide range of descriptive, comparative, and analytical context of this important study" (2008, 103). Also valuable is their work of game texts and tunes, *The Singing Game* (1985). Tucker explains that although Peter passed away in 1982, Iona

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[19] According to the Opies, when children are without adults, they have their own groups, they have a recourse to a variety of mechanisms (contractual, judicial, penal, legislative, economic, and communicative) in the conduct of their affairs (Opie and Opie 1989, 169). Through a contextual investigation, the Opies explore characteristics of children's folklore, acknowledging children's own realm of expression such as affirmation, ordeals, secret languages, and making and breaking friends.

continued to illustrate children "as full-fledged people, not just schoolchildren" (2008, 104) in her own solo works including *The People in the Playground* (1993), becoming one of the earliest scholars to recognize children from a child-centred approach.

The Opies are specifically credited with removing childlore from adult recollections and nostalgia, and helping establish the interest in and value of children's own traditions from their own perspective. The Opies were, in fact, following the lead set by American Dorothy Howard, another influential pioneer in the field of children's folklore.[20] Howard's research for her 1938 dissertation "Folk Jingles of American Children" at New York University, and her choice to collect rhymes directly from children "influenced the work of other folklorists, including Iona and Peter Opie, according to Jonathan Cott" (Tucker 2008, 104). While early scholars were not concerned with the differences between collecting childlore from the memories of adults and collecting childlore from children (because it was not a primary concern in interpreting comparative historical tracing), Howard and the Opies were some of the first scholars to collect childlore from children which marked a shift toward a child-centred approach and a step toward listening to children themselves.

Most importantly, Grider explains that the Opies were "leaders in refuting the premise that literacy and the pervasive mass media are destroying the traditions of children, and of course we know today that the media even help to diffuse many traditions" (1995, 14). Like the Opies, I attempt in this thesis to refute the misconception

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[20] Howard's work on Austrian children's games has been said to "give the reader an excellent sense of the games' and rhymes' complexity" (Tucker 2008a, 104). Dorothy Howard's significant contribution to children's folklore study is also discussed in detail in Brian Sutton-Smith's essay, "Courage in the Playground: A Tribute to Dorothy Howard", and *Child's Play: Dorothy Howard and the Folklore of Australian Children* (2005) edited by Kate Darian-Smith and June Factor.

that mass media is destroying children's folklore (see Chapter Three, Myth-Conception #5), and illustrate how mass media can generate and encourage traditions of children, rather than destroying them.

Another famous husband-and-wife team who were interested in interviewing children was Mary and Herbert Knapp. The Knapps are good examples of the trend toward publishing studies in children's lore. In 1976, they wrote *One Potato, Two Potato: The Secret Education of American Children* (subtitle would later be changed to *The Folklore of American Children*). Consisting of folk traditions from 43 states, and some foreign countries, it is considered to be the most wide-ranging body of childlore yet published (Bronner 1988a, 22). They observed, interviewed children and young adults, and gave questionnaires, but have been criticized for failing to indicate which items were elicited by specific techniques; for failing to provide comment on the manner or circumstances of the research collection; and for failing to provide more data on informants (such as age of informant or where collected) (Bronner 1988a, 22). While there is some analysis, the Knapps have also been criticized for naïve and simplistic commentary; however, Bronner argues that this book is important because of the large collection on which it is based (1988a, 22).

New Zealander Brian Sutton-Smith also interviewed children and is well known for having used "this technique in his fieldwork in New Zealand in 1949-51" (Grider 1995, 14). He was also influenced by the current trends in cultural anthropology (Grider 1995, 14). Described as an international leader in the field (Grider 1995, 16), Sutton-Smith's research and "many publications have contributed enormously to folklorists' understanding of children's play, games, and narratives" (Tucker 2008, 104). Some of

his most influential works include *The Games of New Zealand Children* (1959), *A History of Children's Play: The New Zealand Playground* (1981), *The Folk Games of Children* (1972), *The Folk Stories of Children* (1981), and *The Ambiguity of Play* (1997). Sutton-Smith's dedication and long periods of observation on playgrounds illustrated that "With minimal adult intervention, children could keep order, handle bullies, and take care of all but the most serious problems on their own" (Tucker 2008, 104).

While most of Sutton-Smith's work focused on games, game strategy and play behaviour, his book *The Folk Stories of Children* (1981), "departs from games and play and turned instead to narrative, using a phenomenological approach radically different from that of previous studies" (Grider 1995, 16). This book contains published stories from children aged two to ten in a New York city school, as well as plot analysis based on Vladimir Propp's structural approach. Most importantly, Sutton-Smith was one of the folklorists who "were turning their sophisticated attention toward children's lore in the 1950s, leading to a major assault on the 'triviality barrier'" (Grider 1995, 15). The triviality barrier is discussed further in Chapter Three.

Sutton-Smith is one of the editors of the indispensable children's folklore resource book, *Children's Folklore: A Source Book* (1995). Other influential contributions to the field of children's folklore include Simon J. Bronner, Roger D. Abrahams and Elizabeth Tucker. Grider argues, "The most recent significant contribution to the field is the extensive and thoroughly annotated collection of children's folklore compiled and edited by Simon J. Bronner" (1995, 16) entitled *American Children's Folklore: A book of rhymes, games, jokes, stories, secret languages, beliefs and camp legends for parents, grandparents, teachers, counselors and all adults who*

were once children. Two other important reference books are *Jump-Rope Rhymes: A*

Dictionary (1969) and *Counting-Out Rhymes: A Dictionary* (1980) edited by American

folklorist Roger D. Abrahams. Elizabeth Tucker's *Children's Folklore: A Handbook*

(2008) is another valuable resource and introduction to children's folklore.

2.5   Evolving Definitions of Children's Folklore

2.5.1   From Search of Origins to Search for Meaning

A major theoretical shift occurred between the nineteenth and the twentieth

centuries when scholars turned their search for origins to a search for meaning (Zumwalt

1995, 30).

> As we have seen, in the nineteenth-century cultural-evolutionary framework,
> children's folklore provided a link with the past. In contemporary approaches,
> children's folklore provides a key to understanding the crucial, unstated elements
> in a child's life. The stress on meaning is apparent in the psychological,
> functional, structural, and symbolic theories. (Zumwalt 1995, 30)

These new approaches and evolving definitions of folklore continued to influence how

and why scholars studied children's folklore. For example, while early folklorists

focused on cultural products, items or texts which "tended to abstract them from their

social and cultural context" (Bishop and Curtis 2001, 6), folklorists were now shifting

their concerns to the actual performance of folklore and its function and use.

The functional approach focusing on the use of folklore its the social setting[21] is

demonstrated in C.W. Sullivan's discussion of the function of folklore in science fiction

and fantasy (1992b). Martha Wolfenstein's (1911-1976) *Children's Humor: A*

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[21] Within Malinowski's theoretical framework on functionalism, folklore functions to create a social being,
and to reinforce cultural values (Zumwalt 1995, 32).

Psychological Analysis[22] (1954; 1978) illustrates the underlying, unconscious meaning of

children's jokes, Alan Dundes' research on pre-pubescent and teenage urban legends

(1971, 1976, 1998, 2002), as well as Gary Allan Fine's socio-psychological research

(1980, 1980b) offer psychological approaches to children's folklore. John Holmes

McDowell's *Children's Riddling* (1979)[23] illustrates the structural approach to folklore,

which investigates the surface (morphology) and the underlying (deep) structure of the

material in an effort to find meaning (Zumwalt 1995, 33).

2.5.2   Folklore as Communication and Performance

Evolving definitions of folklore in the 1970s brought a new concept of children's

folklore – folklore as a process of communication rather than a set of products or texts

(Bishop and Curtis 2001, 7). This shift not only created an interest in the social,

developmental and educational, but it also focused on the cultural, expressive and

aesthetic (Bishop and Curtis 2001, 7). Long considered to be "non-serious" and therefore

unimportant, children's traditions began to be viewed in a new light as "expressive

culture." The concept of folklore as performance and communication with an emphasis

on artistic behavioural analysis was defined by folklorists such as Dan Ben-Amos (1972),

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[22] Wolfenstein highlights the intensity in children's interest in jokes, in learning them and passing them on. From this functional approach, "The underlying meaning of the joke is directly related to the basic motive of joking, 'the wish to transform a painful experience and to extract pleasure from it'" (Zumwalt 1995, 30 quoting Wolfenstein). In addition, Wolfenstein argues that when children tell riddles, they are attempting to demonstrate their intelligence over others who are dumb (Zumwalt 1995, 31).

[23] McDowell's "Children's Riddling" (1979) is composed of riddles collected from Mexican-American children and children from Austin, Texas. "By examining the structure of the riddle, McDowell is able to suggest that riddles both organize the child's universe as a form of classification and play havoc with the order by taking the familiar and rendering it strange (McDowell 1979, 87)" (Zumwalt 1995, 33).

Ben-Amos and Kenneth S. Goldstein (1975), and Richard Bauman (1977, 1984).[24]

Moving from a search of origins and text collection to a search for meaning and folklore as performance and communication, resulted in folklore appearing more active, "since it appeared to be a human tool, not simply a reflection of culture; and extending the action model, folklore soon appeared more dramatic" (Bronner 1988b). According to Bronner, new key terms like interaction and transaction also "stressed agency and invoked the electronic crossing of time and space barriers" (1988b, 89).

2.5.3   Folklore as Emergent: Creativity in Tradition

There is a distinct shift from viewing folklore as stable, repetitive, continuous and orally transmitted to folklore as emergent,[25] a process, communication and performance. Most importantly, this shift views folklore as having an active role, and also takes into account both the traditional precedent as well as the special performance.

> As an emergent force, folklore did not have to dwell on the stability of a society or the timelessness of its products but could be examined for its role in implementing change. As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett noted, folklorists could study the 'stimulus that sociocultural change provides not only for persistence and revitalization, but also for the creation of folklore.' (Bronner 1992b, 4-5)

W.F.H. Nicolaisen's work was based on the notion that "individuals creatively, strategically, control their cultural traditions" (Bronner 1992b, 1). Nicolaisen

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[24] This follows postwar trends of folklore as "verbal art", as defined by William Bascom in the *Standard Dictionary of Folklore*. Bascom differentiated between folklore that was primarily social – such as customs – and folklore that was primarily expressive, textual, and artistic – such as tales and myths. Bascom emphasized the "aesthetic forms of folklore; the term 'verbal art' combined attention to expressive form and to its medium" (Bronner 1988b). Ben-Amos furthered Bascom's notion of art, and defined folklore as "artistic communication in small groups" (1972). "In this definition, Ben-Amos went beyond the combination of form and medium that Bascom had suggested in the term "verbal art" by emphasizing the transmission – the behavioral and textural qualities – of lore" (Bronner 1988b, 86).
[25] Richard Bauman explains that "performance always manifests an emergent dimension" (1992, 42).

investigated the connections to find meanings in the creativity and tradition[26] that express

our humanity (Bronner 1992b, 1). Nicolaisen writes:

> Tradition, in this process, guides and safeguards continuity in a world of change
> without restraining or jeopardizing individual ingenuity. There is a toughness and
> a persistence about folk culture from which even the most independently-minded
> escape only with difficulty. Yet – and this is the fascinating miracle of all folk
> cultures – the filter of individuality, of creative identity, of recognizable
> personality, prevents the products of tradition from becoming faceless and
> interchangeable. (1984, 270)

This approach analyzes the creative in the traditional (what Nicolaisen referred to as the

'variation in repetition'), considering both the traditional collective precedent and the

particular contextual performance. Nicolaisen's conceptual matrix also "suggests the

operation of folklore in complex human, or more exactly, social and cultural contexts,

rather than in mere linguistic terms" (Bronner 1992b, 2).

Not only is innovation based on an understanding of traditional precedents, but

"Creativity and tradition are intertwined, and represents the complex processes of humans

expressing themselves to others in ways that carry value and meaning" (Bronner 1992b,

3). Bronner's understanding of innovation and traditional precedents is similar in concept

to McDowell's theory of the activation of traditional competencies via popular culture,

and also Laba's definition of tradition as a continuity of practice, rather than the

continuity of content.

> The study of creativity in tradition identifies structures, acts, processes, and
> individuals involved in cultural expression, and as such it explores the essence of

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[26] The concept of tradition has greatly influenced the field of folklore study. "Tradition" has dominated our
thinking of the definition of folklore. "Literally, 'tradition' comes from the Latin for handing down or
handing over and therefore contains the idea of transmission so crucial to the modern concept of folklore.
In general usage, it carries the idea of repetition based on cultural precedent" (Bronner 1992b, 1). However,
a new approach developed, and by the 1910s, with the help of early scholars like Boas and Crowley, this
concept became more and more a trend, analyzing both the creative in the traditional. This approach began
to look at the crucial roles of context and creativity in narrative formation (Bronner 1992b, 3).

our humanity – our ideas, our capacities, and our ability to express them. The study of creativity in tradition moves internally toward studying consciousness, outwardly toward culture – and both are mediated by art. (Bronner 1992b, 6)

Folklore, as a process and as a human response to a complex environment, can therefore carry power: "Folklore, Nicolaisen suggests, gains its vitality from its use, from human responses to a complex environment. Folklore allows people to adapt to, or comment on, other people; it carries power because it draws on a social grounding with room for individual expression" (Bronner 1992b, 12). According to Nicolaisen, folklore such as storytelling, allows people to create innumerable pasts and rehearse possible future scenarios, which in turn, help them cope with the actual future (1990, 41). These evolving definitions of folklore were better at defining what child folklorists were already observing, especially in terms of the roles of narrative behaviour[27], the emergence of folklore in everyday life, creativity within tradition, and variation in repetition.

2.5.4   Children's Folklore as a Dialectical Process within Culture and the Theory of Traditional Competencies and Activation

Due to the constantly changing definitions and concepts of folklore, Sutton-Smith explains that children's folklore has been problematic to define (1995a, 3). With an initial emphasis on particular genres of folklore as texts and recording the survivals of the past that were believed to fast vanishing; today, folklorists focus on context and performance of these traditions (Sutton-Smith 1995a, 3). Sutton-Smith argues that we will never have a final definition of children's folklore because scholars keep adding and

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[27] There is also a new emphasis on narrative and understanding how people express and communicate through narrative; and, studying how people express themselves and communicate with one another. There is a shift from questions of nature, to questions of behaviour and social needs.

updating definitions based on their fieldwork and research, which they deem more valid (1995a, 3). However, he does offer a solution to this definitional problem by arguing that the view of folklore as a dialectic is an accurate definition of children's folklore (1995a, 7). Therefore instead of thinking of tradition as fixed and unchanging, scholars began to think of tradition as a "dialectical process within culture":

> By contrast, contemporary folklorists have tried to construct a notion of tradition as a dialectical process within culture (cf. Toelken 1979) – in other words, as a process of both continuity and change, stability and variation, dynamism and conservatism, both through time and across space. This lead to the perception that, rather than such-and-such a tradition dying out, traditions have often been modified and altered. (Bishop and Curtis 2001, 10)

The examination of creativity in tradition and the view of folklore as a dialectical process led many child scholars to study the relationship between children's folklore and popular culture, the effects of mass media on play traditions, how mass media is a critical tributary of folklore, and how children are both conservative and creative in their play; some of these include Opie and Opie (1959, 1985), Mary and Herbert Knapp (1976), Brian Sutton-Smith (1977), Delf Maria Hohmann (1985) Jay Mechling (1986), Simon J. Bronner (1988a), Eve Harwood (1994), Elizabeth Tucker (1999, 2008), Kathryn Marsh (2001), Elizabeth Grugeon (2001) and C.W. Sullivan (2006-07).

> Mechling explains children's "dialectic" relationship with the media. He writes,
>
> ...the cultural 'hegemony' the mass media are supposed to inflict upon our society, wiping out 'local cultures' of all sorts, does not seem to be happening among children. Children's folk cultures turn out to be very resilient, according to this perspective, entering into a dialectic with mass media and appropriating for their own uses its materials and forms. (1986, 109-110)

Sutton-Smith argues that scholars need to listen to and address the antithetical nature of children, as well as both their conservative and innovative manifestations (1995a, 7).

Sutton-Smith explains, "Our rhetoric of children's folklore, then, is that it is a branch of folklore characterized by that dialectical mimicry and mockery, performance and parody, of which children seem to be especially capable, given their adaptively neotonous and sociologically marginal characteristics" (1995a, 7).

As noted, for McDowell, children's folklore and its process of transmission are more accurately described as traditional competences that are activated by popular culture. In other words, McDowell argues that within children's folklore, traditional items are primarily functioning as a guide to innovative folklore creation (1995, 60). And rather than viewing the process as a process of transmission, it is viewed more as a process of activation. McDowell's theory is discussed further in Chapter Ten.

These evolving definitions of folklore, along with the child-centred approach, has shaped contemporary folklore child research studies. Grider writes that by World War I, "interest in children's folklore became more and more diversified. Researchers sought more than conventional and socially acceptable games and nursery rhymes" (Grider 1995, 13). She also explains that scholars "also finally are investigating previously taboo topics such as children's use of obscenity and scatological materials" (Grider 1995, 16). An excellent example of this type of contemporary research involving tradition and creativity can be found in *Play Today in the Primary School Playground: Life, Learning and Creativity* (2001) – a collection of essays edited by Julia C. Bishop and Mavis Curtis, with a foreword by Iona Opie. Antithetical, taboo, obscene, and scatological materials are discussed in detail in the upcoming chapters on play activities, such as parodies in Chapter Six and Chapter Eight.

2.6   Interdisciplinary Child And Fandom Research

Just as folklorists were creating their own definitions of children's culture,

scholars in other fields were also contemplating notions of childhood and children's

culture including, and most pertinent to this thesis, the discipline of cultural studies.

Marsha Kinder's edited collection of essays, *Kids' Media Culture* (1999), provides an

example of interdisciplinary child research. Kinder explains that Stuart Hall, and other

members of the Birmingham school, moved away from the passive models of

spectatorship and "introduced a theory of active readership rooted in Gramsci, which

explained how the meanings of popular culture could be actively negotiated by its fans (5,

1999). Scholars, like Dick Hebdige, saw this movement of "reading against the grain" as

an active form of cultural resistance (Kinder 1999, 5). Kinder's research on Teenage

Mutant Ninja Turtles, Power Rangers, and Nickelodeon, (along with Henry Jenkins on

Batman, *Star Trek* and Pee-Wee Herman, and Ellen Seiter on Strawberry Shortcake and

My Little Pony), all illustrate participatory culture and how resistant readings are

perceived as a means of empowering youths (Kinder 1999, 6). According to Kinder,

negotiated readings empower kids by allowing them to display their personal knowledge

and differentiate themselves from other groups and generations (1999, 6). Henry Jenkin's

edited collection *The Children's Culture Reader* (1998) likewise, assists in understanding

the history, development and implications of the "childhood innocence myth", as well as

how adult beliefs and conceptual frameworks impact the treatment of children.

Other significant and contemporary interdisciplinary research relevant to this

thesis includes *Kid Culture: Children and Adults and Popular Culture* (1994) by

Kathleen McDonnell (Children's Literature). McDonnell's work draws attention to the

phenomenon of Kid Culture as a subculture, and demonstrates how Kid Culture functions

for youths (1994, 9). *The Bosom Serpent: Folklore and Popular Art* (2001) by Harold

Schechter (English) similarly was useful in understanding popular art and entertainment

as communal storytelling and modern-day equivalents of folklore (2001, x). In summary,

both Harry Potter literature (seven-volume series) and fan reaction and behaviour (the

Harry Potter phenomenon) have provided scholars across various disciplines with ample

material to analyze. This has resulted in numerous articles, texts and collections solely

devoted to Harry Potter that are explored in this thesis.

2.7   Conclusion

In this children's folklore literature review, I examine the historical and social

shifts, and ideological trends affecting adult concepts and studies of children and

childhood, including the triviality barrier. It is only by following the progression of

children's scholarship and the social and political climate that we can come to understand

how research, theories, approaches, and views of children changed over time and what it

has come to be today. Most importantly, this historical overview aids in understanding

why adults today continue to believe many misconceptions about children, their play,

folklore and popular culture. Chapter Three examines seven popular adult

misconceptions regarding children.

Chapter 3

Adult Agendas and Popular "Myth-Conceptions" about Childhood, Children's Folklore, Popular Culture and Play

3.1   Introduction

Before investigating how children define for themselves what it means to be a child, and how they construct their cultural and social identities through play and fandom, it is important to explore the adult perspectives and agendas children confront. By investigating the perspectives adults have towards children, childhood, play, popular culture and mass media, I aim to achieve a more complex and accurate understanding of how children are affected by adult agendas. It is also critical to explore these perspectives and agendas because, according to Henry Jenkins, adult views affect the treatment of children and impact our scholarly ideologies, approaches, orientation, and conceptual frameworks: "Our beliefs about childhood have some impact on our treatment of children, just as shifts in material practices such as our responses to industrialization…have some impact on our conceptual frameworks" (1998, 22).

This chapter begins by exploring how adults have perceived children and childhood throughout modern history, and the major myths and misconceptions adults have about children. Many of these popular beliefs are unsubstantiated and yet have existed for centuries and continue to flourish despite evidence to the contrary (Factor 2001, 6). In addition, there are many scholars who ignore the massive amounts of evidence that would prove their arguments false. Most importantly, many adults, from educators to politicians, have used these arguments to further their own agendas while

affecting and influencing children's lives in significant ways. Chapters Four to Nine, I

present evidence from my Harry Potter case study to help dispel these popular

misconceptions.

3.2   **Children's Culture "Myth-Conceptions"**

Not only do a number of significantly biased beliefs about children's culture and

childhood exist, but what is more astonishing is the fact that these beliefs continue to exist

despite massive amounts of conflicting evidence (Factor 2001, 6). The Opies explain that

these myths have become so ingrained in adult contemporary society that they assumed

the status of traditional beliefs in themselves: "Yet the belief that traditional games are

dying out is itself traditional; it was received opinion even when those who now regret the

passing of the games were themselves vigorously playing them" (1969, 14).

What follows is a discussion of the cultural misunderstandings that plague adult

perspectives and views of children and childhood, which I have termed as "myth-

conceptions." Although folklorists define "myths" as explanatory narratives about the

origins of the world, or "traditional prose narratives, which, in the society in which they

are told, are considered to be truthful accounts of what happened in the remote past"

(Brunvand 1998, 170), throughout modern society and interdisciplinary children's culture

research, the word "myth" has generally been used to refer to the "misconceptions" held

by adults that affect their views of children and childhood. In this sense, the word "myth"

has become popularly or colloquially defined as a misconception, error or false

assumption. I have therefore combined the terms "myth" and "misconception" to

produce the term "myth-conception" defined as a popular cultural misconception in

society that achieves legendary or belief status. In this case, I am referring to popular

misconceptions about children, children's culture (folklore and popular culture) and

childhood that have become so ingrained and believed among society, that they enter into

belief status despite evidence to the contrary. This chapter therefore presents the major

myth-conceptions adults have regarding child development, mass media, popular culture,

and children's play activities in an attempt to understand child and adult reactions to the

Harry Potter phenomenon and the child-adult divide.

3.2.1 The Child-Adult Divide

A number of child scholars have offered reasons to explain the existence of the

child-adult divide, outside the obvious age difference and imbalance of power. The Opies

write:

> Yet our vision of childhood continues to be based on the adult-child relationship.
> Possibly because it is more difficult to find out about, let alone understand, we
> largely ignore the child-to-child complex, scarcely realizing that however much
> children may need looking after they are also people going about their own
> business within their own society, and are fully capable of occupying themselves
> under the jurisdiction of their own code. (1969, v)

According to McDonnell, the generational gap between children and adults is a cultural

gap: "We also have to come to grips with the fact that Kid Culture belongs to kids

themselves. We adults just don't get it. Having left childhood behind, we're mostly

aliens in that world. We don't speak the language. We don't see things the same way.

The generation gap is, in a very real sense, a cultural gap" (20, 1994). Another major

reason, according to Fine, is the difference between child and adult skill and

psychological attributes which "must be recognized in the analysis of their folk

traditions" (1980a, 171).

Child scholars such as Fine, Sutton-Smith, Clark, Marsh and others, have also acknowledged the limitations of the child-adult divide. Fine argues that we, as adult researchers, have to resign ourselves to the fact that we are not members of children's groups and therefore portions of their culture will remain inaccessible to us (1995). Sutton-Smith writes that our view of children is as through a peep-hole (1986, 253), which is probably why so many misconceptions about children and childhood exist. In addition, Marsh argues that "Adults often have a tendency to underestimate the abilities of children" (2001, 93). Children's culture is a site of conflict, and to understand this culture we must therefore provide the perspectives of child and adult.

> To understand culture in its full complexity, it is important to assess both juvenile and adult viewpoints and dynamically interrelate them. When a child interacts with an adult in a jointly constructed cultural event… Taking children into account more than enriches ethnographic understanding; it enables understanding of the full dynamic in the first place. (Clark 1995, 106)

By taking a childist (child-centred) approach to my research and exploring the relationship between children's media culture and adult needs, I aim to avoid the oversimplification of children and children's culture and expose how adult interpretations of media texts and popular culture frequently disagree with those of children.

3.2.2   Alarmists Vs Optimists

Marsha Kinder (1999) places adults and their reactions to and research of children's culture into two categories: alarmists (the perception that popular culture is a destructive force that destroys kids' creativity; a perception often affected by nostalgia) or optimists. Alarmists "demonize children's media culture as a terrible contemporary

aberration that is somehow transforming our kinds into a mass of dumb-down zombies and killers, in contrast to 'the good old days' when children were vibrantly active, creative, and innocent" (Kinder 1999, 2). Adults in this category therefore focus on protective interventions, censorship measures and regulations "that would preserve kids' innocence by denying them access to offensive material" (Kinder 1999, 2). They tend to focus on a single element of media culture (such as pornography or violence), and often use the childhood innocence myth to support their own political, social, and educational agendas, and "as a symbolic rallying point from a broader crusade against what they perceived to be a disturbing moral decline in our society (for example, a sharp increase in and wide acceptance of consumerism, urban violence, political corruption, broken families, pornography, tabloid journalism, homosexuality, abortion, and so on)…" (Kinder 1999, 2-3). It is therefore easy to see how adults in the alarmist category, whose main goal is to guide and protect the innocent, are capable of significantly interfering with children's free play, socializing and popular culture exposure.

No doubt, there are many adults ringing the Harry Potter alarm, such as parents (who fear their children's minds and traditional culture are being destroyed), and fundamental religious anti-Potter groups (who fear the pagan literature will lead children to dark literature or magic, demonic or satanic worship). Religious alarmists who oppose fantasy and the Harry Potter phenomenon are discussed further in Chapter Eight. Educators and corporations, who also have their own vested interests and approaches, are also explored.

Optimists fall into Kinder's second category of adults who study children. Adults in this group are "more concerned with providing equal and equitable access to all

children (regardless of class, race, or gender), and studying how kids actually learn to cope with their culture and negotiate its meanings, not as passive subjects but as active historical agents" (Kinder 1999, 2). Fostering free choice among children and preserving civil liberties is critical to those in the optimist camp. However, whether alarmist or optimist, according to Kinder, "neither side assumes that kids have all the power needed to *totally* govern their own choices, the key issue is what kinds of guidance are most effective" (1999, 2; emphasis in original).

3.3   Myth-Conception 1 – Childhood is a Modern and Invented Concept

According to Sutton-Smith, the notion that childhood is a modern and invented concept is very widespread in recent scholarship (1995b, 19). Factor concurs with Sutton-Smith arguing the idea that "childhood-is-a-social-construct" (2001, 29) (where childhood is an adult creation not a natural phenomenon of human development in every society), is a major misconception clouding adult views of childhood. This misconception is credited to the French cultural historian Philippe Ariès and his book *Centuries of Childhood* (1962) in which he argued that childhood, as we know it today, did not exist before the Middle Ages. Factor explains that Ariès's work "generally is credited as the first promulgation of the thesis of 'invention of childhood' – in Ariès's view, a development which occurred in the seventeenth century" (2001, 31).

Not only is Ariès's notion active and thriving, but it has also acquired classic status (Factor 2001, 32). However, many claim that Ariès misread historical evidence, such as medieval children dressed in clothing similar to adults, to inaccurately claim that childhood was absent before the seventeenth century (Factor 2001, 32). Factor claims that

because Ariès's book was written in the 1960s when children's folklore research was not particularly extensive or common, it may explain why he ignored and failed to acknowledge such research (2001, 33). Ariès argues that during the seventeenth century, developments and changes, such as child clothing taking on distinct style from adults, signaled the idea of childhood consciousness (McDonnell 23, 1994). McDonnell asserts that by the early eighteenth century, children were becoming fully established as subjects for contemplation: "This period saw the emerging idealization of childhood, which began with Rousseau and the Romantics and which reached its zenith (or nadir, depending on your point of view) in the sentimental stories and illustrations of the Victorian era in England" (McDonnell 24, 1994).

Factor makes a plea to folklorists to address this myth in their research because its exponents help support a view that children's free time is trivial, unimportant and in need of adult intervention (2001, 33). Scholars such as Factor (2001, 29) and Nicholas Tucker (1977, 22) warn scholars that to ignore this misconception and treat children as products of adult social expectations will inevitably lead to problems and oversimplifications. Although Ariès's thesis may have been inaccurate and questioned by historians for its simplicity, what is important about his book is that it "opened a space for examining the social construction of childhood as an ongoing historical process and for questioning dominant construction of childhood innocence" (Jenkins 1998, 16). For others, the value in Aries's work is in the recognition of the separation and division of the child and adult work worlds following the Industrial Revolution (Sutton-Smith 1995b, 19). Most importantly, through this separation, children began to gradually acquire more traits of a distinct subcultural group (Sutton-Smith 1995b, 19).

Sutton-Smith explains that before industrialization, the adult and child world used

to come together when engaging in entertainments; there used to be less division between

adult and child entertainment and leisure. He asserts that after industrialization, there

grew a further separation between child and adult world through programs like universal

schooling and, as a result, kids' free play time became more and more structured, and kids

were organized to create peer, age categorized relationships in schools (1995b, 20). In

addition, children preferred games that were less complex (ignoring linear forms and

preferring rounds and circle games), while adults favored leisure culture such as spectator

activities and mass-participation forms (Sutton-Smith 1995b, 20).

This shift and separation of adults and children does not imply that children's

culture and folklore (i.e., childhood) didn't exist prior to the Industrial Revolution. It

simply means that due to the separation of child entertainment from adult entertainment

and changing perceptions of the child, it brought attention to childhood as a concept and

children as a subculture. The problem is that, for some, this seemed to suggest that

childhood itself was a modern and invented adult concept, and that children did not have

a "childhood" or play prior to this adult invention. It is also important to stress that this in

turn does not suggest that all children's culture or experiences of childhood are universal.

Sutton-Smith argues that children's folklore has not always been the same, and that

children's folklore is distinct as each different subcultural group develops its own

expressions and customs.

> A group that senses itself to be distinct usually develops characteristic customs
> and ceremonies, many of which express opposition to those of the hegemonious
> surrounding culture. In these terms children's folklore is the product of a kind of
> generational subculture instigated by a society that requires quasi-dependence and
> quasi-independence in the young. (Sutton-Smith 1995b, 20)

Unfortunately, some scholars have responded differently to children as a subculture, often with conflicting descriptions of a "novel subculture" or depictions of children as primitive, irrational or disenfranchised (Sutton-Smith 1995b, 20).

3.4   Myth-Conception 2 – The Innocent, Vulnerable Child

A major adult myth-conception pervading children's culture has to do with a notion popularly known as – the childhood innocence myth.[28] Elizabeth Tucker explains that this innocent, idealized, sheltered, dreamy view of the child was "one of the core concepts of nineteenth-century Romantic poetry and children's literature" (2012, 390). Most important to this thesis is the fact that this myth of childhood innocence functioned, in part, "as the basis for criticism of modernity and the breakdown of traditional forms and community life" (Jenkins 1998, 17). It is therefore not surprising to hear many parents today lament that popular culture, like Harry Potter, is responsible for their children's lack of traditional play. (The myth-conception that children's folklore is destroyed by mass media is addressed in the following section on children's play and popular culture under "Myth-Conception #7.") During this era, the mind of the innocent child was often compared to wax or clay, waiting to be molded by adults (Jenkins 1998, 18). Viewed as simple, children are therefore perceived to need direction, instruction, protection and guidance from adults.

This myth of the child as innocent has therefore been used by adults for their own agendas, including those of politicians, educators, and child protection advocates.

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[28] To help explain the development of this myth, Karin Calvert (1992) distinguishes three shifts in the cultural understanding and adult regulation of American childhood between 1600 and 1900.

According to Jenkins, some politicians today continue to use the myth of childhood innocence to achieve their goals and agenda, using the child as the embodiment of change, the child is always in the process of becoming something else (1998, 5). Most importantly, the childhood innocence myth-conception has, throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century, "helped to erect or preserve cultural hierarchies, dismissing popular culture in favor of middle-brow or high cultural works viewed more appropriate for children" (Jenkins 1998, 14). In an attempt to shelter children's purity, adults rationalize their censorship and regulation efforts (Jenkins 1998, 14).

The major problem with the innocent child myth, and the idea that a child demands nothing but protection, is that it takes away the power of the child, silences the child, and empties the child of its own political agency (Jenkins 1998). Because simplicity and innocence were assumed to be the child's distinguishing features, it was therefore argued that happiness should be the natural state of the child. According to this ideology, writes Jenkins, an unhappy child is equated to an unnatural child; therefore the innocent child was to be protected at all costs from threats such as crime, drugs, abortion, illegitimacy, child abandonment (1998). For conservative-religious anti-Potter groups, who also base their arguments on the childhood innocence myth, this also means protection from dark, pagan or satanic literature, which they believe Harry Potter literature to be. The innocence myth allows such groups to justify their arguments, and rationalize their censorship attempts to ban Harry Potter literature from schools and homes, ultimately preventing children from reading Harry Potter. The anti-Potter movement and the "Potter Wars" are discussed further in Chapter Eight.

Advocates of the childhood innocence myth-conception base their arguments on

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the idea that the child exists in a space above the political. This myth encourages adults and parents to take action to protect the child. As Mintz writes, "Today [2012], many adults believe that children are growing up too fast too soon. According to this declensionist model, the young are stripped of their playfulness, innocence, and sense of trust at too early an age" (2012, 25). This desire to protect the child has also resulted in children with little time to play freely with their peers without being under the watchful eyes and agendas of parents. There have been many scholars and cultural critics who have argued against the childhood innocence myth (Jenkins 1998, 23). Research presented in this thesis also attempts to discredit this myth.

3.5 Myth-Conception 3 – Children's Play is Trivial

One of the biggest battles a scholar must face when they decide to study children's play is the unfortunate stigma of triviality. In this case, children's play culture (as well as its study), is viewed as simple, insignificant, unimportant, worthless, and non-productive nonsense; in a word, trivial. The trivialization of children's play has affected the study of children and even those who study children. "As we can define childlore partly in terms of its 'triviality,' it follows also that most serious persons will find it too trivial to study, that at this historical time there will be a 'triviality barrier' against its serious pursuit" (Sutton-Smith 1970, 4-5). Triviality deals with attitudes towards the subject matter rather than the subject itself. "We must ask, therefore, what is it in the subject matter of childlore (and folklore) that permits such an attitude" (Sutton-Smith 1970, 2).

Sutton-Smith explains that folklorists cover activities which have been traditionally and historically viewed and treated as "the nonserious areas of child life"

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including children's group traditions (such as rhymes, jokes, superstitions, wit, nicknames, torments, parody, codes, gang lore, etc.), and activities that children perform individually (such as daydreaming, fantasies, solitary play, comic reading, dramatizations, mass media interests, stories, etc.) (1970, 1). In a work-oriented civilization, activities perceived as fun are often regarded as trivial[29] (Sutton-Smith 1970, 2). Sutton-Smith therefore warns that disregarding these traditions is a mistake because they are important to a child's development.[30] By not trivializing, adults may actually see play, and the activities of children, for what it is – a key to development (Sutton-Smith 1970, 4).

Ultimately the triviality of childhood can be blamed on adult-centred views, the character of civilization, and the attitudes that originated during the Reformation (Sutton-Smith 1970, 5). If trivialization were removed from adult perceptions, argues Sutton-Smith, it could result in more serious academic pursuits. At the time of writing his 1970 article, Sutton-Smith claimed that "We are perhaps on the verge of revolution in folklore" (6) believing that ongoing research will eventually end stereotypes of triviality in the study of children's folklore. "In sum, to this point I have argued that childlore is concerned with expressive forms, and that for this reason it has historically been regarded as a trivial subject matter, but that current trends in research would appear to foretell the end of this demeaning epithet" (Sutton-Smith 1970, 6). The research presented here

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[29] As Sutton-Smith claims, psychologists and biologist therefore regard anything fun as having no obvious survival value and therefore of no importance (Sutton-Smith 1970, 3). Connected to the idea of fun is the concept of expressive activities, which according to Sutton-Smith, have been ignored in young babies. Psychological approach is to look at how "the infants' immature response-systems are guided toward more 'mature' forms of behavior" (Sutton-Smith 1970, 3).

[30] Sutton-Smith also defends the value of playlore and childlore by stating that childlore is important to child development. He compares the ability to use game strategy to cultural complexity and cites his and M. Robert's research on Tick Tack Toe. Their cross-cultural studies revealed "cultures possessing games of strategy were at a higher level of cultural complexity than any of the cultures without such games" (Sutton-Smith 1970, 6-7).

supports the argument that helps discredit, debunk and dismantle the triviality bias.

I also aim to counter some of the effect trivialization has had on children's agency. According to Sutton-Smith, the triviality barrier can act as a major means of suppressing children's voices. This suppression, argues Carole Carpenter "has helped create their colonialized position in contemporary society which seeks above all to PROTECT them rather than to support their PARTICIPATION in society and thus empowering them and enabling the pursuit of their best interests in accord with the UN Convention [on the Rights of the Child (1989)]" (February 18, 2008, e-mail to author; emphasis in original). Child advocacy programs have had an increasing affect on children's folklore, limiting children "for their own good" and controlling children's rights to participate in their own culture. This re-invention of children and advocacy programs treats children as passive, and views them as passively controlled by the evils of outside influence; thus, parents, adults and advocates are needed and justified to intervene (often affecting children's play time). By protecting them, argues Carpenter, we are not letting children fully participate in their own society. Addressing this triviality barrier is the first step in fully understanding children on their own terms.

3.6   Myth-Conception 4 – Childhood as Training Ground to Adulthood

One of the greatest contributors to the trivialization of children's folklore has to be the perception and belief that childhood is simply a stepping stone, a training ground, and a temporary place a human being passes through on their way to adulthood (McDonnell 1994, 21). In this light, childhood is therefore unimportant, temporary and used only as a way to get from point A (infant) to point B (adult). "Since children are in a sense

unfinished products and have not yet achieved the 'goal' of maturity, their lives are somehow considered trivial, not deserving of our interest or attention" (McDonnell 1994, 21). Psychological development theories, in particular, often view and value childhood as only a preparation for socializing and development. "What appears to have happened is that the scientists of human development have taken an adult-centred view of development within which they privilege the adult stages over the childhood ones" (Sutton-Smith 1995, 5). Many scholars therefore also see childhood as a subject fit only for developmental psychology (Jenkins 1998, 2). These adults often fail to see outside the normative, into the subversive and disobedient (which is of critical significance to a child and his/her lore) because it isn't what they strive to achieve in the child (Jenkins 1998, 2). Jenkins argues that "While we often celebrate the 'resistant' behaviors of youth cultures as subversive, the 'misbehavior' of children is almost never understood in similar terms" (1998, 2). However, this view has begun to fade since 1998 as more scholars began to investigate childhood (Jenkins1998, 2). As McDonnell reminds us, "The world of childhood is vastly more interesting when viewed on its own terms than as merely a series of 'developmental tasks,' a way station on the road to adulthood" (1994, 22).

3.7   Popular Culture, Mass Media and Children

There have been and continue to be adult debates (including debates between "parents, teachers, children's advocates, policymakers, media producers, broadcasters, journalists, social critics, cultural theorists, researchers" [Kinder 1999, 1]) surrounding children's media culture such as television programs, electronic games, movies, comics, books and toys.

In the growing field of writings on children and media, those cultural debates include the widely covered confrontations between children's advocates and researchers, on one side, calling for more responsible programming and policies from media producers, broadcasters, advertisers, and government agencies on the other. There is also a less publicized conflict within the former camp between those who see children primarily as passive victims being contaminated by an increasing corrupt culture and those who perceived them as active players grappling with the inevitable processes of social and historical change. (Kinder 1999, 1)

Kinder is suggesting that in debates over children, there are usually two sides, advocates and researchers vs. media producers, advertisers and government agencies. The advocates are usually viewed as having good intentions, yet they often differ when it comes to viewing children as either passive or active (Kinder 1999, 1). However, it is best to view the whole situation to see if children are actually feeling empowered/active or disempowered/passive. There are moments when children are literally disempowered; for example, when marketers use psychological research to take advantage of them; when advertisers manipulate them and expose them to products; and when corporations legally bully them and their fan activities (several Harry Potter legal cases involving children are discussed below). One cannot deny that these groups of adults take advantage of children on a daily basis. However, when one takes a closer local look into the practices of fans, and their behaviours and reactions, we can see that children do indeed find the power they seek, finding their own way through the corporate mire.

Children from all over the world have been exposed to the world of Harry Potter and author J.K. Rowling. In fact, several of the children I interviewed quite proudly proclaimed their knowledge of the author, while one child even proudly demonstrated the spelling of her name.

Contessa: Who wrote the books?

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Group: JK ROWLING!
Lucas: I'll spell it for you! J-K-R-O-W-L-I-N-G! (2005)

As well, while conducting field research between 2005 and 2011, there wasn't one person (child or adult) I approached who did not know who Harry Potter was. Their exposure is obvious, and their fondness for this phenomenon, immense. In fact, it is this obvious exposure to popular culture that parents are most fearful of. "Adults, particularly educated, middle-class adults, are becoming ever more alarmed about pop culture's grip on childhood" (McDonnell 1994, 10).

Fearing that "popular culture is poisoning kid's minds" (McDonnell 1994, 10), contemporary popular culture fads, like Harry Potter, often fall under biased critical scrutiny. Toys like Star Wars and GI Joe paraphernalia for example are viewed as "politically retrograde" (McDonnell 13, 1994). Parents are increasingly concerned with and fearful of the influence of popular culture in children's lives, and because of their fear, they attempt to limit and control their children's exposure to it. However, this is often difficult to do due to "the omnipresent influence of popular culture" (McDonnell 10, 1994). Not only do kids now have increasing access to popular culture, but they are also now are the target of marketing ploys.

3.8   Myth-Conception 5 – Children's Playlore is in Decline; Children-Don't-Do-That-Anymore

The history behind the myth-conception that "children's playlore is in decline" is easier to explain than its continued presence in modern society. Not only did early folklorists believe children's folklore was dying, but scholars like Newell (who were

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operating under the concept of cultural decline), believed all folklore was dying. Brunvand writes, "The theory of gesunkenes Kulturgut (German for 'debased elements of culture') reversed the direction of diffusion – folklore has sunk from its high origin as 'art' or 'learning,' to become 'tradition' among the common people" (1998, 50). This theory is significant because, as Bronner explains, "this rustic stereotype of folklore been widely refuted on the scholarly level, and it still reigns unchallenged in popular thought" (1988a, 13). Rooted to this myth is romanticism, and the idea that industrialization killed folk ways of life (Factor 2001, 26).

It is commonly believed among adults, parents and educators that playlore is in decline, that "children don't know how to play anymore," and that children's traditions are dying out. The Opies write, "It seems to be presumed that children today (unlike those in the past) have few diversions of their own, that they are incapable of self-organization, have become addicted to spectator amusements, and will languish if left to rely on their own resources" (1969, v). It is quite unclear as to why this misconception remains as there are ample collections as evidence to prove the contrary (Factor 2001, 28). The Opies write:

> Many folklorists, however, seem to be magically insulated from literature not strictly within their discipline; and neither Newell, one of the founders of the American Folklore Society, nor Lady Gomme, seems to have been aware of the juvenile books on children's games which had long existed, even in their day, both in Britain and in the United States. (1969, viii)

Harwood explains that collections of published children's lore illustrate "ample evidence of the continued existence of children's folk repertoire despite easy access to popular music through electronic media and equipment" (1994, 189). However, Bishop and Curtis (2001) reference the continued widespread belief and popular perceptions among

teachers that children have lost the art of playing games, children don't know how to play any more, and traditional games are dying out.

English educator David Holbrook wrote in the 1950s that British children's traditional games and rhymes were disappearing, blaming the developments and changes in television, in mass production of toys, in family life and ways of living (Factor 2001, 27). In addition, Factor explains that in the 1980s writers, such as Neil Postman and Marie Winn, ignored more than two decades of play data and insisted that children's games are an endangered species (2001, 27). Not only did Postman (1982) and Winn (1983) assert that playlore was in decline, but they also attached the troubling notion to the popular and long-standing fear of technology (Factor 2001, 27). Unfortunately, Factor warns of the presence of this misconception: "Despite evidence to the contrary, it is now a truism among many educators and social reformers that children's playlore is in decline, and that this, like the canary in the mine, portends danger to our collective (social) health" (2001, 28).

At the core of these myths, explains Factor, is that of the well-used phrase "the good old days" where children were more polite, cooperative and innocent. "In contrast, today's youngsters are seen as worldly, attracted to crude humour and instant gratification, their imaginations desensitized by an over-abundance of flashy toys provided by mass-produced technology. They have only a vestigial repertoire of the old play traditions; soon these too will be going" (Factor 2001, 26). Kinder notes the equally troubling effects of the "good old days" myth "when kids were vibrantly active, creative, and innocent" versus the notion that children's media culture as transforming kids into "dumbed-down zombies and killers" (1999, 2).

However, numerous collections, acknowledgements and discussions prove children's games do indeed exist in a lively form (Bishop and Curtis 2001, 2). Dispelling this myth is critical because many educators ignore data of kids' play. Adults often ignore the evidence in front of them in order to pursue their own agendas. Factor claims that it was Peter and Iona Opie's book, *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren* (1959) that "exploded the children-don't-do-that-anymore myth in the UK. Since then, folklorists around the world have published an array of complications of children's playlore, and there are now journals, theses and conferences dedicated to a lively and flourishing childhood tradition" (2001, 27). However, given that many popular myth-conceptions exist despite such collections, studies and evidence, it is even more important that adults (from parents to scholars) continue to examine and vocalize the reality of children's lived experiences, play and culture.

3.9   Myth-Conception 6 – Popular Culture Destroys Children's Traditional and Creative Competencies

Some of the myth-conceptions regarding children have to do with the destructive, negative, detrimental, brain-rotting influence of popular culture has on children. Described as "societal rot" (Schechter 2001, xii), and the "pornography of childhood" (McDonnell 10, 1994), popular culture is also attributed with destroying children's creativity and causing negative behaviours in children. Some parents do not understand or acknowledge popular culture's value; rather, they believe popular culture to have a degenerative quality, lowering their children's creative minds and limiting their potential. Popular culture and technology are often accused of taking away a child's capacity for

play, and traditional games.

From this perspective, adults perceive children as helpless and passive to the onslaught of mass mediated popular culture. Some adults believe that because children are sponges, they will absorb the bad with the good. They believe popular culture will impede their intellect by either destroying their capacities for creativity and causing an inability to tell creative, original stories; or by destroying their capacities for tradition and play. In particular, some adults also believe that media influence will destroy children's narrative tradition and narrative creativity (Tucker 1992, 25). However, two good examples that disprove this particular myth-conception are the emergence of media narraforms and parodies on the Internet (see discussion of narraforms in Chapter Nine).

And what do adults blame for the supposed decline in children's playlore traditions? Usually the technological innovation of the day.

> The reasons often cited today for the declines of play are also remarkably similar to those of the past. In the nineteenth century, commentators blamed national schools and the coming of the railway; in the twentieth century, first cinema, radio and gramophone, and now comics, televisions and video games, are the common scapegoats. (Bishop and Curtis 2001, 2)

Like modernity, technology, and mass cultural goods, popular culture has taken the blame for replacing the traditional. The argument is the same, with just a shift in the particular form of modern technology, innovation or popular art that is blamed for the corruption. Kinder reminds us that this position has a long vital history, "traceable back to Plato, that has been applied not merely to current mass media – like pop music, movies, television, video games, and the Internet – but to virtually all of their popular precursors – including poetry, theater, novels, radio, comic strips, and comic books" (1999, 3). She notes, ironically, "For some of those very same media and texts once vilified as harmful to

youth can, with a shift in discursive context, subsequently be converted into laudable "children's classics'" (1999, 3).

A number of scholars have critiqued corporate construction of children's popular culture arguing that it destroys kid culture (both traditional and creativity competencies). Some argue that children's traditional artifacts are being replaced and manipulated by "media culture objects" (Kellner 1997, 85), thereby destroying their traditional play competencies and artifacts. Corporate saturation has even been cited as limiting children's creative and imaginative capacities (Turner-Vorbeck 2003, 19). From this perspective, it is believed that children consume uncritically, and passively obey dictated play and play behaviours.

Despite there being a "widely held misconception that electronic media have contributed to the decline in children's traditional play pursuits" (Marsh 2001, 81), children's play activities including those media inspired play activities flourish. As well, not only have there been collections of children's folklore to help dispel this myth-conception, but the very dialectic nature of children's play ensures its guaranteed flourishing of games and traditions. The innovative, creative quality gives children the ability to adapt to change. John Blacking (1967) illustrates this in his study of Venda children's songs, finding that children gain prestige and develop confidence when using innovation. Blacking writes:

> There is a certain amount of regional variation in the texts and the popularity of the songs, though the melodies of different versions vary little, so that a child may also gain prestige by introducing some new words into songs that he and his friends already know. …The children's songs present Venda children with musical materials which they can soon manipulate with confidence. (1967, 32)

As Marsh points out, children's dialectic with popular culture guarantees play traditions

will continue: "This ability to accommodate and create change enables children to ensure that their play traditions will continue to flourish, despite the dire predictions of adults to the contrary" (2001, 94). Again, my research outlined below supports this argument, and demonstrates that children's capacity for creativity or tradition is not destroyed by popular culture, but rather it is ignited by popular culture and born in direct response to daily life.

3.10   Myth-Conception 7 – Popular Culture Causes Negative Behaviour in Children

Not only is popular culture viewed as turning kids' heads into mush, and taking away their ability for creativity, play and tradition, but aggressive and violent media and popular culture has also been accused of *causing* aggressive behaviours children. Adults from this mindset or camp therefore view kids as passive, innocent and needing protection, and therefore often cite or claim the "effects" of mass media on kids. However, this is usually exaggerated. According to cognitive psychologists Rodney R. Cocking and Patricia M. Greenfield (1996), while violence in the media may glamorize, desensitize, and help us tolerate more violence, it is difficult to prove that violence in the media causes violence (Kinder 1999, 4). In addition, Harold Schechter argues that today's films and movies are probably less violent than the entertainment of earlier eras such as violent or "hard core" folktales, and points to Maria Tartar's research on the violent "hard core" of fairy tales such as the Juniper Tree (2001, xiii).

Some adults believe and often claim publicly that children's aggressive and violent media culture causes children's aggressive behaviour. Other adults, however,

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believe media culture acts as an acceptable channel for aggression. Dorothy Walter

Baruch (1998) argues that media influences, like radio programs, comic books, and

movies, are not the cause of aggression in children but rather the channel or outlet for

aggressive expression. Exposure to aggressive or violent popular culture does not simply

cause aggression in children, claims Baruch, rather it channels it (1998, 493). Baruch

argues that aggressive popular culture acts as an outlet for the natural aggression

abundantly found in children's lives – full of conflict and tension with adults. She

believes that popular culture doesn't cause children to be mean, rather it is a way for

children to channel their wild, scary, aggressive, confrontational desires. Baruch explains

that because children feel themselves inferior, small and weak next to adults who tower

above them, media sources allow them to feel more powerful among adults (1998, 493).

> The aggression, as we know by now, is already there. A child feels himself small
> and weak next to the adults who tower above him. He desires to be greater and
> bigger – more powerful. He musters aggression to this end. A child feels
> resentful and angry of many things as he grows. He wanted to be able to let out
> and get even. He wants to bring out the 'murderous' impulses that lie within him.
> (Baruch 1998, 493)

Just as viewing aggressive media may channel a child's aggressive desires, so too

can fantasy channel the child's need for a sense of power. Baruch argues that popular

culture "characters bring out and express the aggression which he may not. This feels

good to him. He gets a vicarious thrill from it. He identifies himself with the characters

who are what he is inside and who do what he could like to do" (1998, 493). She further

defends against this myth-conception by adding, "Being honestly angry and letting the

anger come out honestly against the person who engendered it, yet channeling it into

harmless channels – this, as we've seen, does good. It is the MOST REALISTIC

ANTIDOTE for the appeal of the comics and such" (1998, 494; emphasis in original). I argue, and demonstrate with fan-play examples in Chapter Six, that children and youths similarly use fantasy to channel their powerful feelings, emotions and need for power in socially acceptable ways.

3.11   Conclusion

All of these myth-conceptions (from viewing children's play as unimportant and trivial, to believing playlore is in decline and destroyed by popular culture) affect how and why adults modify and interfere with children's play activities and games. The myth-conception that playlore is trivial, insignificant and unimportant has caused adults to ignore children's play activities for the most part. According to Factor, the fact that adults have ignored children's games and play has been to the advantage of children. "This has permitted children to organize themselves as they wish, free of the imposition of current adult notions of how and what to play" (Factor 2001, 33).

Adults also respond to these myth-conceptions by interfering rather than ignoring. This has resulted in parental attempts to regulate (either by elimination or substitution) children's free playtime (Factor 2001). Recess is sometimes eliminated from schools, or replaced with organized sports.[31]

> However, the increasing professionalizing of sport, together with concern in many developed countries about people's weight and its relationship to lack of physical exercise, has lead to accelerated attempts to regulate children's free playtime. Teachers and physical educators therefore organize mini-athletics and sports activities to encourage children to get in shape and engage in competitive adult team games. They push their 'adult focused game equipment at recess and

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[31] Factor cites the 1998 decision of the Atlanta public school districts to eliminate recess in elementary schools. Recess was viewed as a waste of time, with time better spent on academic work (Factor 2001, 35).

lunchtimes' on the children to encourage their competitive game skills. (Factor 2001, 34)

Perceived as having a purpose, and a positive and productive effect on children, organized sports are often used to substitute what adults believe to be children's wasted free time such as recess. In fact, the time spent by children in organized sports doubled between 1981 and 2009 (Harper 2009). It is also important to remember, that when play becomes forced, non-voluntary or has a goal or purpose, it stops being play for the child. Carpenter also noted this in her research on Canadian boys who played hockey. Carpenter found that a large percentage of boys stopped playing hockey before their teens because it was no longer fun. She writes:

> Overall, a very high percentage of boys in Canada have played one form or another of hockey at some time, though very few indeed ever make the professional leagues. Today, a great many boys stop playing before their teens, which raises the question of why they do so. My informants in this category, including my own 21-year-old son, said almost uniformly, 'Because it was no longer fun'. (2001, 175)

Parents and adults from this camp often have one particular view (theory) of child development: that "the young have one purpose, to grow more and more mature. That growth is what one should encourage, so pastimes such as Hopscotch are viewed as merely training for the important, mature activity of competitive sport. A narrow concept of usefulness prevails" (Factor 2001, 34). Unfortunately, a narrow concept of usefulness based on normative schemes of child development has underscored the majority of childhood rhetoric (Sutton-Smith 1995a, 4).

With this in mind, children's games are substituted with "more valuable" activities like competitive sport and academic work and imposed on them; recess becomes cut or organized into competitive sport or physical education lessons; lunchrooms become

supervised; parents and guardians micromanage; play dates are organized and play monitored; and free socializing time, eliminated. The damaging result of this is obvious when one recalls a very important reality of children's culture – children don't just learn from adults, they learn from each other: "Children's lore is thus to a great extent independent of the teachings and wishes of parent and their surrogates" (Opie and Opie 1989, 169). Free play studies have shown children to demonstrate co-operation, communication, creative, problem-solving, social and interpersonal skills (Harper 2009). So what happens when adults prevent children from being alone? They directly prevent the development of children's lore and play, ultimately stifling their development, socializing and experience of childhood. Harwood argues that

> A greater threat than the presence of mass media may be the absence of unsupervised time and play space afforded many modern children. Their folk culture needs time and privacy to flourish; the safety of a community away from adult ears is necessary to explore the boundaries and rules of childhood. Isolation in front of TV or Nintendo on the one hand and constant participation in school, after school and extra-curricular programmes on the other, effectively eliminates the opportunity for participation in folklife with its rich heritage of childhood wisdom and creative communal expression. (1994, 193)

There is no doubt that there is a current crisis involving the structuring, supervising and often removal of children's free time for play. Playtime has been cut, more regulated, as well as supervised and monitored by adults. Adding to the confusion, is the ongoing adult distrust of popular culture, mass media and modern technology that began during the Industrial Revolution, and continues to exist in adult popular thought today. Children's culture myth-conceptions continue to dominate contemporary thinking "long after the decline of Social Darwinism and the notion of children as the primitives of the race. …Distrust of the processes and products of machine culture continues, at some

level of consciousness, more than 200 years after the cataclysm called Industrial

Revolution" (Factor 2001, 27).

However, despite being ignored and interfered with, what is certain is that

children will still find the opportunities to play and socialize during school hours. As sure

as children will continue to find ways to express their play, culture and fandom; adults

will find ways to misinterpret, ignore, trivialize and manipulate children to their own

advantage and agenda. It is therefore on us scholars to remind the rest of the world of the

pervading adult biases towards children, children's culture, play, folklore and popular

culture. In the following chapters, I present child research from my Potter case study that

continues to dispel these false adult assumptions and myth-conceptions.

Chapter 4

Children's Literary and Folk Aesthetics:
Harry Potter as Mythic Hero and Folktale

4.1   Introduction

Before addressing specific examples of local and online child fan-play that are

used to help dispel the adult myth-conceptions presented in Chapter Three, one should

ask, "What is it that makes *Harry Potter* so popular?" Suman Gupta writes, "The Harry

Potter books are worth examining for one special reason: they should give, more than any

other recent book, adults some indication of that magical thing – the kinds of textual

qualities that grab children. What is the factor X that gets Harry Potter books an

extraordinary endorsement from children?" (2003, 9). In this chapter I ask, what is the

secret, "magic formula" or "Factor X" that turned a book into a global phenomenon?

Rowling explains that she has been asked this question many times and her answer

always points in the direction of her readers (Anelli, 2008). Rowling writes, "Over and

over again they asked me the same question, with tiny variations. 'What is it that makes

Harry Potter so popular?' 'What's the magic formula?'…And I always gave them non-

answers. 'It's not me you should ask.'" (Anelli 2008, ix). Rowling is right. While

commodity consumption may indeed set reading and aesthetic tastes in terms of what

books are produced and available to children for reading, one cannot forget that it is

children themselves who hold the power to create and support literature popularity.

> The popularity of Harry Potter emerged with the schoolyard chatter, not with
> marketing hype. Today [in 2001], two-thirds of kids ages 8 to 18 have read at
> least one in author J.K. Rowling's series of Potter books – properties that initially

arrived with comparatively little of the fanfare we've come to associate with new book titles. A generation that has been marketed to its entire life birthed its own buzz, took ownership of the Potter brand and declared it genuine. Until now, virtually everything marketed to kids has been saturated by hype, and they're hyped out. *Harry* grew organically, and it is the purity of these origins that has created real equity for the brand. (Lynch 2001, 26)

By taking a child-centred approach, and by perceiving children as active rather than passive, one can hear and observe children articulate why they like Harry Potter and why the series is so popular. My fan interviews reveal much about the literary or textual and story appeal, in particular the function of narrative, folklore and popular culture for young people. What follows is a discussion of the several major factors contributing to the success, popularity and global phenomenon of Harry Potter including: (1) the appeal of fantasy and magic; (2) the identification with the protagonist and other characters as empowerment; (3) the identification with kids' folk groups, liminality and subculture; (4) the presence of folklore in the text (Harry Potter as folktale and mythic hero); and (5) how the folktale narrative and hero character function for its readers. In this chapter, I also discuss Rowling's biography and how her own rags-to-riches life story parallels that of Harry Potter's. (The ability to elaborate on, extend or "play with" the series, providing opportunities for play, socializing, expression and wish fulfillment, is another significant reason why kids enjoy Harry Potter and is addressed in Chapters Five to Nine.) I conclude this chapter by arguing that the ultimate secret of Rowling's success is the hybrid literary combination of the traditional (familiar) and the creative (unexpected), which in turn mimics the nature of children's culture and play.

4.2   Fantasy and Magic

Some scholars make the case that fantasy is not an escape from something, but liberation into something, and that children opt for fantasy because it gives something to them, and fulfills a need (O'Keefe 2003, 1). Deborah O'Keefe writes, "Reading fantasy is not so much an escape *from* something as a liberation *into* something, into openness and possibility and coherence" (2003, 1). No doubt, Harry Potter is a world of magic and fantasy: a world of flying broomsticks, charmed candy, magic spells, potions and wands, powerful creatures, and magical quests and journeys. The child's imagination and suspension of disbelief allow the child to enjoy the magical, fantastical world of Potter. When asked what they enjoy and like about Harry Potter, by far the majority of kids and teenagers I interviewed commented on the appeal of the fantasy genre and the presence of magic in the story.

Contessa:	Why do you like Harry Potter?
Brittney:	I like the magic.
Contessa:	You like the magic?
Lucas:	And I like the flying on the broomsticks.
Contessa:	How about everybody else? What do you like about Harry Potter?
Scott:	I like flying, I like the boomsticks, the magic and all the characters.
Lyndsay:	Yes, so do I except for Snape.
Amber:	I like most of the characters, I like when they fly on the broomsticks and the magic.
Contessa:	How about you?
Lyndsay:	I'm a big reader so I love magic books and really thick books. So, I really love the magic and Quidditch.
Lucas:	I like Quidditch too. (2005)

As demonstrated in the quote above, children like the ability to stretch and use their imaginations through fantasy literature, by suspending disbelief and reveling in the hero's ability to cast magic spells, fly on broomsticks, do the impossible, and reorder the world. My interview with Theodore also reveals his attraction to magic, "I like how they

fly on brooms, and their magic wands, and how they levitate stuff" (2006). In their own words, both children and teenagers, illustrate the appeal of fantasy and magic, witches and wizards and a world full of possibilities. The following quotes were taken from teenagers between 2007 and 2008, and illustrate the attraction youths of all ages have to magic and fantasy.

> I like the whole fantasy thing, that's what I'm really big into. So, I like magic, and different kinds of magical creatures. I really like the idea and the concept of Hogwarts and everything. (Benjamin 2007)

> And it's just like a fantasy world that you can't really explore in real life, so you go there and just drift away. (Connor 2007)

> I find the idea of the world of wizards interesting. (Jacky 2008)

> It allows me to break away from the everyday mindset of society and jump into a magical world of possibilities. That feels good! (Rachel 2008)

> I love fantasy. I grew up with C.S. Lewis' Narnia series and Tolkien's Lord of the Rings books read to me, so the magic and fantastical realm appeal to me (Robyn 2008).

> I just find the idea of wizards living among people so cool, and the school that can only be seen by wizards and witches. It just fascinates me, and how Harry can be the only person to defeat Voldemort because he was saved by his mother's love. (Declan 2008)

> I enjoy Harry Potter because it has a high imagination. I enjoy any type of fiction based around witches, wizards, etc. I find it very interesting to learn about other things that is believed to be both true and untrue. You can also learn much about other things during theses books or movies, like how to keep an open mind, and imagination. (Sabrina 2008)

> Harry Potter fuels the inner child, makes you envious, and reminds you of your childhood dreams. (Amelia 2008)

> Magic! Who does not love magic? I'm almost 20 years old and I still wish I could fly, or have a broom that let me fly. (Amelia 2008)

> Is it bad that after talking about this, I want a wand? [laughter] (Jacob 2008)

While young children may not fully know or understand the concept of fantasy, as compared to the understanding of teenagers and young adults, they are still able to articulate their attraction to the magical motifs found in the Harry Potter story. Nine-year-olds Gregory and William demonstrate a similar attraction to magic and fantasy as described by the teenagers above.

> Contessa: What do you like about Harry Potter?
> Gregory: Ahm, magic. (2008)

> The flying car is really cool. (William 2010)

> I also like how it's like ghosts and goblins and everything…, and like how, like they have the owls instead of, like, airplanes. And the broomstick! The broomsticks are my favourite. (William 2010)

Thirteen-year-old Naomi also expresses the appeal of witches and wizards.

> Contessa: What do you like about Harry Potter?
> Naomi: Everything.
> Contessa: Like what? Anything in particular?
> Naomi: I like the whole, ah, eh, there's a lot of things I like, but, I like the suspense of it, the whole idea of witches and wizards and stuff, yeah. (2011)

Fans sometimes even articulate their desire to live at Hogwarts as twelve-year-old Molly explains. Hogwarts possesses a wonderful world of characters and motifs with which to experience and co-create.

> Contessa: So tell me, what do you like about Harry Potter?
> Molly: Oh my god, everything!
> Madeline: Everything!
> Contessa: Like what? What in particular?
> Molly: Just, you know, it's so magical and perfect. And it would be an awesome place to live – at Hogwarts. (2011)

Many kids daydream and fantasize about being witches and wizards themselves and having the power to cast magic spells:

I just like it. Everything about it is just amazing. I wish I could live as a witch, but unfortunately I was born a muggle. (Naomi 2011)

Contessa: Do you like the magic?
William: Yeah.
Contessa: A lot of kids say they like the magic the best. Do you wish you
             ever had magic?
William: Oh, yeah.
Contessa: Yeah? What would you do?
William: I'd probably go back in time to fix anything I did wrong or, yeah.
Contessa: So the time-turner thing would be good.
William: Yeah. And I could like, I don't know. If I had magic, I'd find out
             when I got there. (2010)

Well, just that, he's like a wizard and the effects and the castle and everything, it just blows my mind. And, I'm really addicted to it. (William, 2010)

Teenagers like Zack also comment on the appeal of Harry as an orphan boy hero

who is suddenly empowered with the ability to perform magic:

Well, when I first read *Philosopher's Stone*, I just, I just, ah, like I found it interesting. Like when Harry came to be, and how he became famous, and when he first got the letter to go to Hogwarts and found out about how his parents being witches and wizards. So, after that I just got into it, because I likes, I likes stuff like that, magical stuff. (2007)

This is similar to Adele's secret desire to be a wizard:

One of the reasons I was so into Harry Potter was because it was a type of wish fulfillment. I wished that someone would come and tell me that I was secretly a wizard! Also the story interesting and funny; it's entertaining. (2008)

Below Lucy explains how Harry's plight interested her:

I am a fan because I like the story line – poor mistreated little boy turns out to be a huge wizard and really wins and shows his family his is worth much more than a little room under the stairs. It really sparked my interest as a child. (2008).

These quotes illustrate how kids gravitate toward tales where the hero (youth) is

empowered with magic and can wield that power over other humans (adults). Maria

Nikolajeva writes, "In fairy tales retold for children, characters are usually empowered in

a way that makes them superior to other human beings. They are endowed with magical agents enabling them to be transported in space, or to metamorphoses into animals or other, presumably better, human beings" (2003, 127). Furthermore, Nikolajeva writes that folktale heroes and their helpers reflect the power relationship between children and adults in society (2003, 127).

Roni Natov explains that Harry embodies this power relationship and "state of injustice frequently experienced by children," in the adult world (2002, 127). By reading Harry Potter and identifying with the main character, children are therefore able to vicariously live out their desires and, at least imaginatively, achieve their ends. This may indeed be a reason why youths like reading, experiencing and "playing" Harry Potter.

> Zack: To tell you the truth, I wish I was him.
> Contessa: Why?
> Zack: I don't know, he's a cool kid. It's like, every time Harry Potter goes into, you know, as soon as he goes into Hogwarts something bad happens to him, *only him*, and like, Ron was jealous of him. Like every year something happens to Harry Potter and Ron just wishes it was him. (2007)

Zack, who identifies with Harry, is also quick to point out the parallel experience between Ron's jealousy and his desire to be Harry Potter. The following chapters on children's fan-play illustrate how Potter provides the opportunity to exercise and experience power through imaginative play and activism, and further illustrate kids' identification with Harry Potter, boy-wizard.

4.3   Identification with Protagonist and Youth Underground Folk Culture

Preadolescent and adolescent readers who are the same age as Rowling's protagonists, are said to be particularly drawn to Harry Potter, because they are in a

constant state of flux (Lacoss 2002, 87). In addition, because the story follows students as they move from grade to grade, liminal examples and rites of passage that parallel real life abound in the pages of Rowling's book. Natov writes that Harry begins his journey at eleven years of age "an age associated with coming into consciousness, particularly for boys, and particularly in England, when children begin their 'serious' study to prepare them for adult life" (2002, 125).

According to Tucker, a substantial factor contributing to the appeal of the Harry Potter books has to do with Rowling's knowledge of the world of children, and her understanding of children's "underground" culture: "J. K. Rowling's understanding of the childhood underground substantially contributes to the appeal of her books, which have delighted children around the world" (2008,133). Child interviews reveal that it is indeed Rowling's familiarity and knowledge of children's culture as a folk group between two states of existence – childhood and adulthood – which appeals to young people as a liminal folk group. Iraq-born Shara, a foreign student in Canada, could relate to feelings of loneliness and isolation as a new kid in school (like Harry), and as the outsider who is unaccustomed to the new world surrounding them (Hogwarts/Canada):

> The books are very different from anything I read before. The idea of another world with us is amazing and the story of an orphan in a school help me relate to it sometimes. It's really a nice way to leave the real world and open your imagination. (Shara 2008)

I suspect this is what kids are referring to when they compliment Rowling's on the "realness" of her fantasy world. Almost every child and teenager I interviewed commented on how the Harry Potter world felt real to them, how it was relatable to them, and how it spoke to their real emotions and experiences of childhood. For Angie,

Rowling's "realistic" world "makes sense" to her: "It's just, it's really interesting, like, you don't really, it's kind of different than the other fantasy books I've read. It's, it makes sense, you know what I mean? It's, like, more realistic. Seems to tie in really well" (2007). In other words, for Angie, Rowling's "realistic" books are believable and relatable.

Teenaged Rosalie also states that the novels appeal to people because of the realism of the characters, "I think the thing about it that is appeal to most people is, I think it's the characters, like the characters are really, realistic, and you kind of want to know them and want them to be your friend. You know, they're just realistic. That's what I think it is, and I mean, the plot's awesome too so" (2007). Children were often less articulate in expressing the same sentiment as teenagers; however, they still express the same sentiment. In the following interview excerpt, a group of eight-year-old children were asked what they liked about Harry Potter. One little boy explained it as "He's a real person" but was quickly corrected by another child who said "No, he's not!", prompting laughter from the other kids in the group.

Contessa:	Why are you a Harry Potter fan?
Lucas:	I just love him. [Laugher]
Contessa:	Why?
Lucas:	He's cute. [Big laughs from all]
Contessa:	What is it that you like about Harry Potter? What is it about the stories that you like?
Lucas:	He's a real person.
Brittney:	No, he's not. [Laughter] (2005)

 It's not that Luke failed to understand that Harry Potter was a literary creation, but that for him, he felt like a real boy he could relate with.

Most importantly, for children who physically grew up with the series, the

Rowling's characters provide an identifiable age group with whom they could progress through life.

> It's just a really great book, and it's just fun to read. And, where, the characters, are pretty much our age, like, as, when I started to read the books, he was about my age then, when, like, just stayed with my age group; so you can kind of relate to it. (Connor 2007)

> I like the movies I saw because the characters have always been around my age at the time I seen the movies so I could sometimes related to them. (Anastasia 2008)

> They aged them pretty well, throughout the years as well. They stick to the ages, the way the characters age in the books. (Stephen 2008)

> I began reading the books and found that I could relate to each of the characters in some way. As they grew up in the books I grew up along with them. (Sophia 2008)

Author J.K. Rowling relates well to the perspective of young people, as Roary and Sienna attest:

> Rowling makes kids feel a part of the story. I really enjoyed the books. They made me feel part of the story. (Roary 2008)

> [Rowling] puts normal story lines (friends who like each other, school enemies, etc.) in a magical and exciting story line. (Sienna 2008)

Rowling understands how the identity of youth is shaped by their status as a liminal group. The author demonstrates her knowledge and familiarity by taking her characters through a variety of rites of passage similar to those that children and young people experience in real life. For example, when Harry Potter leaves his home to go to Hogwarts School to train to become a wizard, his journey is marked by a rite of passage (van Gennep 1960) with three stages of separation, transition and incorporation (Turner 1989) which parallels children's school experiences in real life: "All of the students must leave their families, spend time with special guides who will train them in the ways of the

main folk group (i.e., wizards), and learn enough to be reincorporated into the general

folk group as full-fledged members. This rite of passage is divided up in the same way

that school is for children," (Lacoss 2002, 73). In the case of Harry Potter, children were

quite literally aging alongside the characters (as well as the movie actors) and

experiencing the same challenges as they transitioned through life.

One of the most obvious rites of passages featured in the text is the first-year ritual

of the Sorting Hat where each new student is put into an official subgroup, in the form of

a house assignment. It is therefore not surprising that the Sorting Hat ceremony has

become a popular activity to parody and play. Many Potter-Party planners recreate the

ceremony at Harry Potter event parties such as birthday parties and book launch parties

(discussed further in Chapter Five). By focusing on Harry's experience, Rowling relays

the tension and pressure experienced by children while undergoing rites of passages. She

writes:

> 'Potter, Harry!'
> As Harry stepped forward, whispers suddenly broke out like little hissing fires all over the hall.
> 'Potter, did she say?'
> '*The* Harry Potter?'
> The last thing Harry saw before the hat dropped over his eyes was the hall full of people craning to get a good look at him. Next second he was looking at the black inside of the hat. He waited.
> 'Hmm,' said a small voice in his ear. 'Difficult. Very difficult. Plenty of good courage I see. Not a bad mind either. There's talent, oh my goodness, yes – and a nice thirst to prove yourself, now that's interesting… So where shall I put you?'
> Harry gripped the edges of the stool and thought, "Not Slytherin, not Slytherin.'
> 'Not Slytherin, eh?' said the small voice. 'Are you sure? You could be great you know, it's all here in your head, and Slytherin will help you on the way to greatness, no doubt about that – no? Well, if you're sure – better be GRYFFINDOR!"
> Harry heard the hat shout the last word to the whole hall. He took off the hat and walked shakily towards the Gryffindor table. He was so relieved to have been chosen and not put in Slytherin, he hardly noticed that he was getting the loudest

cheer yet. (1997, 91)

Jann Lacoss argues that through Rowling's "invention of specific jargon, dress, and foodways, she has sculpted a credible folk group based on existing social models" (2002, 88). Rowling's understanding of children's culture as subculture and children as a credible folk group adds to the appeal of Potter stories, "Because the group is so appealing, the characters are easy for children (and former children) to relate to, and the issues broached speak to the needs of the audience" (Lacoss 2002, 88). So, it is also not surprising to see multiple examples of children's playlore based on the subversive, the reversal of the norm, and taboos including the gross and disgusting.

> The magical creatures depicted in the books allow children to explore fears and play with preconceived notions of what constitutes 'gross and disgusting'. Children are enticed by things that most adults deem repulsive. Browsing toy store aisles reveals that contemporary children's toys include Slime and Gak, both of which are neither liquid nor solid (and cross that boundary nicely), Icky Yicky Water Ball, the Hairy Hairball plush toy (which spits up various objects), and Gus Guts (who vomits individual internal organs.) Objects that cross boundaries are especially difficult to discuss or even consider. Birth provides a real-life example. (Lacoss 2002, 83)

> Alan Dundes explains, "The term 'folk' can refer to *any group of people whatsoever* who share at least one common factor" (1965, 2; emphasis in original). In this case, child Harry Potter fans share mutually accepted traditions, and can be viewed as distinct based on age, social, position, and biological and mental development stages (Lacoss 2002, 69). Based on Dundes's definition of a folk group, Jann Lacoss draws a comparison between wizards as a folk group and children as subgroup as created by Rowling,

> Using the guidelines that indicate delineations of folk groups, children can be seen as a distinct group, based on age, social position, and biology and mental developmental stages. Likewise, the wizards in the Harry Potter series are a folk

group, and child wizards constitute a subgroup. J.K. Rowling has, either consciously or unconsciously, drawn from a knowledge of how folk groups are constituted in building her wizarding society. (2002, 68-69)

Just as child wizards constitute a subgroup, so do child fans of Harry Potter. Sutton-Smith argues that children join groups on the basis of their shared interests and traditions that are important to their shared sense of identity. He writes:

> Our rhetoric of children's folklore speaks to their 'own group traditions,' which raises the question, Just what are the folk groups to which children belong? Folklorists have expanded considerably their definition of the 'folk group.' No longer reserving this term for isolated rural community or urban enclave, most folklorists would agree with Alan Dundes' view that a folk group consists of two or more people who share something in common – language, occupation, religion, residence – and who share 'traditions' that they consider important to their shared sense of identity (Dundes 1965, 2). Folk groups should be small enough that each member has, or could have, face-to-face interaction with every other member. (1995a, 8)

In this case, the child Potter fans can be considered a folk group who share in their common interest in Harry Potter books and movies. They also share "traditions" and customs including social reading, joining local fan groups, wearing character costumes, attending a Science-Fiction and Fantasy Convention, role-playing and imitation, writing fanfiction, creating fan art, attending book launches and midnight movie showings, joining fan sites and Internet chat rooms, and creating and posting media narraforms and parodies on the Internet. "Children's folk groups, therefore, can be many and overlapping. The smallest folk groups can be composed of playmates" (Sutton-Smith 1995a, 8). Most importantly, it is their participation in folk groups and shared common characteristics (such as language, rituals, rites of passage, secrets, clothing, play, and activities) that become the foundation for cultural communication (Toelken 1979, 51).

4.4   Folklore

Many literary scholars have pointed to Rowling's work as demonstrating a variety

of mainstream and folk genres such as mystery novels, adventure films, and TV sitcoms

(Zipes 2001, 177), pulp fiction, gothic and horror stories, detective fiction, the school

story, sports story, fantasy, quest romance and myth (Alton 2003, 141). However,

Rowling's work has been most compared to that of the traditional folktale, and the

character of Harry Potter most compared to an archetypal, mythic hero. The fact that

Rowling ended the series by writing two endings that follow both paths set forth by the

folktale and the heroic myth demonstrates this. In this chapter I therefore apply Vladimir

Propp's thirty-one functions or actions of the folktale to the first Harry Potter novel, and

discuss the character of Harry Potter as mythic hero as identified by Otto Rank.

Throughout this section, I also take the opportunity to highlight some other examples of

folklore from Rowling's book such as rites of passage, liminality, school lore,

dichotomies, language and dialect, motifs, and Axel Olrik's epic laws of folk narrative.

In addition, I explain how Rowling's use of this folklore and knowledge of children's

culture as a subculture has contributed to its appeal, and ultimately to its success.

4.4.1   Harry Potter as Folktale

Although many literary scholars believe Rowling's novels to demonstrate a

variety of genres, the structure, plot, motifs and narrative epic laws of Harry Potter have

been most compared to one genre in particular – the traditional folktale. Jack Zipes

writes that Rowling's book runs parallel to folktale plot structure in which "a modest little

protagonist, typically male, who does not at first realize how talented he is and who

departs from his home on a mission or is banished until he fulfills three tasks" (2001, 177). This is the story of Harry Potter. According to Bengt Holbek, the structural analysis of tales (such as the work of Axel Olrik in 1909, Lord Baron Raglan in 1934, Joseph Campbell in 1949, and Vladimir Propp in 1968) has focused on "the study of patterns, of their parts and the rules for putting them together, and of the forces underlying the creation of such phenomena" (1987, 323). Propp, in the book *Morphology of the Folktale*, provided a systemization of magical fairy tales, which deciphered and broke down the folktale into thirty-one "functions" or actions performed by a specific character type. "Functions is understood as an act of a character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action" (Propp 1994, 21). According to Propp, functions (or acts) of characters are fundamental, stable, constant elements or components of a tale that drive the action of the story forward (1994, 21). Propp defined several principal characters (what he called *dramatis personae)* including the villain (Voldemort), donor (provider – it is from the donor that the hero obtains some agent – Hagrid, Dumbledore), helper, girl (Hermione saved from bathroom troll), hero (Harry), and false hero (Professor Quirrell). The Harry Potter series does employ these same actions, although not always quite in the same order, but close to the chronology of plotlines with slight variations.

While Propp based his analysis on the Aarne-Thompson tale types numbers 300-749, which are Indo-European in origin, Dundes argues that Propp's analysis is not limited to Russian materials; Dundes additionally suggests that parts of Propp's morphology may be cross-culturally valid and applicable to non-Indo-European tales such as African tales and American Indian tales (1994, xiii-xiv). Propp's functions reveal that there is a strong similarity between folktales throughout the world, and a single, possible

psychological, source origin. Propp writes:

> This phenomenon is so unusual and strange that one somehow feels a desire to
> dwell upon it, prior to going on to more particular, formal conclusions. Naturally,
> it is not our business to interpret this phenomenon; our job is only to state the fact
> itself. Yet one still feels inclined to pose this question: if all fairy tales are so
> similar in form, does this not mean that they all originate from a single source?
> The morphologist does not have the right to answer this question. At this point he
> hands over his conclusions to a historian or should himself become a historian.
> Our answer, although in the form of a supposition, is that this appears to be so.
> However, the question of sources should not be posed merely in a narrowly
> geographic sense. "A single source" does not positively signify, as some assume,
> that all tales came, for example, from India, and that they spread from there
> throughout the entire world, assuming various forms in the process of their
> migration. The single source may also be a psychological one. (1994, 106)

Zipes also contemplates this connection:

> It is uncanny how similar tales – let's focus on oral wonder tales or fairy tales –
> are throughout the world. I am presently translating Sicilian fairy tales told in the
> 19th century, and they are remarkably similar to many French, German, and
> British tales that circulated about the same time, and the peasant women who told
> these marvelous tales would not have known of the French, German, and British
> versions. How has this come about? How did it come about? How does it still
> occur? (Bannerman 2002, interview with Zipes)

How do we explain the fact people tell the same kinds of stories despite where they live

in the world, and what is the origin of these stories? While some scholars rely on

psychological theories of archetypes, and Carl Jung's theory of the collective unconscious

to explain folktale commonalities, Zipes relies on theories of social Darwinism,

evolutionary psychology, sociobiology and bio-poetics to conclude that there are basic

instincts in the human species that are the same throughout the world, writing:

> The instincts and dispositions have evolved genetically and are articulated through
> mental and public representations in response to a civilizing process. Given that
> the instincts and dispositions that evolve genetically are the same but altered by
> the environment, we are bound to feel the world and respond to the world in very
> similar ways and to record our responses in similar but different ways.
> (Bannerman 2002, interview with Zipes)

The folktale as wonder tale therefore evolved genetically as our response to a civilizing process, argues Zipes (Bannerman 2002). For Zipes, while the nature and the meaning of folktales have depended on the stage of development of a tribe, community or society, they are ultimately about the transformation of the protagonist. The miraculous and hopeful transformation is the reason why the folktale, and in this case Harry Potter, has such appeal, writes Zipes:

> …even if we cannot establish whether a wonder tale is ideologically conservative, radical, sexist, progressive, etc., it is the celebration of miraculous or fabulous transformation in the name of hope that accounts its major appeal. People have always wanted to improve and or change their personal status or have sought magical intervention on their behalf. The emergence of the literary fairy tale during the latter part of the Medieval period bears witness to the persistent human quest for an existence without oppression and constraints. It is a utopian quest that we continue to mark down or record through the metaphors of the fairy tale. (Bannerman 2002, quoting Zipes in interview)

In other words, because the folktale is a story of transformation, it is an ideal structural device for relaying memorable and appealing transformative stories involving youths. As Bettelheim points out, it is through fairy tales that the child comes to believe that such transformations are possible (1977, 179). It is therefore important to explore Propp's functions, not only because they demonstrate how Rowling mimicked the story of Harry Potter to that of a classic folktale; but also because the story actions illustrate the familiar formulas, motifs, classic structure and transformative plot that collectively appeals to young readers. In this section, I therefore compare Propp's thirty-one functions to the novel *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, as well as discuss other examples of folklore appearing in the text.

1. *Member absents self. One of the members of a family absents himself from the home*. Propp writes, "an intensified form of absentation is represented by the death of

parents" (1968, 26); in this case Harry's parents are murdered. M. Katherine Grimes writes that "the theme of abandonment and the motif of dual or multiple parents pervade the Harry Potter books" (2002, 92).

2. *An interdiction is addressed to the hero.* The Dursleys raise Harry without magic and deprive him of his birthright, keeping his identity from him. Regarding this motif, Nikolajeva writes that "a child deprived of his or her birthright is one of the most common mythical and folktale motifs, occurring in stories as diverse as Cinderella and the Bible" (2003, 137). Propp further defines this function: "Children, after the departure or death of their parents, are left on their own" (1968, 27). In this case, Harry may as well be left on his own considering the ill-treatment from the Dursleys.

As well, in their hostility toward wizards, Rowling uses the Dursleys to illustrate concepts of strange versus familiar and normal/abnormal dichotomies. The story begins with the normal world, and more importantly, the Dursleys stringent adherence to normality. "Mr and Mrs Dursley, of number four, Privet Drive, were proud to say that they were perfectly normal, thank you very much" (Rowling 1997, 7). The Dursleys represent fear of the unknown, and refer to witches and wizards as "funny-looking people" (Rowling 1997, 11). As Rowling writes, "The Dursleys had everything they wanted, but they also had a secret, and their greatest fear was that somebody would discover it. They didn't think they could bear it if anyone found out about the Potters" (1997, 7).

Rowling depicts these dichotomized worlds as the Muggle World of humans and its counterpart, and the Magical World of witches and wizards. Dichotomy or the law of contrast, as defined by Axel Olrik in "The Epic Laws of Folk Narrative," (1965) is

identified as a primary feature in folktales. This is best illustrated in Harry's relationships. Throughout the story, Harry is polarized against the Dursleys, Dudley, Malfoy Draco, Snape, Professor Quirrell and Voldemort. As well, the team of Harry, Ron and Hermione is pitted against Draco, Crabbe and Goyle (two of Draco's evil companions who also fulfill Olrik's law of twins.)

Child psychologist and educator Bruno Bettelheim argues that duality is ever-present in fairy tales because children do not see the world in grey, but rather they see it in black and white,

> The figures in fairy tales are not ambivalent – not good and bad at the same time, as we all are in reality. But since polarization dominates the child's mind, it also dominates fairy tales. A person is either good or bad, nothing in between. One brother is stupid, the other is clever. One sister is virtuous and industrious, the other is vile and lazy. One parent is good, the other evil. …Presenting the polarities of a character permits the child to comprehend easily the difference between the two, which he could not do as readily were the figures drawn more true to life, with all the complexities that characterize real people. (1977, 9)

Indeed, Rowling has not only created dichotomized relationships, but the series is book-ended by struggles over life and death; Harry's parents are killed in the first novel and, in the final novel, Harry willingly sacrifices himself, entering a temporary or liminal state between life and death, before he is returned to life. Throughout the seven novel series, Harry continues to fight for his life in each climatic battle with Voldemort, and numerous characters are killed, including Professor Quirrell, Cedric Diggory, Sirius Black, Albus Dumbledore, Hedwig, Alastor Mad-Eye Moody, Severus Snape, Nymphadora Tonks, Remus Lupin and George Weasley.

3. *The interdiction is violated*. Harry finally gets his invitation to attend Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Here we see the motif of the number seven as it takes

seven days for the magical invitations to get to Harry. Uncle Vernon attempts to prevent

Harry from getting his letters. This also illustrates the epic law of repetition that,

according to Axel Olrik, acts as the effective means of emphasis and fills out the body of

the narrative (1965, 133). These repetitive attempts culminate in Hagrid's arrival (the

school groundskeeper) and delivery of the final letter on Harry's eleventh birthday.

4. *The villain makes an attempt at reconnaissance*. The reconnaissance usually has

to do with finding out the location of children, or sometimes precious objects (Propp

1968, 28); therefore Functions Four to Seven can be applied to Harry's first meeting with

Professor Quirrell in Diagon Alley.

5. *The villain receives information about the victim*. Professor Quirrell meets Harry

and learns he is going to Hogwarts.

6. *The villain attempts to deceive his victim in order to take possession of him or of

his belongings*. At this point the audience is unaware that Quirrell is a false hero who is

helping to resuscitate Voldemort.

7. *The victim submits to deception and thereby unwittingly helps his enemy*. Harry

is unaware of who Quirrell really is, and is deceived by his professor status.

8. *Villainy*. Propp writes that at this point, "The villain seizes or takes away a

magical agent" (1968, 31). Voldemort's followers attempt to steal the Philosopher's

Stone from Gringott's Bank. This stone is Voldemort's primary target. Rowling

describes the philosopher's stone:

> The ancient study of alchemy is concerned with making the Philosopher's Stone, a
> legendary substance with astonishing powers. The stone will transform any metal
> into pure gold. It also produced the Elixir of Life, which make the drinker
> immortal.
> There have been many reports of the Philosopher's Stone over the

centuries, but the only Stone currently in existence belongs to Mr Nicolas Flamel, the noted alchemist and opera-lover. Mr Flamel, who celebrated his six hundred and sixty-fifth birthday last year, enjoys a quiet life in Devon with wife, Perenelle (six hundred and fifty-eight). (1997, 161)

9. *Misfortune or lack is made known.* Attempted theft at Gringott's Bank vault 713 (Rowling 1997, 57) is reported in the Daily Prophet newspaper. This is the same vault Hagrid visited on behalf of Dumbledore while escorting Harry to the bank.

10. *The seeker agrees to or decides upon counteraction.* Propp writes: "This moment is characteristic only of those tales in which the hero is a seeker" (1968, 38). Suspicious of the coincidence between his visit to Gringott's Bank, and the break-in of vault 713 at the bank, Harry begins his quest for knowledge.

11. *The hero leaves home.* Harry leaves with Hagrid to go to Hogwarts. Rowling's stories are rife with magical creatures and beasts from folklore, including witches, wizards, werewolves, snakes, centaurs, unicorns, elves and giants, or in Hagrid's case half-giant. Rowling uses vivid descriptions to help impress Hagrid's physical giant appearance upon her readers:

> If the motorbike was huge, it was nothing to the man sitting astride it. He was almost twice as tall as a normal man and at least five times as wide. He looked simply too big to be allowed, and so *wild* – long tangles of bushy black hair and beard hid most of his face, he had hands the size of dustbin lids and his feet in their leather books were like baby dolphins. In his vast, muscular arms, he was holding a bundle of blankets. (1997, 16)

12. *The hero is tested, interrogated, attacked, etc, which prepared the way for his receiving either a magical agent or helper.* This occurs when Harry meets Draco in Diagon Alley in Madam Malkin's robe shop. In this chapter, Harry is tested in terms of where his loyalties lie, either with pure-blood wizarding families or with "muggles" (non-magical humans). This brings another dichotomy to light, the dichotomy between the

pure blood wizards and un-pure blood wizards ("mud bloods", i.e., wizards who have muggle blood). Malfoy says to Harry:

> 'I really don't think they should let the other sort in, do you? They're just not the same, they've never been brought up to know our ways. Some of them have never heard of Hogwarts until they get the letter, imagine. I think they should keep in it the old wizarding families. What's your surname anyway?' (Rowling 1997, 61)

The dichotomy between muggles and wizards, and pure blood wizards and non-pure blood wizards, in relation to the concept of "us vs. them" and insider/outsider perspectives, is discussed further in Chapter Ten.

13. *The hero reacts to the actions of the future donor*. Harry makes friends with Hagrid. Hagrid can be considered the future donor in terms of the secret information he reveals to Harry about the Philosopher's stone, and information Harry needs to survive one of the final tasks.

14. *The hero acquires the use of a magical agent*. Harry is matched with his wand (Rowling 1997, 65). Rowling suggests a sympathetic (contagious and homeopathic) magic connection between Harry's wand and Voldemort's wand – a connection that ultimately enables Harry to destroy Voldemort in the book seven:

> Mr. Ollivander fixed Harry with his pale stale.
> 'I remember every wand I've sold, Mr. Potter. Every single wand. It so happens that the phoenix whose tail feather is in your wand, gave another feather – just one other. It is very curious indeed that you should be destined for this wand when its brother – why, its brother gave you that scar.' (1997, 65)

Harry's wand therefore illustrates a magical object based on sympathetic magic in both contagious (magic of touch) and homeopathic (magic of similarity) forms. According to Sir James G. Frazer who proposed the sympathetic magic theory,

> Homoeopathic magic is founded on the association of ideas by similarity:

> contagious magic is founded on the association of ideas by contiguity. Homoeopathic magic commits the mistake of assuming that things which resemble each other are the same: contagious magic commits the mistake of assuming that things which have once been in contact with each other are always in contact. (1932, 12)

In the case of Harry's wand, two like feathers affect each other, illustrating homeopathic magic (magic of similarity). Harry's wand also exemplifies contagious magic (magic of touch), by the two feathers coming from the same phoenix. The wand as an imaginative play object, and the various ways children play and perform with wands is discussed in Chapter Five.

15. *Spatial transference. The hero is transferred, delivered, or led to the whereabouts of an object of search*. In this case Harry travels over both ground and water. Harry is brought to Hogwarts over ground on the Hogwarts Express, a magical train. As well, when Harry gets off, he is sent by boat across a lake to Hogwarts School (Rowling 1997, 83-4). What is most interesting about Hogwarts Express is where passengers need to go to catch it, Platform 9 ¾, a liminal threshold. Rowling's novels are rife with liminal references and descriptions, including where students live, the groups they occupy and their rites of passage. As a liminal group, students are marked by special dress (Howgarts robes) and language; they live in liminal locations (for example, Gryffindor is located in a tower [outer periphery], and Slytherin is in a basement dungeon [lower periphery]) (Lacoss 2002, 75); and their transitions are marked by rites of passage.

16. *Struggle. The hero and the villain join in direct combat*. The first major struggle between Harry and Malfoy Draco occurs during flying lessons. While flying on brooms at great heights, Harry and Draco struggle over Neville's Remembrall (a magical object).

17. *Branding*. Although Harry was branded as a baby, people now notice his scar and

identify him. Rowling writes:

> Professor McGonagall's voice trembled as she went on. 'That's not all. They're saying he tried to kill the Potter's son, Harry. But – he couldn't. He couldn't kill that little boy. No one knows why, or how, but they're saying that when he couldn't kill Harry Potter, Voldemort's power somehow broke – and that's why he's gone.'
> Dumbledore nodded glumly.
> 'It's – it's true?' faltered Professor McGonagall. 'After all he's done… all the people he's killed… he couldn't kill a little boy? It's just astounding… of all the things to stop him… but how in the name of heaven did Harry survive?'
> 'We can only guess,' said Dumbledore. 'We may never know.' (1997, 15)

Harry's lightning-bolt shaped scar is one of the most important features of Otto

Rank's mythic hero in which the hero is eventually recognized as such, often because of a

mark or a wound. Rowling illustrates:

> 'Are you really Harry Potter?' Ron blurted out.
> Harry nodded.
> 'Oh – well, I thought it might be one of Fred and George's jokes,' said Ron. 'And have you really got – you know…'
> He pointed at Harry's forehead.
> Harry pulled back his fringe to show the lightning scar. Ron stared.
> 'So, that's where You-Know-Who –?'
> 'Yes,' said Harry, 'but I can't remember it.'
> 'Nothing?' said Ron.
> 'Well – I remember a lot of green light, but nothing else.'
> 'Wow,' said Ron. He sat and stared at Harry for a few moments, then, as though he had suddenly realized what he was doing, he looked quickly out of window again. (1997, 74)

It is therefore no surprise that fans who like to dress as Harry Potter, will use trademark

lightning-bolt scar as part of their costume. Not only is the lightning-bolt scar a

distinguishing feature of the Harry Potter character but, most importantly, it also offers an

opportunity to play with make-up and costumes. Play and costuming is discussed in detail

in Chapter Six. The rumours surrounding the final release of Book Seven (including the

rumour that the last word in the book would be "scar") is also discussed.

18. *Victory*. The villain is defeated, which could be in contest. At this point, this action is illustrated by Harry's first victorious Quidditch match as "Gryffindor seeker" – a player who seeks out the golden snitch to score points. (Note Rowling's use of Propp's term "seeker.") Quidditch is a magical sports game whereby team players fly on broom sticks trying to score points against the opposing team. In this case, Harry catches the golden snitch and his Gryffindor team is victorious over Slytherin.

Rowling's sport of Quidditch has taken on a life of own outside of the novels. Not only has Rowling written a companion book to the Potter series called, *Quidditch Through the Ages* (2001), but young people have adapted the magical sport to various forms of "muggle" play, from imaginative play to officially organized games of Muggle Quidditch. This live-action-role-playing (LARP) game is the focus of Chapter Seven.

19. *The initial misfortune or lack is liquidated*. This action is somewhat out of sequence. This function occurs throughout the book in Harry's quest for knowledge of the Philosopher's Stone. The stone is previously referred to in Function Nine as the initial misfortune/lack, therefore Harry helps to liquidate this misfortune/lack by seeking knowledge about the stone.

20. *The hero returns*. In this Quidditch match Harry is jinxed by Professor Quirrell and dangerously loses control of his broom. However, with Hermione's help,[32] Harry escapes the spell and re-emerges with the golden snitch in his mouth, winning the game.

21. *The hero is pursued*. Sent to the Forbidden Forest as punishment, Harry stumbles

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[32] According to Gerald Thomas in his analysis of tale-type AT 313, *The Girl as Helper in the Hero's Flight*, "The hero is in fact unable to do anything without the heroine's advice or help. He is better characterized as an UYM (Unempowered Young Male), the heroine as an EYF (Empowered Young Female)" (1997, 166). Based on Holbek's tale role types, Hermione's knowledgeable and helpful role can be interpreted as an "Empowered Young Female" (EYF) who assists the uninformed, Harry, an "Unempowered Young Male."

upon a cloaked figure (Professor Quirrell/Voldemort merged together) drinking unicorn blood. He pursues Harry through the forest.

22. *Rescue of the hero from pursuit*. Harry is saved from Voldemort by the centaur Firenze.

23. *Unrecognizable arrival*. The hero, unrecognized, arrives home or in another country. This function could be analyzed in terms of Harry's adventure in the Forbidden Forest. When Firenze first saves Harry, he does not know who he is saving. Firenze only identifies Harry after he rescues him and recognizes his scar.

24. *A false hero presents unfounded claims*. According to Propp, this is where the false hero is revealed. It is eventually revealed that Professor Quirrell is a double agent working for Voldemort. He allows Voldemort to invade his body, until his spirit can find another body of its own. All is revealed to Harry when, at the beginning of Chapter Seventeen, Rowling writes:

> It was Quirrell.
> 'You!' gasped Harry.
> Quirrell smiled. His face wasn't twitching at all.
> 'Me,' he said calmly. 'I wondered whether I'd be meeting you here, Potter.'
> 'But I thought – Snape – '
> 'Severus?' Quirrell laughed and it wasn't his usual quivering treble, either, but cold and sharp. 'Yes, Severus does seem the type, doesn't he? So useful to have him swooping around like an overgrown bat. Next to him, who would suspect p-p-poor stuttering Professor Quirrell?' (1997, 209)

25. *A difficult task is proposed to the hero*. This is where Harry, Ron and Hermione begin their final tasks. They must first pass a three-headed dog on the third floor; they do so by charming it to sleep with a musical harp. They then have to escape a magical growing weed called Devil's Snare; they do so by using Hermione's knowledge. The next task involves flying keys; Harry uses a broom to catch the flying key that will open

the locked door. The next challenge is a chess game; Ron sacrifices himself as a player in order for Harry to move on and to face his enemy alone in the final task.

26. *The task is resolved*. Harry defeats Quirrell/Voldemort. In the final challenge Harry prevents Voldemort from getting the stone by laying his hands on Professor Quirrell. Harry's magical touch burns the flesh of Professor Quirrell, forcing him to eject the spirit of Voldemort from his body.

27. *The hero is recognized*. Propp explains that this recognition is achieved by "his accomplishment of a difficult task" (1968, 62). Harry, who has passed out after his fight with Voldemort, awakens in the hospital wing and is told by Dumbledore he has defeated Voldemort. In this case, Harry is recognized by his power which comes from his mother's sacrifice. Upon awaking, Harry asks Dumbledore:

> 'But why couldn't Quirrell touch me?'
> 'Your mother died to save you. If there is one thing Voldemort cannot understand, it is love. He didn't realize that love as powerful as your mother's for you leaves its own mark. Not a scar, no visible sign … to have been loved so deeply, even though the person who loved us is gone, will give us some protection forever. (Rowling 1997, 216)

28. *The false hero or villain is exposed*. This is the acknowledgement and exposure of Professor Quirrell as a villain.

29. *Transfiguration*. Harry receives new information and is transfigured by knowledge of his power and his mother's sacrifice.

30. *The villain is punished*. In the final battle, Harry is able to defeat both Professor Quirrell and Voldemort. This is also the result of the final battle in the conclusion of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* when Harry finally destroys Voldemort by his own hand.

31. *The hero is married and ascends the throne.* While a wedding does not parallel the conclusion of the first novel, a ceremonial celebration does take place in the form of the House Cup, end-of-year ceremony. Propp writes, "The hero sometimes receives a monetary reward or some other form of compensation in place of the princess' hand" (1968, 64). Harry's house, Gryffindor, is awarded the House Cup for having the most house points.

However, it can be argued that Rowling does fulfill this function at the ending of the series in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* even though she changes it up a little. Upon saving the kingdom (represented by Hogwarts) from evil, Harry arrives at the Headmaster's study where he is met with cheering crowds of adoring and appreciative people, treating Harry as king and hero with applause and a standing ovation.

> They clambered over him and on to the spiral stone staircase that moved slowly upwards like an escalator. Harry pushed open the door at the top.
> He had one, brief glimpse of the stone Pensive on the desk where he had left it, and then an ear-splitting noise made him cry out, thinking of curses and returning Death Eaters and the rebirth of Voldemort –
> But it was applause. All around the walls, the headmasters and headmistresses of Hogwarts were giving him a standing ovation; they waved their hats and in some cases their wigs, they reached through their frames to grip each other's hands; they danced up and down on the chairs in which they had been painted… (Rowling 2007, 598)

Rowling continues to fulfill Propp's final action when, in the final book of the series *Deathly Hallows*, she take her readers nineteen years into the future to meet Harry who is both married and a father. In this fast-forward or alternative-ending chapter, readers also learn of the marriage between Ron and Hermione and their children; Draco Malfoy is also married with children.

4.4.2 Harry Potter as Mythic Hero

Shared among a number of critics and scholars is the idea that "the attraction of the novels lies chiefly in the main character" (Nikolajeva 2003, 125). Harry's life and background as "the boy who lived" exhibit many of the characteristics of a mythic hero, as identified by Otto Rank. Rank's *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero*, originally published in German in 1909, is a psychological analysis of hero myths appearing all over the world. He writes:

> The prominent civilized nations, such as the Babylonians, Egyptians, Hebrews, and Hindoos, the inhabitants of Iran and of Persia, the Greeks, and the Romans as well as the Teutons and others, all began at an early stage to glorify their heroes, mythical princes and kings, founds of religions, dynasties, empires or cities, in brief their national heroes, in a number of poetic tales and legends. The history of the birth and of the early life of these personalities came to be especially invested with fantastic features, which in different nations even though widely separated by space and entirely independent of each other present a baffling similarity, or in part a literal correspondence. (1952, 1)

Rank credited the worldwide presence of the heroic myth and its "fantastic features" to the imaginative faculty of "humanity at large" (1952, 7). He writes, "The manifestation of the intimate relation between dream and myth… entirely justifies the interpretation of myth as a dream of the masses of the people…" (1952, 6). A student of Sigmund Freud, Rank argued that the myths of heroes such as Jesus, Moses, and Oedipus contain ten basic elements. I argue that by the conclusion of the seven book series, Harry Potter fulfills all ten of Rank's hero myth elements.

1. "The hero is the child of most distinguished parents" (Rank 1952, 5). Harry Potter's parents are a witch and a wizard, and members of the Order of the Phoenix.

2. "His origin is preceded by difficulties, such as continence, or prolonged barrenness, or secret intercourse of the parents, due to external prohibition or obstacles"

(Rank 1952, 5). The conclusion of Book Seven reveals this element. In *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, we learn that Snape's and Lilly's relationship proceeded that of her relationship with James and conception of Harry. Their friendship and love is evident, until Snape and Lilly separate because of his entry into the Death Eaters, and her relationship with James. Most importantly, it is revealed that it is Snape's love for Lilly which prompts him to ask Albus Dumbledore for protection of Harry's life. As a double-agent, Snape had set a plan in motion that would fool and defeat Voldemort. Therefore, it is Snape's love for Lilly, prior to her relationship with James and conception of Harry that ultimately saves his life. Harry explains the loyalty Snape has for Lilly to Voldemort, "'Snapes's Patronus was a doe,' said Harry, 'the same as my mother's, because he loved her for nearly all of his life, from the time they were children. You should have realized,' he said, as he saw Voldemort's nostrils flare, 'he asked you to spare her life, didn't he?'" (Rowling 2007, 593).

3. "During the pregnancy, or antedating the same, there is a prophecy, in form of a dream or oracle, cautioning against his birth, and usually threatening danger to the father, or his representative" (Rank 1952, 5). A prophecy warns Voldemort of his would-be destructor, a male child born at the end of July, which is why Voldemort attempts to kill Lilly's baby.

4. "As a rule, he is surrendered to the water, in a box" (Rank 1952, 5). When Harry's parents are killed, baby Harry is bundled in swaddling clothes and laid on the Dursley's doorstep by Hagrid.

5. "He is then saved by animals, or by lowly people (shepherds) and [6] is suckled by a female animal, or by a humble woman" (Rank 1952, 5). Harry is rescued by Hagrid,

the gamekeeper of Hogwarts, who re-introduces him to the magical world of witches and wizards. Harry is then left in the care of his mother's muggle-born sister, Aunt Petunia, and raised in the human/non-magical world.

7. "After he has grown up, he finds his distinguished parents, in a highly versatile fashion; [8] takes his revenge on his father, on the one hand, [9] is acknowledged on the other, and [10.] finally achieves rank and honors (Rank 1952, 5). Moments before Harry's self-sacrifice, he opens the Golden Snitch to reveal the Resurrection Stone. The Resurrection Stone causes Harry's deceased father, mother and loved ones, including his godfather Sirius Black and former teacher Remus Lupin, to appear to him moments before his death. All four adults were Harry's protectors and are there to prepare him for death and escort him to the other side. At this moment Harry reconciles the death of his parents and loved ones, "'I didn't want you to die,' Harry said. These words came without his volition. 'Any of you. I'm sorry –'" (Rowling 2007, 561). Harry also reconciles his own death, sacrifices himself, and in doing so, defeats Voldemort. Finally, at the year-end ceremony, Harry is honoured and his house, Gryffindor, is awarded the House Cup.

Rowling's Harry Potter might not align perfectly or chronologically with every characteristic of Otto Rank's mythic hero; nor might it align perfectly or chronologically with every one of Propp's thirty-one actions of the folktale; however it is obvious that Rowling has relied extensively on folklore, in particular the folktale, mythic hero, language, folk group, liminality, rites of passage and school lore. The purpose of exploring Propp's and Rank's work and the folklore found in Rowling's text, is to illustrate the connection between traditional folktales and popular storytelling. Most importantly, Propp's model illustrates that Rowling's work is written in a fashion that is

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time-tested and traditional. It is this familiarity with traditional story structure and content

that allows children to understand and predict the story plot and progression, relate to the

characters, and enjoy the experience of reading Harry Potter (Lacoss 2002, 85-87).

(Kids' structural familiarity with stories and the function of folklore is explored further in

the conclusion of this chapter.) In addition, it is only when we analyze the traditional

content and structure that we may begin to understand how and why tradition can take a

backseat to creativity. Rowling's story is without doubt a creative work. In fact, some

scholars argue that it is her unpredictable reordering of Propp's functions and Rank's

elements that demonstrates her work as a literary creation (Lacoss 2002, 87), or a new

overlapping genre (Alton 2003, 140). It is therefore important to additionally explore the

creative elements, and the necessary balance between tradition and innovation, to

understand the ultimate popular appeal of Harry Potter. This is furthered in the upcoming

conclusion section "The Secret of Success: The Traditional and the Creative."

4.5   Rowling's Rags-to-Riches Story: Biography and Myth

There are, of course, many reasons as to why Harry Potter is so popular and

children find it so appealing. Another contributing factor has to do with Rowling herself,

her biography and life. Born in Gloucestershire England on July 31, 1965, Rowling's

"rags-to-riches" life parallels that of Harry Potter and has been promoted in the media as

such. Since her first publication, sensationalized biographical details surrounding

Rowling's life, writing practice and rise to fame have surfaced. Children's literary critic

Jack Zipes argues that "the rise of the myth of J.K. Rowling, single mother on welfare,

sitting in a café and writing the books while raising a daughter by herself" has contributed

to the Harry Potter phenomenon (2001, 173). He writes, "This is the old rags-to-riches story and in our day and age has been spread through the mass media. It is the fairy tale about the diligent, hardworking girl who is recognized as a princess and lives happily ever after (2001, 173).

Elizabeth Teare also states: "According to legend, Rowling was a single mother on the dole when she developed the Harry Potter stories, writing in a café while her daughter napped" (2002, 332). Rebecca Sutherland Borah adds, "The origins of J.K. Rowling are by now so well publicized in the media that they have reached almost mythological proportions… The story of how Rowling would pack up her daughter and visit local coffeehouses in order to find a pleasant place to work is now legendary" (2002, 350). It was also rumored that Rowling wrote the beginnings of Harry Potter on a napkin:

> During her October 16, 2000, Scholastic.com interview, Rowling was asked if she still had the napkins on which she wrote the first book. Obviously a bit chagrined, she responded, "I'm giggling… where did you read that? I didn't write on napkins; I wrote in notepads. We really need to squash this myth before people ask to see the used tea bags on which I drafted the first book!" (Borah 2002, 350)

In response to this mediated image, Rowling has said, "Never in my wildest imaginings had I pictured my face in the papers – particularly captioned, as they almost all were, with the words 'penniless single mother.' It is hard to be defined by the most difficult part of your life" (Life Story 2003, 8-9). However, Teare suggests that Rowling's authorial biography has been pressed into service to support this noncommercial narrative. Teare writes:

> [Rowling] has protested this account of herself as an unworldly and suffering romantic genius, but she is also quoted, on the Scholastic web site as well as in numerous articles, as saying that all she wants to do is write, whether or not she is paid: "I have also written and I know that I always will; I would be writing even if I hadn't been published." (2002, 332)

In other words, while Rowling has verbally protested her romanticized biographic image, her media appearances have also helped promote and generate it. For example, in *Life Story: Movie Magic and Other Worlds of Wonder* (2003) magazine, Rowling is seen in photos that correlate with this image. In one photo, she is depicted as a princess and dressed in medieval attire. In another photo, she sits in a café similar to the one she is credited to have written the manuscript in England. And finally, a third photo places her in a historical train, the setting where she is said to have come up with the idea of writing Harry Potter. "Rowling came up with the idea for Harry while waiting on a stalled train between Manchester and London in 1990" (Borah 2002, 350).

One of the most popular rumours has to do with how Rowling came to write Harry Potter. While telling me all they knew about Rowling, the group of children give the proper spelling of Rowling's name, combine some fantasy with fact (Rowling did have children, but she didn't call them Harry, Ron and Hermione), and finally how she came to write Harry Potter – on a train.

Contessa:	Who wrote the books?
ALL:	JK ROWLING!
Lucas:	I'll spell it for you! J-K-R-O-W-L-I-N-G!
Contessa:	Do you know anything about her?
Lyndsay:	When she finished the sixth book, she was having another baby girl, and she already has two other kids.
Lucas:	She's going to have three kids, and then she's going to name them Ron, Hermione, and Harry.
Brittney:	Well she thought of her idea of Harry Potter when she was on a train in King's Cross station and the first book she wrote was about a rabbit called Rabbit. (2005)

In many ways, Rowling's life story with its mythic or fairy tale interpretation has prompted many readers to defend her deserving success. On July 15, 2007, one reader

named Missfaye (original user name "missloreal" in 2007) posted an online comment in

response to a CBS News article, "Harry Potter and the Book Seven Spoilers?":

> Any book that encourages young people to read and to use their imaginations is a
> good thing. Joanne Rowling was a single mother who has worked her butt off in
> order to give her kids a better life and she has done it in style, it strikes me that
> you two people above are jealous of her success and popularity. She deserves her
> money, fame and recognition… (Goldwert 2007)

4.6   Language, Names and Vocabulary

Rowling's biography also reveals her interest in and knowledge of language and

names. Indeed, name and language choice is a significant characteristic within the Harry

Potter series, especially in terms of folklore. It is written that Rowling's parents pushed

her to study French so that she could be a secretary (Borah 2002, 350), and she therefore

obtained a degree from Exeter in French and Classics. This degree, writes Eliza T.

Dresang, provided her with a rich resource for name choice (2002, 212). Dresang claims

Rowling frequently gives her opinion on the importance of names in the Potter books, and

quotes Rowling as saying:

> I love names, as anyone who has read the books is going to see only too clearly…
> Snape is a place name in Britain. Dumbledore is an old English dialect word for
> bumblebee, because he is a musical person. And I imagine him humming to
> himself all the time. Hagrid is also an old English word. Hedwig was a saint, a
> Medieval saint. I collect them. You know, if I hear a good name, I have got to
> write it down. And it will probably crop up somewhere. (Dresang 2002, 212)

Dresang adds: "The names of most of the 127 characters in the Harry Potter books

have a tie to some appropriate external meaning" (2002, 212). As well, Lacoss observes:

"By drawing on words and roots from other languages, Rowling gives the reader terms

that are meaningful on a higher level" (2002, 71). Indeed, Rowling's use of language

helps in the translation of image. As Amanda Cockrell accurately observes, "Rowling has

a good deal of fun with her names" (2002, 23). For example, "Hagrid's first name is

Rubeus, Latin for a bramble, which he resembles: a giant of a man (he proves indeed to

be half-giant in parentage) with a shaggy mane of hair and a wild, tangled beard"

(Cockrell 2002, 23). It is therefore not surprising that many scholars have analyzed the

historical and linguistic roots of Rowling's character names. For example:

> The headmaster's phoenix, a bird that bursts into flame every five hundred years,
> to be reborn from its own ashes, is named Fawkes, as in Guy. Draco Malfoy,
> Harry's school rival and nemesis, translates roughly as 'bad-acting dragon' or
> 'dragon of bad faith.' Draco's father Lucius, a follower of Voldemort, shares his
> name's origins with Lucifer, the fallen light-bringer. (Cockrell 2002, 23)

One writer argues that the words themselves suggest the magical power of

language to mean, as well as to evoke and connote. "Such passwords as 'pig snout,'

'scurvy cur,' 'oddsbodkin,' suggest treasure and mystery. The characters' names are

appropriately allusive and inviting" (Natov 2002, 130). It can therefore be suggested that

Rowling's deliberate language and name choice (no doubt influenced by her French and

Classics education from Exeter) evokes image and shapes the expectations and responses

of the reader. Rowling's use of folklore, folktale, mythology, as well as stylized language

rooted in history, appeals to her audience.

The decision by Scholastic publishers to change the title of Rowling's first Potter

novel, along with other British vocabulary used in the book, is a good example of the

agendas and the influence adults have over children's literary content. The original title

of the book, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* was changed to *Harry Potter and

the Sorcerer's Stone* for American readers. American editors also changed many other

words. Arthur A. Levine, the American translator for Scholastic, stated that their changes

were only meant to give American kids the same literary experience that a British kid could have (Nel 2002, 261). Levine and Scholastic changed terms like sherbert lemon to lemon drop; motorbike to motorcycle; chips to fries; jelly to Jell-O; jacket potato to baked potato; jumper to sweater; mum to mom; trolley to cart; loo to bathroom; and rubbish to crap (Nel 2002, 262).

However, this decision came under heavy criticism for several reasons. Not only did Levine's editing sometimes change the poetic nature of the words but, as Philip Nel writes, it also changed the meaning: "Not only is "English muffin" different from "crumpet," but Sorcerer's Stone lacks reference to alchemy implied in Philosopher's Stone in the title of the British edition published by Bloomsbury in 1997" (2002, 262). Most importantly, Nel explains that Scholastic's versions of the Harry Potter novels are guilty of some degree of cultural imperialism (2002, 263). Ultimately, not only are some adult editors and publishers ignoring the fact that non-standardized, local language can indeed be appealing to children, but they are assuming that children are just too dumb to get it, echoing back to the "child as simple" common myth-conception. As we know, children are quite able to, in fact, get it, and enjoy doing so as they challenge and compare their word meanings and local expressions to other cultures. (This is illustrated with examples and interview excerpts in the following chapters, including a discussion of dialect imitation play in Chapter Six.) This example is therefore reflective of the larger problem with adults (children's publishers and editors) assuming a child's literary taste, appetite and comprehension.

4.7   Conclusion

In this analysis, Rowling's use of folktale formula and heroic mythic convention is made evident. The striking similarities between the plot structure of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and Propp's 31 folktale functions; the comparison between Harry Potter and mythic hero; and the use of language, names and dialect, school lore, rites of passage, and liminality illustrate this. There is no denying Rowling's knowledge of folktale structure, magical folktales motifs and historical naming practices and languages. Folklore has influenced her writing, and I would suggest, influenced her success. Zipes credits the conventional and formulaic nature of Rowling's work as the reason for their phenomenal success (2001, 174-177). But the question is – does this demonstration of folklore, conventionality, formulaic structure and pattern enhance the text and aid in the enjoyment and appreciation of the text and increase its popularity? I suggest that Rowling's traditional lore and language is critical to the enhancement, enjoyment and ultimate success of her books. The plot structure of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* is built on the structure of the folktale, one of the most common and traditional forms of the children's story (Lacoss 2002, 85). Lacoss observed that because the plots of the books so closely resemble folktale structure "young readers are accustomed to the progression of events. Although this does not happen on a conscious level, children recognize the chain of events. This also makes the plot of each book easier for them to remember" (2002, 87). Because Rowling has an instinctive "road map," she has created an engaging tale to which children (and adults) can easily relate (Lacoss 2002, 85). Familiarity with the structure of the folktale can therefore be said to engage children as well as provide a story children can easily identify and feel comfortable with.

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C.W. Sullivan offers a slightly different interpretation on the use of folklore in fantasy. In the article "Real-izing the Unreal: Folklore in Young Adult Science Fiction and Fantasy," Sullivan argues that folklore in fantasy is used to make the reader more familiar with the strangeness of the fantastical world (1992b, 144). He explains that it is the presence of folklore (its structure, familiarity and cultural stability) in fantasy that makes the fantasy world less strange and more real, and that folklore makes a connection between the characters and the readers (1992b, 154). It could therefore be argued that Rowling's use of folklore aids the bond between her characters and her readers, ultimately making the world of fantasy more credible, or "real." This idea may help explain the paradox when children describe the realness of the imaginary Harry Potter world.

In his examination of fairy tales and their positive psychological effects on children, Bettelheim claims children need meaning in their lives, and they find the meaning they need through fairy tales (1977, 5). He also argues that fairy tales develop the child's intellect, clarify his emotions, speak to his anxieties and aspirations, recognize his difficulties, give credence to the child's predicament, promote self-confidence, and teach children about "the inner problems of human beings, and the right solutions to their predicament in any society," (1977, 5). Most importantly, Bettelheim argues that by dealing with "universal human problems" which occupy the child's mind, fairy tales "speak to his budding ego and encourages its development while at the same time relieving preconscious and unconscious pressures" (1977, 6), enlighten the child about himself, and foster his personality development by offering meaning and enriching his existence and life (1977, 12).

Lacoss, influenced by Bettelheim, argues that folklore acts as a mechanism for children to deal with their frustrations and conflicts in their lives. Folklore acts as an acceptable and safe outlet for a child's emotions, in particular their aggressive or confrontational feelings with parents (Lacoss 2002, 82-83). This concept parallels Baruch's argument introduced in Chapter Three, that popular culture can harmlessly channel a child's aggressive desires and need for power (1998, 493), and continues to debunk the myth-conception that popular culture is an all-destructive force. Lacoss also writes that the folklore presented in Harry Potter (folk groups, rites of passage, reversals, boundary crossing, and taboo themes) "play significant roles in helping children deal with changes in life and prepare them for appropriate social roles" (2002, 67).

Also basing her work on Bettelheim's fairy tale analysis (1975), Grimes takes a psychological approach in her attempt to understand and interpret the success of Rowling's books: "The Harry Potter novels are popular because they satisfy our psychological needs. Male or female, child or adolescent or adult, we identify with this boy" (2002, 121). Grimes argues that fairy tales and myths like the Harry Potter story provide us with allegories to understand our own worst and best impulses, to help us understand birth, death, sex, identity, and good and evil (2002, 117). "Mythology also helps adults understand the concepts of God and the soul, the way fairy tales help children understand their relationship to their parents and more realistic fiction for young adolescents help those children come to terms with their own identities" (Grimes 2002, 117). Therefore, not only does Harry Potter provide formula, convention and traditional patterns which children are comforted by, but Potter also provides patterns of human behaviour that reassure children of their identity, relationships, social roles and the world

around them.

4.7.1   The Secret to Success: The Traditional and the Creative

Without doubt, Rowling has relied upon folk genres for the structure, plot and character development, predominantly the folktale and the myth; it is for that reason that Rowling is sometimes criticized. Some have critiqued Rowling for combining literary genres, and therefore contributing nothing to original literature; however, others claim that these overlapping variations form a new genre (Alton 2003, 140). Again, I suggest that this is why children ultimately enjoy Rowling's work – because it mimics the hybrid nature of children's culture; in this case, it combines children's literary and folk aesthetics. Rowling's work isn't just a traditional folktale; it is also a literary creation – it combines both elements which each contributes to its popularity. As Anne Hiebert Alton writes, "Rather than creating a hodgepodge with no recognizable or specific pattern, Rowling has fused these genres into a larger mosaic, which not only connects readers' generic expectation with the tremendous successes and popularity of the Harry Potter series but also lead to the ways in which the series conveys literary meaning" (2003, 141). Lacoss also emphasizes that while Potter books have a folktale structure, the plots are not predictable because it is not a folktale – it is a literary creation that "gives the author freedom to reorder the functions so that there are surprises for the audience" (2003, 87).

Analyzing Rowling's novels as both a literary creation and a folktale is, I suggest, the best approach to understanding the novels' popularity and reception, as the books mimic the nature of children's culture (conservative and creative dynamic). Reading a Harry Potter book is like opening the pages to a familiar story. Child and teenage readers

draw on their own folklore sources, recognize and identify with the hero, follow the storyline with their own cultural expectations, and have their own understandings of formula, structure and motif. However, there are undeniable creative innovations in Rowling's writing, especially in the fusing of both folktale and myth, and by her imaginative character names. While Rowling draws on folktale structure, linguistic regionalisms and Classical mythology, she does however, rearrange these elements and motifs to form new (but familiar) imagery. I believe this "familiar but new" / "predictable but unpredictable" factor may just be the "X Factor" speculated to be at the heart of children's culture (the traditional and the creative). As a form of popular culture, Harry Potter mimics the nature of children's culture (conservative/conventional/traditional vs. creative/inventive/new), thereby creating the right combination for children's play. In other words, it allows children to respond both in conventional and creative ways.

Readers easily blur of lines between genres, as well as between fact and fiction; for example, it seems as if readers have taken to Rowling as Cinderella as easily as they have taken to Harry as folktale prince and mythic hero. But most importantly, just like any good folktale, Rowling's folktale invites readers into a familiar story where they can engage with familiar characters; and just like any good literary creation, Rowling's imagination brings freshness, wit and the unexpected to a traditional, and widely-recognized and experienced folklore genre. I argue this hybrid story is what children crave textually, imaginatively and in their play, and such examples are presented in the following chapters.

Chapter 5

Celebrating Harry Potter:
Reading Customs, Book and Movie Launches, Predictions and Spoilers

5.1   Introduction – Fan Literary Behaviours and Reading

The following Chapters, Five to Nine, examine customary youth fan-based play activities surrounding the Harry Potter phenomenon. I begin this chapter by examining customs primarily derived from the experience of reading, playing with the text, and attending celebratory events such as book and movie launches. These are traditions common to several popular young-adult literary phenomena such as *Harry Potter*, *Twilight* and *The Hunger Games*. Chapter Five examines: (1) multiple readings of favourite books (the reading and watching experience), (2) quoting popular and favourite lines from the text, (3) social acts of reading/co-reading experiences (with fellow fans and friends, in public, or with family), (4) consumption of books and tie-in merchandise (book recommending, buying, sharing and gifting), (5) book launch events and midnight movie launches, and (6) oral and online spoilers, predictions and rumours. This chapter therefore demonstrates how reading traditions are shared among a fan base youth group. Other physical play activities (from costuming to Quidditch game play) and online play activities are discussed in Chapters Six to Nine.

5.2   Multiple Readings of Favourite Books

A very common practice for book fans is to re-read the books they love. In addition, children and teens will often boast their accomplishment and even brag about

the number of times they have read their favourite book, to illustrate their fandom and devotion.

> I was right into the books. I read *Philosopher's Stone* at least ten, a hundred times. Because it was like my favourite one, the first one, right? (Zack 2007)

> I've actually read each book probably ten times; except for *Deathly Hallows* I've only read three. (Jacob 2008)

> I have read each book multiple times. (Sienna 2008)

> Madeline: I've read the last book seven times, so I'm pretty obsessed.
> Contessa: Seven times?
> Madeline: Seven times.
> Molly: I'm not sure how many times I've read them. I think I read the last one three times, the second last one twice, and the other ones twice, I think.
> Madeline: I've read, about, all of them, like twice, at least. (2011)

For some children like Lucas, watching the movies multiple times is also a source of pride, as he proudly boasts to having watched "All three ten times" (2005). For seven-year-old Nicholas, instead of bragging about the number of times he read the book, he proudly explains that he has watched the Harry Potter movies about fifty times.

> Contessa: How many times have you watched the other ones?
> Nicholas: About fifty.
> Mrs. Turner: He know them by heart. (2005)

And for some children like Lyndsay and William, the act of reading such "big" books like *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (607 pages) and *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (766 pages) is also something to be proud of. Lyndsay explains, "I'm a big reader so I love magic books and really thick books" (2005), while William says proudly:

> Contessa: Oh, did you read *The Deathly Hallows*?
> William: [Nods]
> Contessa: You read that? That's a really big book.
> William: Yeah. [giggling with pride]
> Contessa: What do you think, is that the biggest book you've ever read?

William: No, the *Order of the Phoenix* was the biggest in the Harry Potter series, yeah. (2010)

Jennifer explains how re-reading the text, at a slower pace, allows her to get more out of her reading experience, "Now I am re-reading it again, and I'm reading it slowly and getting a little more out of it" (2008). Like Jennifer, Jacob has also re-read Harry Potter many times in order to re-experience as well as further his understanding of the text and enjoy the details he missed the first time around. In this case, Jacob has re-read the text in an attempt to further comprehend the narrative. The excerpt below is taken from an interview I conducted with two teenagers, Jacob and Chad. What Jacob refers to as "loop holes" are the plot inconsistencies Chad claims are in Rowling's narrative.

> Like I said, I read them over ten times, because sometimes when I go through them and I'm like, I didn't see that or didn't think of it that way, until this time. Each time read it, I think of it in a different way, like he [Chad] said the loop holes. By the time I read them through ten times, I could see every single loop hole there has been; or like he [Chad] said, like, why doesn't Harry know all this stuff. "We're just going to keep it from you and in a couple of years, we'll tell you about it; we thought you knew, you didn't know?" (Jacob 2008)

This is an excellent example of how popular culture literature can have an educational value in prompting kids to engage in critical thinking, textual analysis and literary criticism – all on their own accord (this concept is explored further in Chapter Nine). Even young children understand the value of re-reading and what it can accomplish for a child. In this case, Lucas answers for Lyndsay and explains what he believes is the result of Lyndsay's multiple readings. Little kids like these, only eight years old, comprehend that reading a text multiple times can further one's knowledge, power and elevate their status and position in a fan group. It can evoke esteem from fellow fans like Lucas:

Contessa: You've read all of them?
Lyndsay: A thousand times.

> Contessa: You've read them over and over. So, what do you get out of reading them over and over?
> Lucas: She understands them more.
> Lyndsay: Yeah, I guess. (2005)

In the quote below, Lyndsay continues to demonstrate her knowledge by citing facts she gleaned from reading one of Rowling's companion book to the series, *Quidditch Through the Ages* (2001).

> Have you heard of *Quidditch Through the Ages*? That's in the first book, when they're getting nervous about their flying lesson, I have that book at home, and I keep reading it over and over again. And I learned that the Golden Snitch was actually a real bird once except their getting extinct, so they had to get another one, like actually invent a new one. It was called the Golden Snidget. (2005)

Re-reading a text also provides a way to extend the reading experience and conclusion of the series. Madeline, who read *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* seven times, explains that re-reading a text prolongs the series finale, because she doesn't want the experience to be over.   She also describes an incident when someone told her that they wished they had not read the text yet, just so they could again experience reading Harry Potter for the first time.

> Like when I read the seventh book, I was so sad. I was like, "It's over!" And that's probably why I read it seven times, because you don't want it to be over, but you know. Like, I had someone tell me once when I was reading it, it's like, "Is that your first time?" And I said, "No," it's like, and they said, like, "I wish I hadn't read them yet because I want to read them again and not know what happens," because they love it so much. And you know, same thing for me, I love it. (Madeline 2011)

Not surprisingly, when a literary text is adapted to the silver screen, multiple viewings of films are as common as multiple readings of the text: "I bought all the Harry Potter books at their release date and read the books at least two-three times each. I have watched all movies multiple times" (Shara 2008). Describing her seven-year-old son

Nicholas, Mrs. Turner commented, "He's watched Harry Potter fifty-three times. He'll say, 'Watch this part, watch this part, just watch this, it's going to be good'" (Mrs. Turner 2005).

5.2.1 Word vs. Image: The Written Word and the Silver Screen

The Harry Potter phenomenon, as a cross-platform industry, has a powerful connection to the film and the visual world, and it is impossible not to discuss the book without discussing the eight feature films. The Potter film series produced by Warner Brothers has had a major impact on fan culture, providing a wealth of objects for consumption in its wake. The majority of children and teenagers I interviewed said that they were both readers of the books and viewers of the films. Most children had indeed read at least one of the books, and the majority had read all books that were available at the time of interview. Despite being exposed to the glossy world of film, what was most surprising was the admission of preference for the written word.

> They are consistently interesting. Like, they are always, like you can always depend upon the books to be like, tell a story that you're going to guarantee you're not going to want to stop reading. Like you don't have to worry, you're going to start reading it and it'd be like, "Oh, this is getting *boring*." Like, like it's obvious because like, look how well they did, like, there has to be a reason, it's because, they're just so interesting; they're so original; the characters are interesting; the writing style is great. I love them. (Madison 2007)

> I think they're pretty cool. I like book three better though. (Zane 2007)

> The books are a lot better, a lot better. Like I just finished *Order*, the other day, and the same day I went to see the movie and I like the book a lot better. (Pippa 2007)

> I probably like the books better. (Stephen 2008)

> Novels are better than movies, but the movies are pretty well done. (Janey 2008)

Basically before the movies, I was a big fan of the books… I've always been a huge fan of the books. (Jennifer 2008)

I love these books. I really got into it, like, two years ago, and I read, I read the books throughout the time. I can't wait to read this one. (Angie 2007)

The books were the ones that appealed to me and got addicted to them before movies were out. Each book has different story with a lot of mystery and suspense which I love a lot. The diverse type of characters also appeal to me and how she developed them throughout the series; also overall puzzle pieces of each book and how she combined them all at the final book. (Shara 2008)

Contessa: So what do you like better – the books or the movies?
Madeline: Oh definitely the books.
Molly: The books. The books.
Madeline: The books.
Molly: Yeah. (2011)

By far the majority of children and teens I interviewed said that they preferred their reading experience to their watching experience of Harry Potter. This seems to be a departure from the common belief that children prefer the image over the written word as McDonnell claims: childhood culture "favours the Image over the Word as its preferred mode of expression" (1994, 28).

There were, however, some children and teens who were just as excited about the movie experience as the reading experience.

Contessa: How about you? What do you like about Harry Potter?
Janey: I don't know. The fantasy novel, the whole witch and wizard thing. I don't know. I started to read the book before and we started reading it in school, and after I finished it, everybody was like "Oh, this book is cool," and I was like "YES!" and then I started going to the movies, and that just made it so much better. You could actually see it. (2008)

I think the movies are interesting because it contains things that have wild imaginations and goes beyond what is really in the world. (Sabrina 2008)

I enjoyed the movies very much, but I just never got into the books. I don't like reading about that sort of thing. (Jasmin 2008)

Contessa: Why do you think adults and kids like it?
William: Well, like I said before, it's just so really cool how they make the movie and everything, and how they animate like, how they make the castle so big, and the, you look up at the grand staircase and, it's just gigantic, squares and squares going around, that and moving staircase and stuff. (2010)

These particular comments seem to illustrate the claim that children prefer image over word. However, that does still not account for the fact that the Harry Potter fans I interviewed rank their experience of reading higher than their viewing experience. One possible explanation has to do with the reader liking the images that are conjured up in their own "mind's eye" over one that is already mediated, supplied and dictated, as Sienna explains, "[I'm] not a huge fan of the movies. [I] enjoy to read so you can come up with your own idea of how things look and happen" (2008). Connor also explains how movies can, in fact, limit his limitless imagination by providing the image for him visually, "It's all up to your imagination then. Like, when you see the movie, its like, 'Oh, that's how it is'. You really can't imagine anything else. But in the [book] series, you can imagine the landscapes, what the magic spells look like. I don't know, it takes you away" (2007). Connor's experience with films versus books provides a good illustration of Marshall McLuhan's hot and cold media where the Harry Potter films are "hot media" (media that is low in audience participation and is exclusionary), and the books are "cold media" (media that is high in audience participation and is inclusive) (1964, 23).

A major pet peeve for some Harry Potter fans is how the book has been adapted to the screen, and how some of the precious details are lost in translation. Fans of books

often prefer the movie to be close to the exact copy of the text and follow the original

story, plot line, and characters. I believe this is a perfect illustration of the conservative

nature of children. The screen play is very different from the book, mostly because the

books contain too much content which have to be adapted to the silver screen. And while

fans seem to understand that, some are still annoyed by the omissions or inconsistences

found in the movie. In particular, fans do not appreciate when a screenwriter or a director

changes the nature of a character or a plot development.

> You didn't have to do that. You really didn't. I mean, I understand leaving stuff
> out; you can't have an eight-hour-long movie. But, you know, you didn't have to
> change it so that like, so and so, becomes a bad person. I don't know, they just do
> stuff for like, I don't know, just to make the movie sell better, I guess, at times.
> And they make Harry seem dumb and like, when he's like "I love magic", and I'm
> like, "Yeah, you love corny lines, don't you Harry?" (Madison 2007)

> Ellie: I like the books better; they've got more details and stuff. But the
>   movies are kind of just, different.
> Josie: They left out a lot in the last movie. A lot of things left out. (2007)

> There's a lot left out of the movie because the novels are so long. (Pippa 2007)

> The films lack a lot. Up to the second film, they did a pretty good job; but as the
> books started getting longer, they cut more and more out and it started getting
> worse after that. The third one was the worse, the fourth one was so-so, and fifth
> one getting a little bit better though. So, maybe by the sixth and seventh might be
> pretty good. (Connor 2007)

However, for many fans, the movies are a wonderful companion to the book experience,

and any changes are excusable, "As with all books that get turned into movies, there are

some parts left out. But I think they did a pretty good job of treating the book" (Noah

2007).

5.3 Quoting Popular Lines and Phrases: Combining Text (Convention) and Imagination (Creation) in Play

Not only does the number of times a fan has read a book illustrate their commitment to their fandom and bragging rights, but it also helps build the memory bank of words, phrases, images, motifs, and characters that children resort to in their fan-play activities, as the children below demonstrate.

Contessa:	Who is your favorite character in Harry Potter?
Amber:	Hermione.
Scott:	Harry, Harry, Ron and Hermione.
Amber:	I like all three of them too.
Lyndsay:	Hermione. I can even do an impression.
Contessa:	Oh, do you want to do it for us?
Lyndsay:	Okay. [In British dialect] "Oh move over. Alohomora." It's from the first movie.
Contessa:	That's very good. Anyone else do impressions?
Amber:	Ahm, I can do it like, [British dialect] "It's not Wingardium Leviosa, it's Wingardium Leviosa."
Contessa:	That's good, that's really good. And how about you?
Lucas:	I can do a Ron one. [British dialect] "We're done for!" (2005)

In this regard, knowledge and mastery over the text is a form of power and play (mastery of knowledge is discussed further in Chapter Six). Mechling argues that children both conform to and violate folklore conventions – this gives them a way to develop their competence and mastery over a form. He writes, "By violating and otherwise playing with the conventions of this folklore genre [riddles], children develop competence and mastery over a form" (1986, 101). Not only do children learn to master the forms of mimicry and parody, but they also often gain competence and respect from their peers, with their level of memorization skills.

One mother, Mrs. Christine Collins, agrees that such acts can help children retain information and memorize: "The memorization of the spells, all the characters and who's

done what, and where they've been, I mean they can give you middle names and dates of birth and all these facts, that I think makes them think, again memorization" (2011). Some parents like Mrs. Collins acknowledge the literacy and memory skills needed to read and memorize such as text, even if it is through play. Other parents like Mrs. Turner acknowledge attention to detail her son has demonstrated in his Harry Potter play: "To the detail. He's very meticulous for the details. Like that stuff that came in the box of Valentines, the magnet, well, it's not really the right one, but I put it on there. That has the four houses on there, it's not really Harry's but, okay I'll put it there" (2005). Despite being a form of popular culture, Harry Potter literature and the act of reading is a valuable and educational tool for kids, as this mother claims "It's just, I don't know, I don't see anything bad about kids reading; even if the material may not be all that appropriate. I don't see anything bad about kids reading" (Mrs. Collins, 2011).

5.4   Social Acts of Reading

With the advent of the Internet, the birth of personal technological devices such as laptops, phones and tablets, and the rise of social media, one would think that collective reading as a social act or event would be non-existent. However, despite what those from the "mass media destroys kid's culture and traditional play" camp might want one to believe, reading as a social event, occurs. Social acts of reading can involve (1) reading with family, (2) reading with friends and fellow fans, and (3) reading in public. Verbal and online discussions often follow these social readings which is why I claim kids like doing it, because they often get to immediately discuss what they've both read (or watched in the case of Harry Potter movies) together.

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> Even last night, me and my friend, we were out eating, and we got into a discussion about… (I mentioned that the trailer for the sixth movie [*Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*] is coming out in May), and we got into this big discussion about how they are going to do the seventh movie [*Deathly Hallows: Part 1*] and, you know, just basically have these conversations out of nowhere about Harry Potter. (Jennifer 2008)

And what types of discussions do fans have? Jennifer explains that she and her friends talk about, "Our favourite parts of the books, and what we'd like to see in the movies, and what we thought should have happened, or stuff like that" (2008).

5.4.1 Reading with Family

Parents often read books aloud to their children, even when the children are quite capable of reading it themselves. The pleasure is located in the act of reading and experiencing a story together. "When I was seven years old, my mom, we started reading them together and she'd read them to me. So she read them to me the first time, and then I read them myself" (Molly 2011). Perceiving Rowling not only as an author, but also as a mother, Mrs. Collins bases her decision to allow Molly to read the books at the age of seven.

> I started to read the books out loud to [Molly] when she was seven because that's When J.K. Rowling allowed her own children to read the books; that's when she felt they were old enough, so I felt if she wrote the books and allowed her kids to them at that age, then that would be a good age. So, we started in January, I guess, of 2006, we started reading the books. So, and then it continued from there. (2011)

> My family, my sister had been a Harry Potter fan and she sent the first two books to [Molly] for Christmas, oh no for her seventh birthday, so I started reading the books Christmas. Oh no, her birthday's in January, so I'm not really sure, Christmas or her birthday or when it was, but that's when we started reading the books together. And I read them all aloud to her, even after she was capable, well capable of reading them herself, I still read them all aloud to her. Some of them we read more than once, aloud, and she has also read them herself. (2011)

For Molly and her mother, what began as a reading exercise (parent teaching the

child literacy skills) became a deeper and more emotional, shared experience for them; as

Mrs. Collins says, she continued to read them to her daughter long after she was capable

of reading them on her own. This proves that despite the mother's praise of the books for

improving her child's literary and memorization skills, she also enjoyed the act of reading

to her. For many parents, the social parent-child act of reading together is more important

than a simple reading exercise for the sake of literacy. The child and parent connect

through popular culture and reading.

Parents who read to their children are doing more than just encouraging children

to read; they are engaging with their child in a very meaningful way. This became very

clear in Jacob's case. Jacob lost his mother when he was only fourteen years old. Jacob,

who was seventeen at the time of our interview, is not only a fan of Harry Potter because

he grew up reading the series, but also because it is a form of nostalgia and means of re-

experiencing his memories of when his mother used to read the books to him. After

Jacob's mother died, he re-read the books in honour of her. He re-reads the books as a

way to stay emotionally connected to his deceased mother. Reading with her formed a

powerful and meaningful memory and connection to the text.

> Contessa: How long have you been a fan?
> Jacob: I was nine years old so that would be eight years ago.
> Contessa: So why are you a fan as opposed to him?
> Jacob: I have seen the loop holes and I have seen them, but it actually
>   doesn't bother me, I find the world intriguing. As simple-minded
>   as it is, it is quite an intriguing world, and while a lot of people
>   could have done similar things, they haven't. And I find the world
>   of Harry Potter is just quite exciting. Maybe it's because its
>   something I grew up with since I was nine. Maybe if I started
>   reading it now I wouldn't have the same feeling [sic]. And maybe
>   that's why I love the series. I read it with my mom and she passed

	away when I was fourteen, so I am pretty much reading the series back over for the both of us.
Contessa:	So, she brought it…
Jacob:	Yeah, when I was nine years old, even though I was nine [and could have read it myself], she read me the first three books. (2008)

Jacob acknowledges that it was the act of reading the books with his mother before her death, something they shared, that makes him wonder if he would love the series as much as he does today: "I'm not as big of a fan as a lot of people. I've actually read each book probably ten times; except for *Deathly Hallows* I've only read three. I don't know why I have read them so many times, I just have" (2008). It is also interesting to note that Jacob also points out that his mother read the books to him "even though" he was nine, much like Molly's mom who read the novels to her daughter "even after she was capable" (2011). Most importantly, even though Jacob says he's not as big a fan as others, he has read the book a significant number of times despite not knowing how to articulate it. I suggest it has to do with the emotional connection and attachment Jacob formed with his mother while reading.

5.4.2   Reading with Friends and Fellow Fans

Numerous fans also described their experiences reading along with their friends and fellow fans. This may take a variety of forms; some children read passages or chapters together aloud, while others read it together in silence.

Contessa:	And did you ever read books with other kids? Like your friends or anything?
William:	Well, do you mean, like, we bought the same book and then we read the, like…
Contessa:	…would read it together, or anything like that?
William:	Yeah.
Contessa:	Yeah?

William:	Yeah. Me and my best friend, we did it.
Contessa:	Okay. What would you do? Just read chapters, sections of it together, or pages?
William:	Well, we bought the same book, but like, we'd sit next to each other and read it together.
Contessa:	Okay.
William:	And like, we'd finish the chapter, and then we'd wait for each other…
Contessa:	…to finish?
William:	…whoever finished it first, yeah.
Contessa:	Did you talk about it then? Did you talk about the book and what you read and…?
William:	No.
Contessa:	No?
William:	We'd just keep reading.
Contessa:	You'd just keep reading?
William:	Because every chapter stops at a good part.
Contessa:	Have you ever done that with any other book?
William:	Umm, no. (2010)

5.4.3 Reading in Public

As popularity of the Harry Potter books grew, so did the anticipation of fans as each book was released. With each book's release many fans began reading as soon as they got the book in their hands, which often took place in bookstores on the launch day of a Harry Potter novel. When a book becomes a mass favourite, reading with others is a favourite pastime of fans, particularly when a new book is first released.

> The one girl that was here, who was reading all morning, she only got to Chapter Five. We watched the expression on her face [as she read the book]. It turned to dread, she cried. She had to close the book and walk around for a while. And she did say, "It was too much death in the first five chapters,"… So we don't know. We told her, "Don't tell us a thing, we can't know." (Gillam 2007)

Some fans will loiter in bookstores and on sidewalks in order to start reading the pages as soon as physically possible. For Ellie, she planned on reading it as soon as she

possibly could, somewhere between leaving the bookstore and arriving home.

> Contessa: When will you start reading it?
> Ellie: As soon as I get in the car! (2007)

Other fans will brag about how quickly they finished a particular book. Here Jennifer

explains how quickly it took her to read *Deathly Hallows* after she bought the book at a

midnight book launch at a Coles Bookstore in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

> Jennifer: It was a small release, but it was really exciting. Me and my friend were there and we were wondering what was going to happen in the end.
> Contessa: And how long did it take you to read the book?
> Jennifer: I started at midnight when I got home, and I read for about three hours, and then went to bed and got up at 8am, and I finished at 8:30pm that night. (2008)

However, what was of utmost importance to fans during the summer of 2007 was getting

to experience and discover the ultimate fate of Harry Potter and his friends, and the

conclusion of the seven-novel series. For fans, this, of course, meant avoiding face-to-

face verbal and online discussions, predictions and spoilers (see below).

5.5   Literature and Popular Culture Consumption

5.5.1   Recommending, Buying, Sharing and Gifting

In many interviews I conducted, fans revealed how they were either exposed to or

passed on book recommendations, illustrating the power of grassroots development and

word-of-mouth recommendations made by friends and family:

> Actually, originally I was like, when they first came out I was like, "*Oh*, everybody loves them." I thought they were like, you know, like, *Dora The Explorer*, or something [stupid or whatever for kids.] So, I was like, I don't want to read those, but then my little cousins wanted to go to the first movie when it came out, and so I was like, "Well I'll take you guys to the movie" and then I loved the movie, so then I had to read all the books, and then by then the fourth

book was just coming out, and I had four books to read at once, and I was like "*Yes! Awesome!*" (Madison 2007)

I have a sister-in-law and at least two friends who are really into the series too, so I'm going to tell them the book's out and to go get it. (Angie 2007)

I was twelve when I first read the books, and ever since then, I've been waiting month to month, every time there's a new book going to be published. And, you know, I was probably the biggest fan of my friends at the time, and I got a lot of people into reading the books and, you know, trying to spread it around. (Jennifer 2008)

My cousin [Kevin] and [Kenneth] from Denmark came to visit, they enjoy the movies and books and wanted to go to this show [the Harry Potter movie]. I went along with them. (Samuel 2008)

This mother explains how her child received the books from her extended family: "My family, my sister had been a Harry Potter fan and she sent the first two books to [Molly] for Christmas, oh no for her seventh birthday, so I started reading the books Christmas. (Mrs. Collins 2011)

In the quote below, Adele illustrates her pride and her power of persuasion when she admits she "converted" her sister into a Potter fan: "I'm still a Harry Potter fan, but when I was younger I used to participate in the fandom a lot more than I do now. Most of these activities were done when I was 11-16, and most were either done alone or with my sister, who I converted to a Harry Potter fan" (2008). Potter's local grassroots origin and Internet presence therefore suggests that the story of Harry Potter spread both locally/orally and globally/electronically which contributed to the popularity and development of a global phenomenon. (The use of the Internet is discussed in detail in Chapters Eight and Nine on Internet fan-play activities.)

Many fans buy their own books for their own reading and ownership pleasure: "[I] bought all seven books, and also books on Quidditch and Mythical Creatures" (Sophia

2008). Despite the fact that "two-thirds of kids ages 8 to 18 have read at least one in

author J.K. Rowling's series of Potter books" (Lynch 2001, 26), Jack Zipes doubts the

readership of Harry Potter books and seems to fail to see the power of grassroots book

recommendations, sharing and gifting outside the realm of adult purchases. Zipes

interviewed children about the first three novels in 1999 and concluded that children were

adverse to spending money on books, "They [children] certainly do not buy them" (2001,

186). My research points to different conclusions from Zipes' observations. When kids

are interested in something on a grassroots level, they will find ways to get their hands on

the books, even if they cannot afford them. While many parents do purchase books for

their children, books are also given as gifts from readers to children, as eighteen-year-old

Samuel explains, "I bought a book or two for my younger brother (he is ten)" (2008). It

is therefore important not to underestimate the power of book-giving, book-sharing

among friends, fans and family, and book borrowing through schools and public libraries.

Electronic copies of Harry Potter can also now be downloaded illegally online, or

downloaded for a fee (such as on Rowling's newest website <www.pottermore.com>, the

exclusive home of the Harry Potter eBooks and digital audio books).

5.5.2   Merchandise and Toys

Because Harry Potter is a multiplatform industry, the desire to buy literature can

also prompt the desire to purchase other forms of merchandise besides the books:

> Most store bought games were for the computer or PlayStation and Wii. [I] bought
> Bertie Botts Beans and a Golden Snitch necklace. (Sophia 2008)

> I attended the midnight selling of both the 4th and 5th books with friends. While
> waiting I bought things such as posters, Bertie Botts every flavor jelly beans, etc.

I also buy a friend of mine Harry Potter items every year for Christmas. (Lucy 2008)

My room is covered. I have like newspaper clippings, and I got this box; it used to have a Harry Potter puzzle in it, and now it's full of magazine stuff with Harry Potter. And I painted the Hogwarts crest on my closet door when I was sixteen. And I got posters, and I bought a lunch box – and I've no use for a lunch box – but it had Harry Potter on it… (Jennifer 2008)

I have the books. When I was younger, I actually had Harry Potter shampoo, I remember that. My nan was like, "Here's Harry Potter shampoo!" I'm like, "That's great. I'm excited!" I'm trying to think if I had anything else. Wait, I did have a wand one time. It was a wand full of sugar. And it was a Harry Potter wand. It was like Pixy Stix. (Jacob 2008)

I own several Harry Potter Playstation games. (Naomi 2011)

Loads. Loads. My room is just full of Harry Potter posters. (Naomi 2011)

Nine-year-old William demonstrates his particular affinity for the Harry Potter video games, and boasts of how many games he's played, " I played The *Order of the Phoenix* at my friend's house. And I have *The Chamber of Secrets*, *The Prisoner of Azkaban*, and the *Goblet of Fire* that I have at my house" (2010). As numerous Harry Potter merchandise websites illustrate, there is an awareness among youth of online merchandise and purchasing. Young children, like nine-year-old William, are even aware of it, and often direct their parents to order it for them.

Contessa:	There's a lot of Harry Potter merchandise, hey? A lot of games and clothing and that kind of stuff.
William:	Yeah, cause on the website, you could have got a wand that took triple A batteries and you waved it and it lit up. And, it was really cool. And then you could have got Hedwig, like a stuffed Hedwig and the Time-Turner, Hermione's.
Contessa:	I got that one.
William:	I have that too, yeah.
Contessa:	Oh do you?
William:	You can get it at Coles and everything.
Contessa:	Yeah, I got the wand, and I have the time-turner and…
William:	I had the wand and it snapped. (2010)

5.6   Book Launches and Midnight Movie Launches

Book launches have also become customary events for literary fans. And for those

books that have been have adapted to the silver screen, movie launches are popular

customs for fans as well. Launches of the books and movies are highly anticipated events

for fans. Not only are they excited to read the new text or view a new adaptation, but

Launch Day provides opportunities to socially celebrate one's fandom among other fans.

Line-ups outside bookstores and cinemas can last for hours or days, and can provide

ample opportunities for fans to share and socialize.

> I was in a line-up for about two or three hours to get the book. (Stephen 2008)

> [I] attended mid-night selling of the books. (Samuel 2008)

> Last year I went to the mid-night launch of the last book with my friend. I always go to the movie in the theatre with that same friend. (Roary 2008)

> [I] attended all the movies as soon as they were released in theatres. (Nancy, 2008)

> For children, midnight launches are even more exciting as they are sometimes

temporarily permitted to stay up past their bedtimes to attend the public event.

> Contessa: …and what about your wand?
> Lyndsay: I got that at Chapters when the new one, when the new book was coming out. I was one of the first ones there to get the new book at midnight, except I went to Coles instead. (2005)

Children are quite aware of the special status of the day, sometimes even getting special

permission to miss school, "My mother took me out of school to see the fourth movie,

and we lined up for four hours" (Sophia 2008). Several fans also explained how the

launch of the movies correlated to their birthdays and became an annual birthday

tradition.

> The Harry Potter movies used to come out in November and my birthday is always in November, there was at one point in my life where my boyfriend and I would go to see every new Harry Potter movie in theatre every night of my birthday, I believe from 2002-2004. (Rachel 2008)

> Most of the books that I own were given to me for Christmas or on my birthday on the same years the books were released. After enjoying the books so much, it was only natural to see the movies with friends when they came out in theatres. (Austin 2008)

On book-launch days bookstores usually supply their customers with opportunities to celebrate the series. The idea is to provide entertainment and celebration such as music, games, food, treats, prizes, trivia and costume contests, or Harry Potter themed events like recreating an initiation like the Sorting Hat Ceremony (as previously noted and described as a rite of passage in Chapter Four) or a jail cell from Azkaban. In 2005, Chapters Book Store in St. John's recreated a Sorting Hat ceremony and sorted children into Hogwarts Houses. In this photo below (Figure 5.1), a Chapters employee, dressed as Professor McGonagle, places the Sorting Hat on a young girl and sorts her into the Gryffindor house. The photo below is taken from the July 16, 2005 edition of local St. John's newspaper, *The Telegram*.

POTTER PARTY

FANS CELEBRATE BOOK'S LAUNCH: Courtney Toombs of Portugal Cove South celebrated her 12th birthday Friday at the Chapters book store in St. John's where she took part in a sorting ceremony and picked up the latest book in the Harry Potter series. Prof. McGonagle, also known as Nancy Pender-Feltham, placed the hat on Courtney's head, which then assigned her to Gryffindor house.

Figure 5.1: Sorting Hat ceremony at a Harry Potter book launch at Chapters, St. John's, Newfoundland. *The Telegram*, **July 16, 2005.**

Chapters bookstore in St. John's also re-created a jail cell from Azkaban, featured in the book, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. One youth describes how she was able to jail her friend and take pictures of her friend in the cell, "I attended the midnight selling of the last two books with my cousin, at the Chapters store in St. John's. They had a crafted jail cell of Azkaban and you could place your friends in the cell" (Sophia, 2008).

July 21, 2007, also known as "P-Day", was the day the book *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* was released, I visited two stores that sold the book on Launch Day and interviewed the fans who were there to buy the book. This was a particularly exciting day for Potter fans as it was the release of the final book and would finally reveal Harry Potter's fate to long-awaiting hungry readers. "I'm really excited. I've been counting down since 155 days" (Josie, 2007). Fans from all over the world were counting down to

this moment. In fact, count down clocks sprung up over the Internet on book and entertainment sites.

On P-Day I visited two book-selling locations: the Walmart in Stephenville, and Coles Bookstore in Corner Brook. This Walmart location did not hold any celebratory event as such, but it did feature a book display unit, as well as a promotional pledge which promised not to reveal the ending of the book. (This pledge is discussed in detail in the upcoming Anti-Potter Movement section.) Coles Bookstore in Corner Brook, however, attempted to engage their customers and marked the occasion by providing celebratory activities for Harry Potter fans and participants. The employees dressed in costumes, the store was decorated with a variety of manufactured and handmade items, and they also offered food, costume and trivia contest prizes. Instead of a Sorting Hat ceremony or an Azkaban jail cell, the staff came up with the idea of decorating the store like Diagon Alley (a shopping alley for wizards).

The manager also played the Harry Potter musical soundtrack throughout the store. "And we've got the Harry Potter soundtrack playing. We've had that going all day" (Gillam 2007). Store employees (see Figure 5.2) were also dressed up in Harry Potter costumes: "We're all dressed up. The store's decorated as you can see, everything's Harry Potter themed from our shelves to our candy stock in front of the cashes and stuff", said teenage store employee Noah (2007).
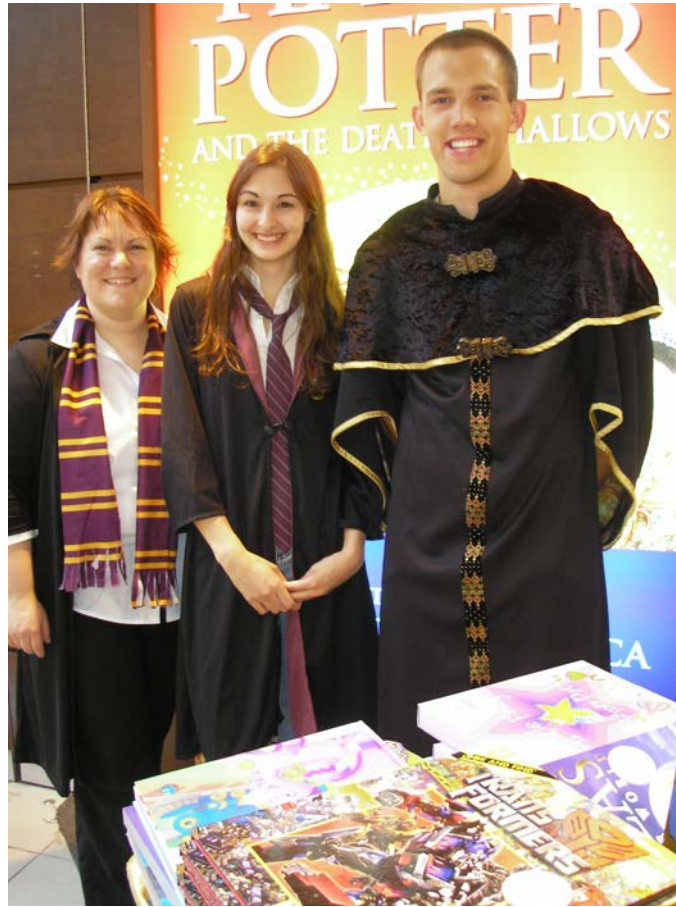
Figure 5.2: Coles Store Employees dressed in costumes to celebrate the launch of the final book in the Harry Potter series, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*.

Book launch days are also extremely exciting news for book stores, corporations and

merchandisers who will profit from book sales. There were three main book displays

related to the launch (Figures 5.3-5.5). The first was a relatively small book cube

featuring the newest and last Potter book, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, which

was placed near the check-out (see Figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3: Harry Potter Book Display 1 – Book Cube of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* books displayed near the check out of Coles Bookstore, Corner Brook, Newfoundland.

Employees also took the opportunity to create a Harry Potter book display featuring all of

the remaining six books in the Potter series and placed it in the very front of the store (see

Figure 5.4).

Figure 5.4: Harry Potter Book Display 2 – Located at the front of the store (left side).

Other fantasy novels, children's books, project books, poster books and colouring

books, related to the Harry Potter franchise, or to children's fantasy novels and magic in general were also selected, displayed and promoted. Some of the titles included in the display below are: *Ironside: A Modern Faery's Tale* (2007) by Holly Black; *The Pinhoe Egg* by Diana Wynne Jones (2006); *The Wizardology Handbook: A Course for Apprentices* by Dugald A. Steer and Master Merlin (2007). There were also several other Scholastic books devoted to Harry Potter, including Harry Potter Deluxe Colouring Book, a Harry Potter Movie Poster Book, and a Hogwarts Through the Years Poster Book.

Figure 5.5: Harry Potter Display 3 – Located at the front of the bookstore (right side). This display illustrates the cross promotion of products available to children in bookstores.

Not only are books available for sale, but also a variety of products and toys including wands, scarves, key chains, costumes, figurines, candy, a build-your-own Hogwarts castle, and musical soundtracks (see Figure 5.6). However, most surprising was the presence of homemade items throughout the store. After some investigation I learned that Coles and Indigo Books had given each of their stores a small budget to

prepare for the celebratory launch day.

> Every Coles and Chapters store were given a budget. You know, we could spend up to our budget, to throw a nice Harry Potter celebration. And we got costumes, and food, and treats, and prizes and we've had trivia going all day. We've probably given out half a dozen prizes. Yup, Coles and Chapters are die-hard Harry Potter fans. (Gillam 2007)

Figure 5.6: Official Harry Potter merchandise display in book store, with toys for sale such as wands, scarves, and a build-your-own Hogwarts Castle.

Bookstore corporations were at least partially recognizing and exploiting the local and the homemade, and capitalizing on fans' "lovemarks." Jenkins explains that corporate media increasingly recognizes "the value, and the threat, posed by fan participation" (2006a, 169). Most often that means that media producers either love or hate fans. "Media producers and advertisers now speak about the 'emotional capital' or 'lovemarks' to refer

to the importance of audience investment and participation in media content" (Jenkins 2006a, 169).

One of the teenage employees, Rosalie who is also a fan of the series, enlisted another visual artist friend, to help her make the homemade crests and signs (e.g., lovemarks), as seen in this "Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry" (see Figure 5.7).

Figure 5.7: "Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry" sign, handmade by store employee, Rosalie.

In this photo below (Figure 5.8), Rosalie has hand-drawn and painted a Ravenclaw House Crest. The juxtaposition of this sign and the manufactured sign is a good illustration of big-box bookstores incorporating the local with the corporate, to take advantage of fans' love of the series. Jenkins states "Corporations imagine participation

as something they can start and stop, channel and reroute, commodify and market"

(2006a, 169). Corporations, he claims, are either prohibitionists who attempt to stop

unauthorized participation or collaborationists who attempt to "win grassroots creators

over to their side" (2006a, 169), opting to view fans as "inspirational consumers" (2006a,

191). However, we must not forget that while corporations may seem to partially

support children's participation, they are, at the same time, "anxious about this fantasy

play because it operates outside their control" (Jenkins 2006a 205). Based on this,

Chapters/Coles seem to have taken a collaborationist approach when marketing *Harry

Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. By providing a budget for its employees (many of

whom in this case were teenage Potter fans) they allowed for an element of the heartfelt

and the homemade which ultimately appealed to customers.

Figure 5.8: Harry Potter official signage, juxtaposed against a handmade Ravenclaw House Crest.

The store manager also arranged to have her mother hand-knit Hogwarts scarves as prizes for the contests: "When I first came in, I was almost shaking, we were so excited. Yeah, we were tripping over each other trying to please everybody. We got some home-knit scarves. The customers all love them, they want to get one knit" (Gillam 2007). The hand-knit scarves can be seen in the photo below (Figure 5.9).

Figure 5.9: Hand-knit scarves used for game prizes displayed at the launch of *Deathly Hallows* at Coles bookstore.

With both a budget and an agenda dictated by head office, the employees set out to prepare a celebratory launch day. The first thing to do was to prepare costumes for each staff member, "Most of them are a little shocked by the way we're dressed. But I think they understand when they realize it's for the launch of the book" (Noah 2007). Perhaps the most successful part of their launch event was their localization and personalization, and how they combined official merchandise with homemade objects like the hand-knit scarves and posters. In the photograph below (Figure 5.10), regular or

"non-manufactured" Harry Potter candy (as compared to the official Harry Potter candies such as Bertie Botts Every Flavour Beans) and treats are displayed in jars to imitate the magical and sometimes grotesque foods found in the Harry Potter universe such as Cockroach Clusters, Jelly Slugs, Tongue Twister Toffee, and Bertie Botts Every Flavour Beans (which were substituted with regular jelly beans). A cake commemorating the launch of the final book was also presented and slices handed out to the crowd.

Figure 5.10: Regular candies and treats mimicking the grotesque foods of Harry Potter are displayed in jars and labeled as Cockroach Clusters, Jelly Slugs, Tongue Twister Toffee, and Bertie Botts Every Flavour Beans.

In the photograph below (Figure 5.11), store employee Rosalie is dressed as a Hogwarts student. Behind her is one of her handmade Hogwarts Crests representing the four houses: Gryffindor, Ravenclaw, Hufflepuff and Slytherin. Also behind Rosalie are homemade stars covered with foil wrapping, as well as hand-made Golden Snitches made by inserting white feathers into two sides of a yellow ball to represent wings. Fans

enjoyed the efforts of staff, especially the costumes, art, food and prizes.

Figure 5.11: Coles Bookstore teenage employee dressed as a Hogwarts student. Behind her are handmade signs, a Hogwarts Crest, tin foil wrapped stars, homemade Golden Snitches and hand-knit scarves that were either given as contest prizes or raffled off.

5.6.1   Promotional Events: Socializing and Resistance

While book launches are usually marked with special activities, displays and merchandise for purchase, the movie launch I observed did not have as much promotion, outside of movie posters and images of Harry Potter on bags of popcorn and soda cups. On July 15, 2011, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*: *Part 2* was released at 12:01 am prompting mass midnight movie showings around the world. One such movie event

took place in St. John's, Newfoundland at Empire Theatres in the Avalon Mall. The two midnight showings were sold out well in advance through online sales.

The cinema did not organize any celebratory "events" as such, as the bookstore had. However, the cinema experience did offer the experience to be amongst hundreds of excited Potter fans of all ages, gathered in one place, anxiously awaiting "the end" of the Potter era – the final Harry Potter film and series finale, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2*. During the movie launch of *Part 2* in 2011, fans were reacting in much the same way, as they had at the launch of the book in 2007. They were excited and the energy of the room was palpable. They were social and happy. Yet, there was also a feeling of sadness as it was the final "new" experience for fans, as Angie explains, "It's sad and it's exciting. It's the last one, it's like the climax" (2007). For Molly and Madeline, who attended the movie launch together (Figure 5.12), the finale of the series is almost overwhelming.

Contessa:	So is there a certain kind of sadness knowing that this is the last movie?
Madeline:	Yes.
Molly:	Yeah.
Madeline:	Oh my gosh, yes,
Molly:	It's like, "Oh my god, there's no more!" That's why we had to dress up, again. Cause like, we dressed up for the book launch and stuff, but you had, it's the last time, so you gotta do it and you gotta stand in line for hours and stuff cause it's just, it's what you do cause you're never going to get to do it again. (2011)

There was certainly a sense of anticipation and intensity about the place and a heightened sense of awareness of those around that this was *the end* of Harry Potter as the world knew it. I would describe it as a very playful and joyful atmosphere with an undercurrent of anticipation, impatience and subversive frustration with waiting.

Figure 5.12: Molly and Madeline, best friends and Harry Potter fans, attend the highly anticipated movie premiere of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2*.

Not only did movie fans buy out the only two movie viewings that night with presold online tickets, but fans also "camped out" in the Empire Studios cinema occupying its space for hours in advance of its opening. While the tickets guaranteed their entrance into the theatre for movie viewing, it did not guarantee or assign them a particular seat. Therefore, they still lined up for hours in advance to be the first ones to enter the theatre to secure a good seat (see Figure 5.13). With two scheduled midnight showings, hundreds of Potter fans (children, teens and adults) came together to share in the midnight viewings around the world.

Figure 5.13: Line-up at Empire Studios for the midnight premiere of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2*.

There were people of all ages but the crowd primarily consisted of adults, unaccompanied teenagers, and parents with their children, similar demographically to book launches. The teenagers occupied the space of the theatre by sitting on the floor, eating, playing games (mostly card games), using their telephones, observing the world around them, and engaging in conversation with others. Approximately 25% of moviegoers were dressed in costumes, which may explain why someone left their sneakers in the line-up following the mass rush to enter the theatre (see Figure 5.14).

I also noticed that the cinema was operating slightly differently from other regular movie nights. The Potter fans were forced to wait in lines in a roped-off designated section (the main entrance from the mall), and were separated from the rest of the moviegoers, the concession area, glow golfing and washrooms. This allowed for other moviegoers to enter the cinema without waiting behind all the Harry Potter ticket holders.

As the clock ticked closer to midnight, the crowds grew louder and more boisterous and energetic. Suddenly, in the middle of one of my interviews, the crowd began to chant someone's name and everyone joined in. It took me a little while to figure out what was happening, but I asked a few people in the mix and was told that it was the name of a particular movie theatre usher named Paul. They were chanting his name in hope of gaining entrance into the theatre. Eventually the chanting of "PAUL" and "let us in" died away, and youth who were once sitting on the floor, were now standing. The chanting had very much reminded me of children at a dinner table, banging their utensils on the table as they shout, "We want food!" Finally, the time to let the fans into the theatre had come, and a rather equally uncomfortable and stern-looking adult employee came to the rope barrier. Within seconds of the rope lowering, huge waves of young fans began pushing their way through, some cutting in front of others, while others dismissed all adult authority, ducking under the remaining rope barriers. Once the gate opened, they flooded through, leaving a field of debris in their wake (see Figure 5.14). The debris in the photo below consists of trash, plastic bags, beverage containers (water, juice, BoosterJuice), a food container and a pair of sneakers which could have been left behind by someone who changed into their costume while in the line-up. Upon close inspection I noticed that among the litter was a plastic food container containing nacho cheese sauce and nacho chips that someone brought from home. For kids who want to enjoy the enticing but expensive movie concessions like nachos but who don't have the cash, they often bring items like this from home to enjoy at a fraction of the cost.

Figure 5.14: Debris left behind in the movie premiere line-up.

With so much anticipation and emotion in the air it was inevitable that a large

gathering of youth would eventually unite in their impatient behaviours and restless play.

Fans have demonstrated similar behaviours at book launches as well. For example, during

the book launch of the last book on July 21, 2007, Coles bookstore manager, Lynn

Gillam, describes her experience when waiting children and teenagers began to hit the

door of the bookstore and rush the doors when opened.

> Today we opened up at 8am, and when we first came in, around the corner,
> around 7:30, we had a line up already started. One young girl was in the line
> since 6:30 this morning. The line went back so far as Charm [approximately fifty
> feet]. Anyway, we came in, trying to get ready, putting on our costumes and so
> on, and, anyway, it was about a couple of minutes afterwards, before we got the
> doors open, they were starting to pound on the doors. So, we opened the doors,
> and they all came running in. (Gillam 2007)

Without doubt, children's culture is sometimes an antithetical, anti-authoritarian culture

of resistance and subversion. "Kid Culture is a culture of resistance and subversion…

Their culture is the site of what little power and autonomy they have in the adult-

controlled world" (McDonnell 31). Parodies, fan fiction and fan-based activism groups, as examples of resistant youth behaviours, are explored in the following chapters.

5.7   Rumours, Predictions and Spoilers

Prior to the release of the final book, one of the most popular pastimes of fans was discussion of Harry Potter's ultimate fate. During the summer of 2007, before the release of the final book, fans buzzed among one other and over the Internet with predictions, theories and spoilers regarding the final outcome of Harry Potter. Rumours and speculation around Book Seven were heavily influenced by a statement Rowling made to the public. When Rowling informed her fans that she was going to end the lives of two characters in her final book, the local talk and chat rooms began buzzing with theory, speculation and predictions.   Was Harry Potter going to be one of these characters Rowling was going to kill off? Or would it be one of his beloved sidekicks, Ron or Hermione? Or, would Harry overthrow Voldemort? Alternatively, would Voldemort kill Harry?

Figure 5.15: Violet, a Potter fan, at book launch.

The question that occupied the majority of all oral and online communication in 2007 was who would die. People passed on their speculations not only online, but together in folk groups, in this case an age-appropriate folk group. They heard by word-of-mouth, usually from friends and fellow fans, and then transmitted the information again verbally or digitally via online websites. Some of the speculations about the finale of Rowling's book series included:

A lot of [rumours about] Harry's going to die. (Ellie 2007)

Well, everyone's speculating – he dies, he doesn't die. (Violet 2007)

I think Harry will die. (Kendall 2007)

Madison: I heard that one of the three main characters – well, Harry, Ron and Hermione – I heard one of them dies, but I heard it's not Harry. And then, well my sister and I have done much speculating and she thinks it's going to be Ron because she thinks nobody will kill off Hermione. And then, somebody else is supposed to die, but obviously Voldemort's gonna die, so, I mean, who's going to leave him alive in the seventh book? And I think the other person's gonna die. I think it's going to be one of the Weasleys because there's so many of them, other than Ron…
Contessa: Percy maybe?
Madison: Oh, nobody would care if Percy died. I think it would be a waste of time. It would have to be like, one of the parents, or one of the twins – people you're really attached to and you're going to be like, "Oh, Mrs. Weasley!" or whatever. (Madison 2007)

I think either Harry or Voldemort dies. (Katelyn 2007)

Actually I saw an interview with Ron, and it said that, and they were asking him, like, how would he feel if he got killed off, and stuff like that? And he said, I hope you die heroically, that kind of thing. (Pippa 2007)

The only one I heard was from my friend Nick. He says everyone dies, so I sincerely doubt that. So, nothing really. (Connor 2007)

Well, you hear a lot of stuff, like, ah, Harry dies or Ron dies. Or like, that it's all a big dream. Like he wakes up from a coma or something, so you don't really know until you read it. (Benjamin 2007)

Figure 5.16: Teenage Potter fan group, Kendall, Katelyn and Pippa, who came to buy *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* **on its release day.**

Figure 5.17: Teenage Potter fans, Benjamin and Connor, buying the book on book launch day.

Another very popular rumour which spread on the Internet regarding the final book was that the last word of the book was going to be "scar." While the word "scar" was not the last word of the book, it did appear in the fourth and second last line of the

book:

> As Harry looked at her, he lowered his hand absent-mindedly and touched the lightning scar on his forehead.
> 'I know he will.'
> The scar had not pained Harry for nineteen years. All was well. (Rowling 2007, 607)

Obviously this rumour had some substance to it, which could have came about from leaks on the Internet that then became localized and modified.

In the interview excerpt below Madison not only boasts about her knowledge of all the rumours, but she makes the most accurate prediction about the ending before she has read the ending. Not only does Madison say she has already heard the scar rumour, but she also predicts that the final scene would take place on Platform 9 ¾. She also hints at a possible resolution or closure with Harry's life when she speculates that Harry "felt secure with his life" (2007).

Madison:	You don't even find out from the last page. It'll probably say something like "Harry walked off Platform 9 ¾, blah blah blah…, felt secure with his life…, crappy crap…, scar" – the last word.
Contessa:	Did you hear that? I heard one of the rumours is that the last word is "scar." Did you hear that?
Madison:	The last word is scar. Yeah, I know them all.
Contessa:	Do you go online?
Madison:	I go on Mugglenet and I go on all the… I go on *Wikipedia* and read all the articles on Harry Potter when I'm bored. (2007)

Other popular rumours circulated including speculation that Rowling would write an eighth Harry Potter book, "Someone came in and told me that there was a possibility of an eighth one. So I went online to see what that was about, like if it was true, but I couldn't find anything about it so, I don't know where she got that" (Rosalie 2007). Another popular rumour has to do with how Rowling came to write Harry Potter. Brittney explains how Rowling came to write Harry Potter – on a train, "Well she thought

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of her idea of Harry Potter when she was on a train in Kings Cross station and the first book she wrote was about a rabbit called Rabbit" (2005).

Rumours about both Rowling and Harry Potter (plot lines, movie release dates, Rowling's battles in court) are so much a part of the Potter phenomenon that Rowling posted responses to these rumours on her official website at <www.jkrowling.com>. Rowling also responded to rumours such as the outcome of Book Seven, and the prediction that Harry and Voldemort will merge. She disclaims this, along with the speculated title of the book. She also disclaims several other plot twists such as characters revealing secret identities. Readers speculate which characters will reveal a secret identity. Rowling also responds to the people pretending to be her online, and to the rumour that she visits and posts on social networking sites incognito. Many people impersonate J.K. Rowling online, mimicking her, as they mimic Harry Potter. This illustrates that not only do fans pretend to be characters of the book, but they also pretend to be the real-life author of the book. With the final release of Book Seven, one would think that speculation and rumours about the text has stopped, however, many speculate about hidden events that Rowling didn't reveal in the text – for example, that Snape was really under the invisibility cloak the night that Harry's parents are killed.

Despite the fact that Rowling and her publishers went to great lengths to prevent early release of the book and its ending, copies and leaks still got out. There was so much anticipation over this book release that July 21, 2007 came to be dubbed in the media as "P-Day" (Reuters 2007). However, due to several leaks (including an US online retailer who erred by sending out copies too early) spoilers made it onto the Internet and even into newspapers disguised as reviews. A French newspaper, *Le Parisien*, was publically

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criticized by Rowling for releasing the fate of the four main characters days ahead of its release (Reuters 2007).   Rowling also criticized two US newspapers, *The New York Times* and *The Baltimore Sun* (Hoyt 2007) for disguising their intentions to release the ending early, as reviews. And when news that the final book showed up on an image-hosting site Photobucket.com, the publisher, Scholastic Inc., was granted a subpoena "to learn the identity of the individual who posted scanned copies containing original works of authorship,' according to a court filing" (*Rolling Stone* 2007). This eventually resulted in a breach of contract suit in which the US Scholastic publisher sued Infinity Resources, who own the online bookstore DeepDiscount.com, for shipping some copies to customers a week before the ship date (Rich 2007).

For Rowling, the leaks were upsetting because they prevented fans from reading and discovering the ending on their own. For fans, there is a lot of value in reading and the freedom to discover and experience the finale on one's own, as thirteen-year-old Gabriel exclaims:

> Contessa: Have you hear any rumours about the ending?
> Gabriel: I wants to figure it out! (2007)

Figure 5.18: Thirteen-year-old Potter fan who drove across the island of Newfoundland to buy a copy of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* on its release day.

Spoiling the "read to find out on my own" experience for readers is a common and seemingly favourite pastime of some people who can best be described as part of the Anti-Potter movement.

The Anti-Potter movement consists of people (from naysayers and Internet trolls to religious groups and literary critics) who all have a variety of agendas, motivations and reasons for wanting to discredit, hate, or ban the Harry Potter novels, and some fan behaviours such as costuming, fantasy and role-playing. There are some adults who criticize or trivialize the text, Rowling's talent, life and/or success, popular culture, mass media, and kid's culture in general. Other groups, such as religious groups, attempt to ban the Harry Potter books from schools and libraries. Out of the 32 responses I collected,

fourteen claimed not to be Potter fans. However, what was interesting is that over half of

them (eight out of fourteen) had still engaged with Harry Potter in some manner by either

reading a book or watching a movie. Out of all the non-Potter fans I spoke with, their

reasons for not being a fan included: (1) religious grounds; (2) a dislike of the fantasy

genre; (3) an annoyance over another group's demonstration of their fandom; (4) a

literary dislike for perceived lack of writing talent, inconsistent writing or problems with

the plot; and (5) and a desire to be an outsider and not part of a popular fad or "trend."

(1) Pauline explains her lack of interest in Harry Potter based on religious

grounds, "Both my parents are Christians and so is everyone in my family. My Mom

wouldn't allow us to read it because it consists of witchcraft etc. During my time away, I

saw parts of the 5th movie but that was it. Never got into it though" (Pauline 2008).

(Protesting Harry Potter books on the basis of religious grounds is explored further in

Chapter Six.)

(2) In the quotes below, Keasha, Ariel and Tori explain their dislike of the fantasy

genre:

> I am not a fan of the Harry Potter series for the simple fact that it is not the type of
> books or movies that I like. I enjoy reading reality books. Things in them could
> actually happen. I'm not a fan of fantasy. (Keasha 2008)

> I am not a fan because I am not into that genre of movies or books. I'm not into
> the whole witches and spells thing. (Ariel 2008)

> I am not a fan because I was never interested in the kind of fiction that Harry
> Potter. I never enjoyed all of the magic and spells that is associated with that kind
> of literature. I always enjoyed more real/believable literature. (Tori 2008)

(3) Alexandria demonstrates her annoyance with another group's demonstration of

their fandom, "I am not a fan because my best friend became an obsessed fan and it

seemed like her life revolved around checking blogs and keeping up on all the latest info and it really, really annoyed me!" (2008).

(4) And Chad, in an interview, illustrates his literary dislike for perceived inconsistent writing and problems with the plot. Some kids, who have read Harry Potter, and still claim not to be fans, criticize the plot or Rowling's writing. In the interview excerpt below Chad explains that he does not like Harry Potter because of plot inconsistencies, and he is frustrated by the information that the magical world and adults keep from disclosing to Harry. This is ironic since he is expressing what many teens complain of, being kept in the dark.

Contessa:	Are you guys Harry Potter fans?
Chad:	I really don't like Harry Potter.
Contessa:	And have you ever read the books?
Chad:	I read the books.
Contessa:	Oh, so you've read all them? You've gone through all seven but you're not a fan?
Chad:	Well if I want to criticize, I have to have a basis.
Contessa:	That's right, exactly.
Chad:	I hate people who criticize things who don't have a basis. That's not very good.
Contessa:	Why are you not a fan of Harry Potter?
Chad:	I am not a fan because J. K. Rowling doesn't really go for the suspension of disbelief. There's a lot of things, both the plot holes and different things that Harry just isn't told, just for the heck of it, just really drove me out of the book. So, I have no connection to the book and there's really nothing, there's no theme or anything to draw me into the book besides the basic fantasy. (2008)

(5) Adrianna explains her desire to be an outsider and not part of a mainstream fad or "trend": "I am not a Harry Potter fan simply because it is not my area of interest. This seems strange because it seems today that it is abnormal to not be a Harry Potter fan. I guess I just did not get caught up in the trend" (2008). Not wanting to be an "insider" and preferring to be on the "outside" is also the case for some of William's friends who "can't

stand" Harry Potter. When asked why, he says that there are some kids who want to be

"without the group" – meaning they want to distinguish themselves as separate from the

mainstream fans, as outsiders.

Contessa: And do your friends like Harry Potter? Are they fans?
William: Some of them. Some of them can't stand him.
Contessa: Why?
William: [Lyrical and quizzical] I do not know.
Contessa: Maybe because he's around a lot, and there's a lot of exposure?
William: Yeah.
Contessa: Is that what you think?
William: Probably.
Contessa: So, sometimes people just like to say things, that they don't like it
             because everybody else likes it? Do you find that?
William: Yeah.
Contessa: Yeah? [laughing]
William: They want to be without the group. (2010)

For those who simply don't like Harry Potter, there are ways to express one's

displeasure by targeting and attacking children who flaunt their fandom or make their

fandom obvious. One little boy Nicholas explained to me how he was bullied when a

group of children took his wand from him and ran away with it.

Contessa: When you went trick-or-treating, or when you went to school, did
             anybody say anything about your costume?
Nicholas: Yeah.
Contessa: What'd they say?
Nicholas: They took my wand.
Contessa: What'd they do?
Nicholas: They ran away with it.
Contessa: Did you have to chase them to get it back?
Nicholas: No, I usually get my friends to do it. (2005)

Another way Anti-Potters can bully fans is through attacking and exposing their

ultimate vulnerability, and their biggest obstacle standing in their path – maintaining and

keeping intact their lack of awareness over Harry's ultimate fate, and wanting to read and

experience the ending on their own. After six books, fans had invested and devoted much

of their reading and play time to Potter literature, and this was the ultimate moment to be savoured.

For those who simply don't like Harry Potter, there are ways to express one's displeasure by targeting and taking away one major source of their pleasure – discovering what is to happen to Harry Potter. Leaks to the ending of Harry Potter were reported all over the Internet. While most endings proved to be fake, it didn't stop readers from fearing what they were reading was the real ending.

> Madison: You watch out for your MSN today.
> Contessa: Yeah?
> Madison: Cause, did you hear about that copy that leaked on the Internet? Someone took pictures of the pages? Someone read that and went on my friend's MSN and posted who died! Not on MSN, but he was on her MSN list, and he posted who died, and she just opened her MSN, and she was like, "Ahh-hhhh!" There was two people who did it, I actually think.
> Contessa: Did you find out? Did you hear it from her?
> Madison: No, no, no, I'll kill her if she tells me.
> Contessa: It would ruin it for you, would it?
> Madison: Oh, yeah, I want to know *on my own*. (2007)

Not only does she point to the connection between the spread of rumours and spoilers, but also reveals how important it is to her to experience the discovery of Harry's fate directly through the literature. When some tries to remove this emotional and highly invested reading experience from a fan's long journey with Harry Potter, it prompts anger and feelings of frustration. They believe they should have the freedom and right to this experience, and are entitled to enjoy it as they see fit. A spoiler or leaked ending would be a horrible experience to have as a fan. For some fans like Rosalie and Angie, fear of overhearing or discovering something they don't want to, or "spoiling it", prevents them from going online or surfing any Potter web content. Rosalie explains how she doesn't

want anything to spoil her experience, "I heard that two people are going to die; which, I don't know, I think that Rowling maybe confirmed that on her site or something I am not sure. But I didn't look up anything because I didn't want anything to spoil it" (2007). Angie, like Gabriel, concurs that she wants to be the one to discover Harry's fate on her own, "The only thing I've actually heard about is that two characters die, that's it, that's the only thing I've heard. I've tried to avoid listening to the other things, what people say, it's like, okay, 'I don't want to know what happens, I don't want to know.' *I* want to find out!" (2007).

The idea of exposing a fan to the finale before they can enjoy the discovery of the ending through their own reading experience is one that Rowling, Walmart and bookstores like Coles, Chapters and Indigo Books take seriously. Coles Bookstore manager Gillam reveals that Coles' employees were cautioned ahead of time not to discuss or share the ending with potential customers or fans, "Don't tell us a thing, we can't know" (2007). Gillam was even suspicious about anyone coming into her store and skipping to the last page, "A few people have said that somebody is going to skip to the last page to find out, but most say they would never do that. They are going to read and they are going to read it slow, so that they don't miss a thing" (2007). In fact, Walmart provided customers who visited their store on July 21, a celebratory "Harry Potter and the Walmart Canada Pledge" pledging (in rhyme) that no one in the store is permitted to discuss or reveal the ending to customers (Figure 5.18). Walmart also gave customers who bought the book, a commemorative Harry Potter sticker bookmark which featured all seven Harry Potter book covers (Figure 5.19).
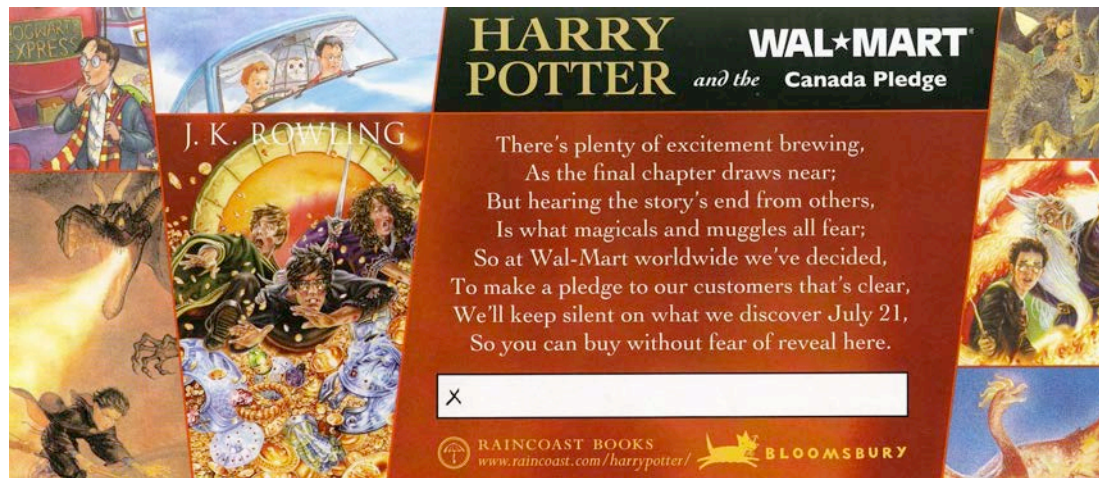
Figure 5.19: "The Harry Potter and the Walmart Canada Pledge" promises not to reveal the finale of the Harry Potter series.
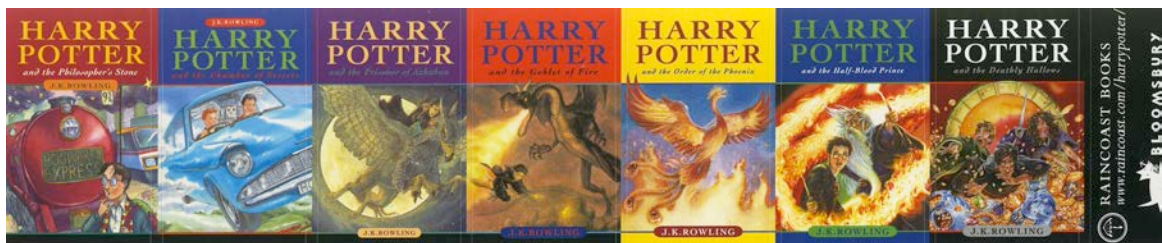
Figure 5.20: Harry Potter sticker bookmark issued to customers who bought the final book on launch day.

The Harry Potter and the Wal-Mart Canada Pledge reads:

There's plenty of excitement brewing,
As the final chapter draws near;
But hearing the story's end from others,
Is what magicals and muggles all fear;
So at Wal-Mart worldwide we've decided,
To make a pledge to our customers that's clear,
We'll keep silent on what we discover on July 21,
So you can buy without fear of reveal here.

By issuing this pledge, I argue Walmart (and similarly Coles/Chapters/Indigo) were

simply attempting to avoid any bad press that have resulted from fans learning of Harry's

fate in an inappropriate fashion. This pledge may have cautioned the Walmart employees

not to discuss the ending, but it certainly did not stop consumers themselves from discussing the plot themselves, or at least attempting to disclose the plot to others as I witnessed on July 21, 2007 at Walmart in Stephenville. While conducting field research in a Walmart and monitoring the Harry Potter display cube, I noticed a father and his adolescent son, rush to the cube, each grab a book, and ask aloud, "So, does he die?" The parent and child immediately flipped to the back of the book, looking to discover if Rowling had killed Harry Potter. A few minutes later, while they were searching the last pages for their answer, I approached and asked if they were fans. It was apparent that they were embarrassed and quickly assured me they weren't fans, and did not want to engage in an interview, and rushed away. What this scene reveals is that Harry Potter created a folk group of fans as well as non-fans based in their shared interest in the outcome of the hero.

This opens up another point of conflict child fans find themselves in, fans versus those who wish to ruin the surprise/pleasure of children reading the ending for themselves. While fans like to speculate and discuss their theories about the outcome, it does not mean they want to be force-fed the real outcome through spoilers. Online responses to spoilers range from people feeling disgust and anger, calling spoilers stupid; to people flaunting the ending by posting the illegally downloaded last two pages from the last book [such as from user "Up Yours" who posted the pages verbatim and followed the text with "Copy and paste it everywhere" (*Rolling Stone* 2007)]; while others like user "Al", state that they just don't care: "Harry Potter dies when his brush gets stuck in his ass! Who the heck cares?" (*Rolling Stone* 2007). These comment from Al and from Up Yours are good examples of Anti-Potters who want to spoil the reading experience and

series finale. Some people posted the exact ending, as the last two pages reveal; some posted speculation that was completely off, saying Ron would die, when he didn't; others seem to suggest shocking scenarios like date rape. Even young children were asked about their speculations and hopes: "I hope that Harry kills Voldemort" said one five-year-old child (Goldwert 2007).

Not only did real copies and spoilers appear, but also fake copies – copies that contained original text as well as re-written ending. One teenage boy told me that he read the book online, thinking it was the original, only to later discover that the ending he read online, was not Rowling's ending. The whole book, except the final ending and last pages, were Rowling's original. Discussion forums were also flooded with instructions explaining how to download the book.

So, while kids may find opportunities to explore their interests, as fans they can also become victim to a spoiler's remarks or comments. As well, if they are searching for downloaded copies to read, they could also be fooled into reading a text that isn't even Rowling's. While there may be a host of motivations for trying to ruin a child's or teenager's reading experience, the overall lesson here is that it is the kid readers who suffer the most, having had something valuable taken away from them.

5.8   Conclusion

By examining reading customs as experienced by children and teens, I have come to make several important observations in this chapter. Based on evidence presented, I suggest that adults should not underestimate the power of grass roots origins and word-of-mouth book recommendations, buying, sharing, and gifting. Collectively, kids have the

power to both start and stop a phenomenon with their actions and words. Children and teens have the power to move other people to read and experience what they recommend and share. And the more moved and emotionally connected a fan is to popular culture, the more likely they are to continue to encourage its spread and transmission. My research also reveals that young Potter fans tend to prefer their reading experience over their viewing experience. I am not suggesting that *all* children prefer word to image; but in the case of Harry Potter fans who are readers, they tend to favour their reading experience over their viewing experience.

This chapter demonstrates that kids are learning literary criticism and engaging in discussions, and are doing it on their own accord, generated out of their own interests. Re-reading a text can provide knowledge, power and confidence, and demonstrate mastery of the text. Not only do multiple readings enhance or extend the pleasure derived from reading the text, it can also act as a source of pride and achievement for children and often garners respect from other fans. Or, as illustrated by teenage Jacob who lost his mother at the age of fourteen, multiple readings can also have deep-seated connections to memory and reliving the past. In fact, social or public reading experiences can lead to more meaningful experiences such as child-parent bonding and collective emotional experiences. As well, quoting favourite lines of text can provide a form of play for kids, as well as improve memorization skills. Leslie Harris proved the power of verse in his autobiography *Growing Up with Verse: A Child's Life in Gallows Harbour*, by explaining how recitations improved memory (2002, 151-152), and how exposure to poems, prayers, and liturgies in books formed a part of his "linguistic development" (2002, 157).

Chapter Five also illustrates how book and movie launch events provide

opportunities for fans not only to purchase the books and buy movie tickets, but as public events they also provide a place to socialize and celebrate the novels. In large public groups and gatherings, these events can also offer opportunities for kids to express their dissatisfaction and socially resist or subvert authority, such as the chanting and yelling at both the book launch and the movie launch.

And finally, a look into the Anti-Potter movement illustrates that children need the freedom to enjoy literature and experience/read/discover it on their own, without the harassment of those who attempt to spoil their experience of the series finale. This movement demonstrates yet another group of people who are invested in disrupting the child's reading enjoyment and participation in culture, and suggests another reason to educate children and protect their freedom of expression. The child's freedom of expression is discussed further in this thesis.

Chapter 6

Children's Fan-Play:
Costuming, Role-Playing, Fantasy, Games and Parodies

6.1   Introduction

Despite there being a "widely held misconception that electronic media have contributed to the decline in children's traditional play pursuits" (Marsh 2001, 81) [see Myth-Conception #6 in Chapter Three] children's play activities, including those media inspired play activities, are alive and well as my research reveals. Also, despite the fact that parents often think their children are vulnerable and not immune to the dominance of popular culture, and that popular culture has a negative influence, children are not totally dictated by it, nor are they passive. This chapter therefore provides my local fan-play research as evidence to help dispel the adult misconceptions presented in Chapter Three.

Based on local ethnographic research and interviews I conducted between 2005 and 2011, this chapter provides an overview of some of the fan-play activities inspired by the Harry Potter phenomenon including (1) costuming, (2) role-playing, (3) fantasy, (4) games, and (5) parodies. I define fan-play as the repetitious, customary and co-creative play activities, events, materials and behaviours of fans. Fan-play refers to the traditional ways fans creatively engage with and celebrate their fandom, individually or in a group, to produce new expressive forms of emergent folk culture. Many of these fan-play forms reflect children's lives and concerns, and reveal power struggles, subversion tactics, resistance and identity expression. In addition, many of these activities are pleasure

seeking, or power seeking, or both – sometimes overtly (as with a parody) and sometimes covertly (as with a knowledge game).

6.2   Fan-Play and Costumes

The Harry Potter universe offers many costuming and role-playing opportunities, and fans love to dress as Potter characters. Both children and teenagers enjoy crafting their costumes and wearing them during everyday local fan-play, online global fan-play, at calendar custom parties such as Halloween and birthdays, or at special events. Children wear their Potter costumes at fan-play events, such as book launches, Fantasy Conventions, Halloween events and movie showings, to demonstrate their fandom and folk-group participation publically. They also wear their costumes in more private, informal events and smaller social circles such as in their family homes, in their local neighbourhoods, and while playing with children at home and in school.

The children I interviewed wore Potter costumes that consisted mostly of homemade (rather than purchased) costume pieces such as school uniforms and school robes. The most generic Potter costume consisted of a robe, scarf, and wand (and if playing Harry, the addition of his characteristic glasses and lightning bolt scar). The fact that children and teens permit homemade items to be worn alongside store-bought items illustrates their conservative and innovative nature. Their costumes illustrate that fan-play objects don't have to be "official" or mass-produced to be used and enjoyed in fantasy fan-play.

6.2.1 Halloween Events

Halloween provides an opportune time to sport one's favourite Harry Potter costume. Many of the children and teenagers I interviewed commented on wearing their costumes during Halloween school parties, trick-or-treating, or Halloween home parties. As one mother commented about her child's costume behaviour, "It's been one Halloween costume for about six years!" (Collins 2011). During Halloween 2005, I interviewed five children on October 31 during a Halloween school party. The school Halloween party took place at Mary Queen of Peace School in Mrs. Piercey's classroom. I was invited to spend the Halloween party portion of the day with the children. Each child was dressed in a costume and permitted to interact and play. They listened to music, played games, ate Halloween treats and bagged lunches, and showed off their costumes to other classes of children. I interviewed five children who identified themselves as Potter fans to Mrs. Piercey, their classroom teacher. Four of the five children wore a Harry Potter costume at the school event. During some of the unstructured "free" Halloween party time, I accompanied the five children to the neighbouring classroom that was a science lab. Occasionally, a teacher would enter one of the two open doors to the room but, for the most part, the room provided enough space for me to comfortably interview five children. It also provided ample room for us to "play," especially when they demonstrated their physical spells. But it was also quiet and private enough for the children to feel they could discuss Harry Potter fully and not be interrupted.

Figure 6.1: Boys dressed as Harry Potter and girls dressed as Hermione at a St. John's Elementary School, October 31, 2005.

6.2.2   Potter Parties

Many kids also commented on wearing their Harry Potter costumes with friends during planned Harry Potter house parties known as Potter Parties. Potter Parties are a part of the Harry Potter lexicon which made its way into popular mainstream culture which include such terms as Pottermania, Potterheads, Potterites; Pottermore (Chapter Five); P-Day (Chapter Five); Anti-Potter Movement (Chapter Five); Quidditch, Kidditch and Wizard Rock (Chapter Seven); Pottercast and The Potter Wars (Chapter Eight)]. Harry Potter fans often assemble Potter parties where they either read the books together, watch the movies together, dress up as the characters, eat Potter inspired food, and play Potter games. Party planners will sometimes arrange a Sorting Hat ceremony as

demonstrated in Chapter Five. Trivia contests are also very popular, as are traditional

games that are adapted to accommodate the Harry Potter universe, such as Tag (by using

the character of "Snape" instead of "It").

Potter Parties sprung up everywhere and ranged from special events like birthday

parties to causal or random parties in their own right – a Potter themed birthday party

versus a party only to celebrate Harry Potter. In fact, Potter "birthday" Parties have

become so popular that Scholastic also capitalized on the phenomenon and offered

parents and adults a step-by-step guide to planning a Potter Party. Inside Scholastic's

"Harry Potter's Birthday Kit – Event Planner" one can find reproducible invitations and

announcements; reproducible puzzles and word finds; and suggestions for decorations,

refreshments, and activities.

Sixteen "and a half" year-old Janey ["I'm sixteen and a half, throw that half in

there" (2008)] who became a reader at the age of nine, explains that her fan group's

parties were not based on any other purpose other than for the sake of celebrating Harry

Potter, sometimes following the group's completion of a particular Potter novel. They did

not use or purchase an idea book like Scholastic's above, rather all their ideas for events

and activities were created and imagined on their own. I interviewed Janey at the

Quidditch match on April 20, 2008 and also communicated with her via email.

Janey:	We actually used to have Harry Potter parties when we were younger.
Contessa:	Oh really?
Janey:	Yeah, we were kind of nerdy.
Contessa:	Birthday or a special event?
Janey:	Just random parties. We'd decide, "Yeah, we finished this novel, let's have a party." And we'd all dress up as a character, and make French fries in the shape of a scar, weird.
Contessa:	What else would you do?

Janey:	We actually sit down and watch the movies. We'd have Harry Potter marathons where we'd watch the movies, and we'd take a break and play the stone game. I can't remember how to play. I still have it. But, we used to do that and curl up in our Harry Potter blankets. (2008)

Janey describes several Potter Party play activities such as making a lightning bolt scar out of French fries. She held and attended many Potter-Parties with her friends, and explains the dynamics of her group, "The parties were held at various locations. Generally at one house or another, always belonging to a 'member of the group'. There was at least 5-6 of us in the group, all quite close growing up. But yes, we were all harry potter fans, and remain so today :3" (Email correspondence 2008).

One of the first and fundamental criteria for Potter Party attendance is costuming. With a wealth of literary and visual images to choose from, friends wear a costume of the character of their choice, often homemade as Janey describes: "Our costumes were considerably make-shift. I think one of us managed to actually get a sorting hat, and then we had our black robes. One of my friend's moms actually knit us the scarfs. That was wonderful :3 Ahh" (Email correspondence 2008).

When fans are dressed in costumes, role-playing is a good companion to Potter-Parties.

> We also used to role-play as the Harry Potter gang. Given that we were all girls, we took turns dressing up as the male characters, mainly because there were more male than female. We would reenact the movies, or the books (basically the same thing as I assume you know : P) and on times we would create our own situations where something evil would take over the castle or something would happen to one of us. I must say, looking back on it, for kids, we were considerably creative ^^ (Email correspondence 2008)

Activities at these parties range from planned games, marathon movie watching, book readings to impromptu games. Some games were based upon manufactured popular

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culture items such as Harry Potter trading or playing cards, stones and chips. Janey explains:

> The activities that took place during these parties were considerably random, and most made up on the spot. I remember at the time there were various games involving Harry Potter stones or chips, if I may, that had instruction sheets for games and other things. I believe there was also the trading card game we used to play. I remember being horribly excited when I received or rather found my favorite card, which happened to be a holographic Hagrid card ^.^ (Email correspondence 2008)

> Book readings or movie marathons also often took place. The release of eight

movies over the period of ten years (2001-2011) also meant that people who attended one

movie together, often attended the next films together as an annual tradition:

> We all too often watched the movies. We had marathons of them until the last one was released, actually. I look at the release of the new movies as a chance for us, now grown up a fair bit, to get together again and laugh about the old times, and kind of bring out our inner child. Either way, movies were a huge thing. I suppose depend upon where we were with our role-playing or moods, depended on the movies we decided to watch. (Email correspondence 2008)

What is significant about Janey's statement above is that by the age of sixteen, she had

already experienced repetitive, traditional activities involving popular culture (movie

viewings and marathons) that then evolved into opportunities for reunion, recalling fond

memories and laughing "about the old times" (2008).

6.2.3   Unsupervised, Free Fan-Play

Without doubt, a child does not often need a special occasion to wear a costume.

Many children wear costumes for fan-play, imitation, role-playing or simple pleasure.

Mrs. Sherry Turner explains that her son wore his costume every day during the summer,

which gave him a neighbourhood identity. Although sporting an almost entirely

homemade costume, Nicholas came to be known locally by his neighbours as Harry

Potter. As Mrs. Turner explains: "Oh yeah, everybody on the street knows… The

neighbours, I'll be out looking for him and, where'd he go, and they say, 'Harry Potter's

up at the top of the street,' or 'Harry Potter's over in this one's back yard.' Right? And I

don't know if they even know his name" (2005). One teenager even described wearing

his Harry Potter costume daily, just for the fun of it. In this interview excerpt from 2007,

Zack (Figure 6.2), then nineteen years old and working at the Walmart store in

Stephenville, describes how he used to dress up as Harry Potter while he was in high

school.

Contessa:	Did you ever dress up as any Harry Potter characters?
Zack:	I dressed up as Harry Potter once.
Contessa:	Did you?
Zack:	Yeah (laughing).
Contessa:	When? Where did you go and what did you do?
Zack:	That was back, like, in Grade Eleven when I was in high school. I graduated in 2005.
Contessa:	Okay. Was it for Halloween or was it…?
Zack:	It was for Halloween, yeah…
Contessa:	What did you do?
Zack:	…but half the time I dressed up for fun.
Contessa:	Okay, so you would dress up like him sometimes just…
Zack:	Yeah, I used to act, I used to act like him a little bit. It was fun.
Contessa:	And then, did you put the scar on and all that?
Zack:	The scar on, yeah, my hair was a little bit longer too, so I looked a little bit like him. (2007)

Figure 6.2: Teenage Potter fan and Walmart employee, Zack, on day of Book Seven release July 2007.

For Zack, the costume allowed him to "act" like Harry Potter, "I used to act like him a bit. It was fun" (2007). Costumes often give children and teenagers material objects that help express their fandom publicly and/or privately in play. They also get to explore roles they would not otherwise get to experience. The majority of children wore their costumes during free fan-play or role-playing by themselves or with friends or siblings. In fact, I observed that (at least for those in Newfoundland) there is much more informal, unsupervised free fan-play involving the wearing of costumes than at public events.

Interviewing kids while they are in costume was beneficial to my research for a number of reasons. Not only did I take the opportunity to photograph the costumes, but I was also able to ask specific questions about what they were wearing, how the costume came together, how it was made, and who helped make it. Their answers revealed some significant observations. The majority of kids I spoke with demonstrated that their costumes were composed of homemade elements, or a mixed array of homemade and manufactured materials. Although William now owns a Harry Potter costume composed of both official merchandise (glasses, robe, tie and wand) and everyday items (see Figure 6.3); he explains that before he owned his official cloak, during play he combined a store-bought wand and a homemade cloak made out of a blanket:

William:	I made a cloak before. I went around with my wand, because I have a toy wand.
Contessa:	Okay. Did you buy the wand?
William:	Ahm, yeah.
Contessa:	But you made your cloak? What did you make your cloak out of?
William:	A blanket or something.
Contessa:	Okay.
William:	And I just tied it around my neck and went around. (2010)

The extent of a child's costume is usually dependent upon the fan-play form or event. On the playground, in a moment's, a cloak can be made out of a towel and a stick turned into a wand. However, special events require special costumes and preparation. Most importantly, for many kids, costume preparation becomes a family affair.

Figure 6.3: Nine-year-old William in one of his Harry Potter costumes.

6.3   Making Costumes: From Homemade to Manufactured

While it would be wrong to suggest that children are not receptive to the lure of advertised products, they do not always use products as prescribed. Instead, children often combine elements of merchandise with homemade "found" items. Amber as Hermione (Figure 6.4), wore a store-bought robe only, and said that she found her wand, a stick, out on the ground – literally a "found" object. "I'm wearing the robe and I have the wand. I found it outside on the ground, and don't know where it came from. And it's a bit broken right there" (Amber 2005). She states that she also wore her hair long and loose to imitate Hermione Granger. Amber isn't the only fan I interviewed who made their own homemade wand, teenage Zack also described how he made his wand, "I found

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like a perfectly straightened stick and I just painted it black *just like his* [Harry Potter]"
(2007). As twenty-year-old Sienna recalls "When we were younger my friends and I
would play Hogwarts with sticks for wands" (2008). Wands crafted from sticks are good
examples of what Simon J. Bronner classifies as "inventive or manipulative objects" –
children's folk objects made from natural resources that are reworked or reshaped
(Bronner 1999, 268).
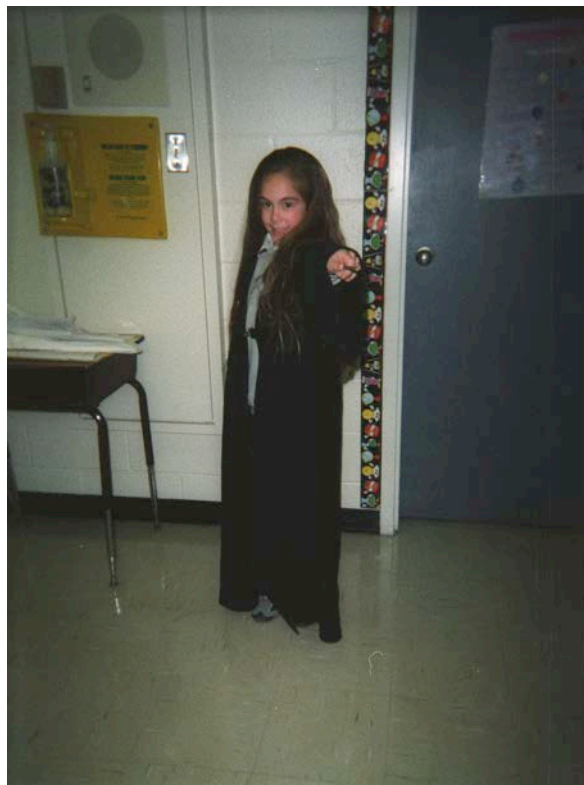
Figure 6.4: Eight-year-old Amber, a Potter fan, in her Hermione costume.

Wands are critical devices for enjoying imaginative fan-play with power, as many
of my interviews reveal. So, it is not surprising that children will go from finding one on
the ground to suit their immediate needs, to making special effort, time and care to either
craft or order a particular wand. Fans have been particularly drawn to the wand, and as a
result, manufactured wands have also sold well. But, while there is a market for those

fans who want the manufactured official wands, Amber and Zack illustrate that kids in

the middle of play (or in the flow of play) will quickly adapt and use whatever is

immediate and available (when outdoors, often a stick or a twig) as a play item.

Scott (Figure 6.5) as Harry Potter, had a store-bought robe, glasses and wand, but

also wore an invisibility cloak that his mother elaborately made for him, as well as a

cosmetically applied scar.

Scott:	I like the robes and that. I have one of the robes and my mom made an invisibility cloak.
Contessa:	And you're wearing glasses too.
Scott:	I bought that with the robe and I bought the wand with them too. (2005)

Figure 6.5: Eight-year-old Scott, a Potter fan, dressed as Harry Potter.

As Harry Potter, Lucas's manufactured costume pieces included an official

Hogwarts School robe and glasses merchandise (Figure 6.6). He made an original wand

and painted on his own lightning bolt scar.

Figure 6.6: Eight-year-old Lucas, Potter fan, dressed as Harry Potter.

The following quote, when Lucas is interrupted by Lyndsay, illustrates another

important feature of costuming – the imagination. It is not so important to children that

they have an official Harry Potter wand, but what is really important is the specific

imaginary feather inside it. Lyndsay also provides a description of her Hermione costume.

Lucas:	I really like the robes.
Contessa:	So is this a homemade robe, or a bought robe?
Lucas:	It's a bought robe. I just like the symbol, yeah, and…
Contessa:	With your glasses?
Lucas:	Yeah.
Contessa:	You bought those?
Lucas:	Yeah.
Lyndsay:	I fixed them for him because he broke them.
Lucas:	I made this wand.
Contessa:	Did you make it yourself?
Lucas:	Yeah, out of wood. A dog tried to chew it up. Evil!

Contessa:	And you have the glasses, the robe…
Lucas:	Yeah.
Contessa:	…and the wand
Lyndsay:	[Interrupting] What kind of feather do you have in here? Do you have a feather or hair in it?
Lucas:	You told me today.
Lyndsay:	Yeah, I forget what you…she has a Veela hair, what do you have?
Lucas:	Oh, I don't know.
Contessa:	Is it a hair of the phoenix?
Lucas:	No, I think she has it.
Lyndsay:	I have the phoenix, cause you can get all kinds, so…
Contessa:	So, let's, you tell me about what you're wearing today.
Lyndsay:	Ahm, I don't know where I got this [holding out her robe] because my Aunt Krista wore it and so did my sister, and so did my mom. So, I don't really know where it came from. And I got my scarf because my uncle, I think he went to Brother Rice or some other school where this was part of their uniform, so he let me borrow it.
Contessa:	Oh, cool, it looks just like the colours of Gryffindor right?
Lyndsay:	It is. (2005)
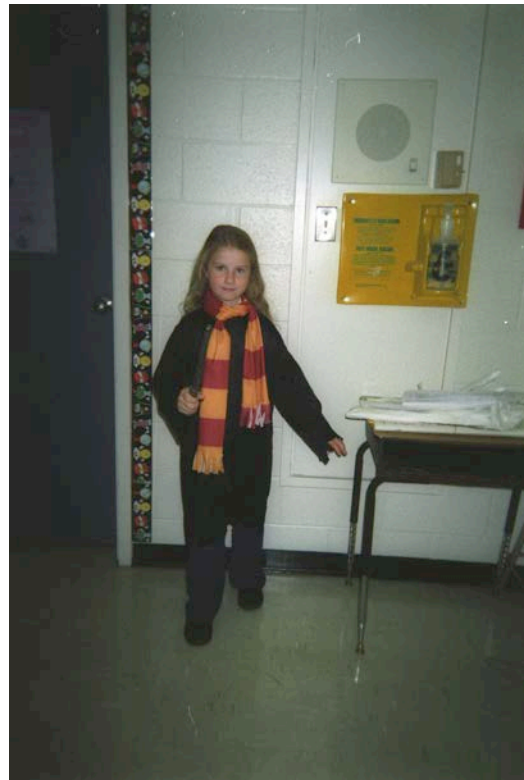
Figure 6.7: Eight-year-old Lyndsay, a Potter fan, dressed as Hermione.

With Lyndsay's costume description, we see two things happening (Figure 6.7). First, out of the whole group Lyndsay was the self-proclaimed "biggest fan" having read the books many times over, and taking her fandom of Harry Potter very seriously. However, she explains that her dress was handed down to her from her mom, aunt and sister. As well, her uncle also passed the scarf on to her. So here we have clothing being passed on in a traditional, vernacular manner, by vertical transmission from one generation to the next, in order to meet a particular costume ideal. Lyndsay, as the biggest fan, had no problem wearing "unofficial" homemade costume pieces; rather it is her attention to detail and knowledge of the Harry Potter universe with which she is most concerned. For example, besides actively correcting the other children on their Potter facts, she also carried a voice of authority throughout the group interview. As well, although her costume was largely homemade, Lyndsay's wand was not. Her comments also demonstrate an element of pride regarding how she acquired her store-bought wand, like a badge of honour for staying up late and wading through the crowds at midnight in order to get a copy of the first released books: "I got that at Chapters when the new one, when the new book was coming out. I was one of the first ones there to get the new book at midnight, except I went to Coles instead" (2005). Janey's quote likewise illustrates her costume accomplishment as a source of pride:

> Contessa: Did you ever make anything?
> Janey: Oh, yeah. We home made our costumes. We never store-bought anything, except for maybe our glasses, for role-playing Harry Potter. …I, I always take more pride in the homemade stuff than store-bought because, you know, you feel special making stuff like that. (2008)

From homemade wands, costumes and scars, the Harry Potter universe provides ample opportunities for children to use their creativity and be proud of themselves for doing so.

6.4   Children's Costuming, Family Participation and Intergenerational Culture

Not only do youth fans themselves make their own costumes, but they also engage their families for help. Eight-year-old Scott was very proud of the invisibility robe his mother made for him, "I have one of the robes and my mom made an invisibility cloak" (2005). In the following interview excerpt with Molly and Madeline (Figure 6.8), the girls explain how their costumes were made with the help of their family members, and how their costumes were made by combining homemade and manufactured items (what Molly refers to as "mish-mashed") (2011).

Figure 6.8: Madeline and Molly dressed in costume at the midnight movie showing of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2*.

Molly:	My grandma made my little grey skirt and she also made my robes, cause they're not, you can see a patch that's there? And my mom knit the sweater. And the rest of it, I bought.
Contessa:	Oh wow. So you really combined a lot of homemade stuff with bought stuff.
Molly:	Yeah. Yeah.
Contessa:	So do you need a homemade costume, or a bought costume to be a Harry Potter fan or can you have them mixed up?
Molly:	No, not really, cause mine's sort of mish-mashed – like my shirt is bought and my tie is bought. And, like, everything else is bought, but, uh, when I was little for, I think it was for the seventh book launch, my grandma made me the stuff, because we were in Saskatoon, with family, and we went to the book launch and we all got dressed up. It was really cool. It was lots of fun.
Contessa:	Tell me about your costume?
Madeline:	Well, I got my robes from my cousin. And [Molly's] mother extended them for me and made them bigger so they fit. [Laughing] I got my shirt from my mother's closet, and my tie from eBay, and the rest of the stuff I just bought. And I have my wand that my friend bought me from Florida from Harry Potter World. (2011)

Molly's mother further explains her involvement and family participation in costume making.

I'm a knitter so I had a pattern, I could just put the stripes in it, kind of thing. And my mother, who made the skirt and the robes, I'm not certain if she had a pattern or not, but she's a seamstress, she was just able to make them. And she made them for my sister and my nephew, and kind of, she made lots. She made an owl costume for my infant nephew for the last book launch. (Collins 2011)

Molly's family members were also involved by dressing up and attending a book launch in Saskatoon, where even the infant child of the family appeared in costume as Harry's owl, Hedwig. The Collins family illustrates how many families are involved with their children and supportive of them on numerous levels of their popular culture experiences including reading with them, making costumes with them, and attending events with them. Mrs. Collins also supported her daughter by wearing her Harry Potter "Snape" costume at the movie launch. She first showed up wearing a t-shirt revealing

one of the characters' true motives and agenda, that read "Snape is Innocent" (see Figure 6.9).

Figure 6.9: Mrs. Collins wearing her "Snape is Innocent" shirt at the movie launch of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2*.

However, before the doors to the theatre opened, Mrs. Collins had changed into her full Snape costume, "I made myself a Snape costume for the last book launch. I have it with me, but I haven't put it on yet – long black robes!" (Collins 2011). She wore her costume proudly and eagerly agreed to pose for photos with the girls (Figure 6.10). Without doubt, Mrs. Collins is demonstrating her own interest in the Harry Potter phenomenon; however whatever her motives, she is supportive of her child's interests and decision to participate in this form of popular culture literary phenomenon. In the excerpt below, Mrs. Collins explains how she and her daughter developed a connection through their Potter fan participation:

She had always been a reader and I had always read to her, but I think it made a connection with us, like it's always been our thing, to do Harry Potter, all of the Harry Potter stuff, it's been our thing; the searching on the eBay, the crazy licence plate thing that I have, that says "Hogwarts Faculty" on it, and you know that sort of stuff; so it's always been our kind of thing. (2011)

Figure 6.10: Mrs. Collins poses as Snape with her daughter and her daughter's friend at the midnight showing of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2* in 2011.

The Collins family is also a good illustration of an emerging entertainment culture that exists across generations, such as rock music and family movies. "This intergenerational culture is a growing phenomenon in the entertainment industry, where shows like *The Simpsons* and Disney's *Aladdin*, which appeal equally to adults and kids, are becoming more and more the order of the day" (McDonnell 1994, 42). The

separation of adult culture from child culture (as identified by Aries) is changing and reversing back to a play culture that blurs the boundaries between adult and child play: "These are trends, but they may also be cultural signals that the historic trend identified by Philippe Aries is reversing itself; the separate realms of adulthood and childhood, which became markedly distinct over the past several centuries, may be blending back into one another" (McDonnell 1994, 42). In many ways, argues McDonnell, this blurring of lines between adult and child culture, is similar to what was experienced in the Middle Ages (playing games together, not separating children from adults for work or play, and not being worried about shielding children from adult concerns like sex) (1994, 42). Most importantly, as Jenkins points out, because the Harry Potter phenomenon involves both adult fans and child fans, a new space for conversation across generations has begun to emerge, and a new form of teaching (child-to-parent, rather than parent-to-child) has developed (2006a, 205).

Because I interviewed seven-year-old Nicholas in his family home with his family present, I was able to get a better impression of costume making in terms of family contribution. Only Nicholas's signature Harry Potter glasses were purchased, while everything else was handmade by this parents. This being his third Halloween dressing up as Harry Potter, Nicholas owns two homemade robes – a blue Hogwarts School robe which his mother said he had long outgrown (Figure 6.11) and a Quidditch robe both made by his mother (Figure 6.12). His mother also made a Hogwarts scarf. "He's [indicating her husband] in the wand department and I'm in the costume department," laughed Mrs. Turner (2005). To make the crest of the robe, Nicholas and his mother used

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a Hogwarts school magnet that came in a package of Harry Potter Valentines. As for the

Quidditch robes, mother, brother and aunt contributed in some fashion.

Nicholas: She just copied this, and put red material; then Ned told her how to
              do the gold material around the [edge.]
Contessa: How did you know how to make it Mom?
Mrs. Turner: You know this red material, my aunt, she had this bag of it given to
              her, so I said, "That'd make a good Quidditch robe. Just the right
              material for this." (2005)

Figure 6.11: Eight-year-old Nicholas wearing bathrobe as Hogwarts robe. He holds his handcrafted wand made by his father.

Figure 6.12: Eight-year-old Nicholas wearing his Quidditch robe and scarf which were handmade by his mother. His aunt provided the robe material; his older brother provided the details on design; his mother sewed the robes; his sister drew on the scar; and his father made the wand.

As well, Nicholas's twin sister Annie (who often participates in Potter fantasy fan-play with her brother) drew his scar on his forehead with a lip-liner pencil, and his father made a contribution by making a finely crafted wand from woodwork (see Figure 6.13). "I'm after making so many now, I don't need a picture" said Mr. Jim Turner (2005). This wasn't the first handcrafted toy inspired by popular culture that Mr. Turner made for his children; some years ago he managed to carve all but one of the characters from the *Toy Story* movie made by Pixar/Disney in 1995: "[Christopher], the oldest one, *Toy Story* was it? I made all the characters of *Toy Story* out of wood. The only one left is the pig" (Jim

Turner 2005). The act of reproducing popular culture toys using woodcarving techniques had become a family tradition in the Turner household.

Figure 6.13: Nicholas and his twin sister Annie often engage in Potter fantasy fan-play and dress-up wearing their homemade costumes. In this photo, Nicholas is seen waving the wand that his father carved for him out of wood.

Investigating how this family came together, each contributing to the production of Nicholas's Harry Potter costume, reveals their unique, local family dynamic and support system. Teenage Zack also described how his grandmother, a seamstress and local textile business operator, made his costume when he was in high school.

Contessa: Did you buy or make your own costume?
Zack: My grandmother made the costume.
Contessa: Really?

Zack:	Yeah, she lives over in, she actually owns the Drapery Shop here in town, so she's really good with that stuff. She made the robe, and she actually, well, she had, made me the glasses too, right? Because she, like, she had, my grandfather had a pair of eyeglasses like his [Harry Potter]. So I just took the lenses out of it 'cause, I mean, he [grandfather] was blind, and I don't need glasses. So I took the lenses out of it. …Yeah, I had the scarf – yellow and, yellow and red, ah, burgundy.
Contessa:	Did she make that too?
Zack:	She made that too, yeah. I don't have it anymore though; I sold it. (2007)

In Zack's description we learn that both his grandmother and grandfather made a significant contribution to his costume creation.

6.5   Costumes and Character Identification: Physical Appearance and Personality Traits

Some children decide to fashion and wear a particular Harry Potter costume because they believe they resemble that character in physical appearance. They therefore identify with the literary character or movie actor who plays that character. Other children opt to model their costume after a character that they feel more emotionally or psychologically connected to. For children who identify with the physical appearance of the movie actors who play the Harry Potter characters, it is often a source of pride. Many children commented on their own likeness to the Harry Potter movie cast members; Zack, for example, said: "The scar on, yeah; my hair was a little bit longer too, so I looked a little bit like him" (2007). Stephen even told me that many people have told him that he is like Harry and looks like Harry:

| Contessa: | What do you like about Harry and Rowling's books? |
| Stephen: | Well, a lot of people say I'm a lot like him, a lot like Harry Potter, I used to look like him, yeah. |

> Contessa: You kind of look like him, yeah. You have the round glasses for sure. (2008)

When asked how he is like Harry Potter, seven-year-old Nicholas simply replies:

> Contessa: How are you like Harry?
> Nicholas: I look like him. (2005)

Costumes also allow children to "play experience" and identify with their favorite character. Susan Murry, who studied teenage girls' fandom of the television series, *My So Called Life* in the 1990s, argues that many female teenage fans show their identification with the show's lead character by dressing like the character, "…many of these articulate their desire to show their affinity with Angela by dressing, looking, or acting like her, yet they also want to stand out to their peers and prove their own individuality" (1999). In this way the act of dyeing one's hair red is a symbolic system signifying female bonding (Murry 1999, 229). As Molly, who believes her hair is similar to Hermione's hair, states, "I can do the hair quite well" and later "And there's no work for the hair" (2011). Costumes are an important symbol of unity and solidarity in children – it unites them in a shared, common interest. As fans, they form affiliations with other fans thereby occupying a more visible and therefore more powerful place in society (Murry 1999, 229). In this way, fan-play becomes a form of power, giving a sense of unity with a group of people who share in their common love.

Not only do many girls who dress as Hermione do so because they identify with her physical appearance, but because they also identify with and/or admire Hermione's intelligence and studious qualities. The following interview illustrates this:

> Contessa: You both said that you like Hermione the best. Why do you like Hermione the most?

Amber:	Uhm, cause she's a girl and she knows a lot. And, I like her. She's my favorite character.
Contessa:	Why do you like Hermione best?
Lyndsay:	She's kind of like me, because I'm a real book worm so… like all I do is read. (2005)

Here Amber likes and identifies with Hermione's intelligence, as does Lyndsay who identifies with Hermione's book reading ability and compares it to her own. Violet also identifies with Hermione's intellect, "I like her because she's smart and just funny" (Violet 2007). When asked to identify her favourite character, Madison responds by citing Hermione for reasons of her intelligence.

> I am torn between Harry and Hermione because I just like Harry because he's, you know, the focus of all of this. But Hermione's pretty smart, like you know, you're always like, Why are you always not listening to her? It's been like five books or seven books or whatever? And you guys still aren't listening to her? Get a clue, you know, she pretty much has good advice. (2007)

In this quote, Madison identifies with both Hermione's intelligence, as well as how others have ignored Hermione's wisdom, good advice, intelligent insight and suggestions. This parallels the frustration Madison experienced when she attempted to plan ahead and buy her book on its midnight release on July 21, 2007. Madison is annoyed with the ineptitude of the adult employees and their lack of understanding of the book's launch and its importance. This is a fine illustration of the child/adult divide.

In order to get the book at both the earliest possible time and at the cheapest cost, Madison called stores like Dominion and Walmart before the launch date, ahead of time. She was particularly annoyed when employees failed to know any book launch details including when it would be available, and the cost. After a failed attempt to communicate effectively with a Dominion employee, Madison decided to take her business elsewhere. In a small rural town, it was a mad dash to get the book.

I called Walmart and I called Dominion. Dominion only has like twelve copies in. I don't understand that. I called last night and I'm like, "So, are you getting any Harry Potter books in," and she said [mimicking in a high voice], "We don't even know." I was like, "YOU DON'T KNOW?!" She was like [mimicking in high voice], "I'll check. We don't really know," I was like, "Are you the only two people in the store?" I was like "Ask someone!" And she said, [mimicking in a high voice] "Maybe, you'll have to call again at 10 o'clock." Well, I'm like, "Well, how much is the book going to cost?" She's like, [mimicking in high voice] "You'll have to call at 10 o'clock." I was like, "What's wrong with you people, have you not heard of Harry Potter? Do you not know that it's going to sell like six million copies in the first day? What's wrong with you people?!" (2007)

I believe that Madison's experience and passionate response to her Dominion encounter is an excellent example of the child-adult divide, and resulting misunderstandings, discussed in Chapter Three.

For Molly, who dressed as Hermione at the midnight viewing of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2*, her favourite character is Hermione for both her physical similarities (her signature long, wildish hair) and her intellect. For Madeline, it is the brave character of Ginny Weasley who inspires her the most.

Contessa:	Who is your favourite character?
Madeline:	Ginny. Ginny Weasley. I'm actually, I have her wand. And for Halloween I was her. So, I was pretty, pretty into Ginny.
Molly:	And my favourite's Hermione because that's who I am, and last Halloween I was Hermione and we went together, and we did the coordinated costumes.
Contessa:	So, what is it that you like about Hermione?
Molly:	Ah, I can do the hair quite well.
Madeline:	[Laughs]
Molly:	And there's no work for the hair. She's just this smart know-it-all brainiac like me. [Laughs]
Madeline:	[Laughs]
Contessa:	So you admire her intelligence?
Molly:	Yeah, yeah. And I don't know, I just, she's the only girl in the trio, so, I don't know, but I like Ginny too. She would be like my second favourite character probably.
Contessa:	And you like the girls more than the guys?
Molly:	Well, no…

Madeline:	Well, I like Ginny just because of her personality, and how she's really brave, and just like that. But, I don't know, the guys are pretty funny. I love Neville.
Molly:	I love Neville.
Madeline:	I just love Neville.
Molly:	Neville's amazing. (2011)

Many children and teens I interviewed, like those above, explained that they were either attracted to a character's heroism and intelligence. However, some others claimed to be attracted to a character's humour. Harry's sidekick Ron Weasley tended to be a favourite amongst kids who favour humour, as Benjamin explains:

| Contessa: | Who is your favourite character? |
| Benjamin: | I would have to say Ron Weasley because he's really funny, and he's comic relief, in pretty much every book. So you can always count on him for something funny to say. (2007) |

Like Benjamin who preferred Ron as his favourite character, seven-year-old Nicholas explains that it is Ron's humorous antics that appeal to him:

| Contessa: | What do you like about Ron? |
| Nicholas: | He's scared of bugs. (2005) |

However, for some teenage girls, Ron is also a favourite character because he is attractive to them, as Pippa explains, "I like Ron; he's cute" (2007). While for other fans, it is the relationship between Ron and Hermione that make their characters so enjoyable. In the interview excerpt below, Molly explains how she enjoys the imbalance between Hermione and Ron – Hermione is intelligent and Ron is sometimes dumb, but he is also foolish and humorous which Molly appreciates. It is also important to note how Molly and Madeline respond to my question in a playful performance, by using their voices to mimic Ron and his mother when she chastises him for his foolish or irresponsible behaviour.

Molly: And I like Ron because he's like of, cause, I like Ron and Hermione cause, like, Ron's kind of stupid, Hermione's really smart and so he's always saying really weird stuff and he's always cracking jokes and…

Madeline: "Ronald!" [In an imitative voice; extreme jump in high pitch when saying his name]

Molly: [Responding to Madeline's imitative] Yeah, and Ron [sic] supposed to go like, "Ronald Weasley!" (2011)

By 2011 when the final book of the seven-book series was released, there were more diverse characters for kids to read about and identify with, like brave Ginny Weasley and fool-turned-hero Neville Longbottom. William explains why he likes Neville:

William: And how like, Neville, was like, so like, he wouldn't stand up for himself or anything, and then, like, in *The Deathly Hallows* he ran up to Voldemort, of all people, and it killed Nagini, his snake.

Contessa: Yeah.

William: Like, that was just like blowing my mind.

Contessa: Wow. (2010)

Ambiguous characters that were once depicted as and thought to be "evil" but are ultimately revealed to be "good," or at least something in-between good and evil (such as Snape and Draco Malfoy) have also become favourites since all the books have been released and their stories told. For thirteen-year-old Naomi, her favourite character is Draco because there's "Just something about him I really like" (2011). While Draco Malfoy is Harry Potter's child nemesis for the majority of the books, Draco's intentions prove to be honourable and forgivable in the end. Naomi explains how her character preferences changed from "good guy" to "bad guy" back to "good guy" and then to "bad guy" again.

Like first, when I first watched them, my favourites were Harry, Ron, Hermione; and then I liked Draco for like, five months, and then I went back into the whole "good guy" thing; now, for the past couple of months, I've really been into the

whole Draco thing again. Like it's always gone back to Draco. (2011)

Whether Harry or Hermione, Ginny or Neville, Snape or Malfoy, this chapter illustrates

that kids usually favour and identify with fictional characters based on that character's

moral, physical, mental or comic attributes. As a result, children and teens often dress up

as their favourite character, or choose to write stories that involve their favourite character

or characters. Kids who write about or draw their favourite characters and kids who write

fan fiction are discussed in detail in Chapter Nine.

6.6   Fantasy

6.6.1   Ordinary Objects Transformed

Not only are costumes created, but with a little imagination, everyday household

items become play toys and imaginary objects. Ellen Seiter writes that children "are

creative in their appropriation of consumer goods and media, and the meanings they make

with these materials are not necessarily and not completely in line with a materialist

ethos" (1993, 10). Here, corporations take a backseat to the child's imagination. For

example, when playing Harry Potter dress-up with his friend Bradley, Nicholas adapts to

their local surroundings by using a bathrobe for Bradley's Hogwarts robe, and blankets

for invisibility cloaks (2005). (Nicholas' co-optation and use of everyday objects in the

game of Quidditch is discussed in Chapter Eight.) And for three-year-old Randy, his

parents' clothing (mother's black outdoor jacket), toy eyeglasses (taken from his play

doctor's kit), his mom's eye-liner (used for the lightning bolt scar), and chopstick are

more than enough to play dress-up and act as Harry Potter (Figure 6.14) (Harte 2013). In

fact, none of Randy's costume pieces he wore playing that day were official Potter

merchandise illustrating once again how children do not need official merchandise, or even toy merchandise, to enjoy their fan-play.

Figure 6.14: This three-year-old Harry Potter fan plays dress-up by using everyday items found around the house.

Many of the children I spoke with participate in some form of Harry Potter imitation, performance, role-play and/or mimicry. For example, in Nicholas' fantasy play, his bed becomes the Weasley's flying car, the living-room couch becomes the Hogwarts Express, and the Turner family stairwell becomes Hogwarts grand moving staircase. Ordinary, everyday items become extraordinary magical objects, providing the props for kids to play with. Their everyday, home environment becomes a stage where the children act out scenes from the movies as well as creating their own scenarios. For many children, the Harry Potter series becomes a springboard for his/her own particular

interests and creations. Like fan fiction, such dramatic Potter fan-play illustrates that children "… have forged their own paths through the mire, finding ways to link their experiences with the characters and situations from the series in a format that allows them to also connect with other readers of *Harry Potter*" (Bond and Michelson 2003, 113).

6.6.2   Imaginative Fan-Play: Role-Playing, Acting and Make Believe

Scott explains one of his particular fan-play make-believe scenarios: "Me and my friend who lives across the street, we use my cloaks, my robes, and we put them on and pretend we're chasing after Dementors and werewolves, and pretend we're using spells on them…. We just make it up in our own mind" (2005).

Scott even refers to his Harry Potter creations as a "play":

Scott:	When I'm at home I pretend I'm Harry Potter and just make up a little play.
Contessa:	So you create your own little story?
Scott:	Yes.
Contessa:	Do you write it down or act it out?
Scott:	Act it out.
Contessa:	What do you act out?
Scott:	I act out like when Harry Potter is learning Defense Against the Dark Arts, broomstick practice or Quidditch, or doing something like that. (2005)

Amber also describes how she and her friends play Harry Potter. "My friends, we play Harry Potter, and one of my friends [is] are Professor McGonagall, and I'm Hermione, and she's asking me questions to see if I know them. And I really like doing that. It's fun" (2005). This is not just the activity of the child; teenagers alike eagerly enjoy and participate in role-playing, costuming and acting, as Ariel explains, "We were in Grade Nine and we got in groups of three or four and had to act out a part of the book. It was the first book" (2008).

Throughout the course of my research I have come to learn that, in fantasy fan-play, ownership of official merchandise is not imperative. While manufactured goods and toys may enhance the fan-play experience for some children, for the children who use bath towels, robes and blankets for Hogwarts cloaks, it is simply not necessary. For example, during Halloween 2005, many of the jellybeans that were given out as Halloween treats were said to be "Bertie Bott's Every Flavor Beans" or "Harry Potter" jellybeans; and many of the school kids were eating them and playing with them in this manner. When I left Nicholas's home, for example, he and his parents filled my pockets with packets of these *Jelly Belly* jellybeans. Even though both beans are made by the same company, these "unofficial" Jelly Belly jellybeans are not the official Bertie Bott's Every Flavor Beans product. Bertie Bott's is a USA product available in Canada and made by Jelly Belly Candy Company, but the brand is sold under license to Frankfurt Candy and Chocolate Company, which bought Cap Candy, a division of Hasbro. The kids were eating and playing with regular *Jelly Belly* jellybeans because they are cheaper and more readily available. Beside the packaging, the only difference between the regular *Jelly Belly* beans and the Bertie Bott's is the presence and absence of "disgusting" flavours such as black pepper, sardine, booger, grass, vomit, earwax, dirt, earthworm and rotten egg. Through fantasy fan-play children are able to imagine their regular jellybeans as Bertie Bott's Every Flavor Beans, even without those memorable flavours.

However, when children do get their hands on an official package of Bertie Bott's Every Flavor Beans with their gross-out flavours, there is often much temptation to use the nasty beans as a practical joke, especially on family members. In the following interview except Nicholas and his mother explain how Nicholas tried to fool his

grandfather by giving him a black pepper flavoured bean.

Mr. Tucker:	Tell her about the jellybeans.
Mrs. Tucker:	Oh, yes.
Nicholas:	Oh, yeah, I ate them and threw them up.
Contessa:	Because you ate so many?
Nicholas:	No, it's the flavour.
Contessa:	Were some of them yucky?
Nicholas:	There's booger, spinach, dirt, earth-worm.
Stephanie:	Are these the ones? (handing him a package of jelly beans.)
Nicholas:	No, they're Jelly Bellys.
Contessa:	What are they called?
Nicholas:	Bertie Bott's Every Flavor Beans. …Spinach, booger, earth-worm, dirt, raspberry, butterscotch, sardine.
Mrs. Tucker:	He gave some to his poppy, and his poppy didn't know. Remember?
Contessa:	And did he get a yucky one?
Nicholas:	I gave him black pepper, but he don't care. It's the hottest kind. … The back of the box, it shows all the flavours. (2005)

When using their imaginations to engage in fantasy fan-play, children demonstrate their power to understand, interpret and appropriate. Rather than passively purchasing "official items" and playing with them in a dictated fashion, children selectively manipulate, devise and create their own Harry Potter world. For example, Nicholas's mother describes Nicholas's magic potions.

Mrs. Turner:	He does experiments. Concoctions, toothpaste, water, shampoo. Harry Potter potions.
Contessa:	Tell me about your Harry Potter potions?
Nicholas:	I usually make them to clean the carpet. [Laughter] (2005)

Mrs. Turner provides further detail:

I had a bottle, some garlic-oil came in it, when we used to buy garlic-oil. It's a nice little, like a potion bottle. And I go up there, and there's toothpaste and shampoo. My expensive shampoo! Squeezing in there, with toothpaste and water. And a few days later you'd find these bottles tucked away under the bed and stuff, right? "That's my potions, don't pour them out, that's my potions!" (2005)

According to Bronner, everyday objects used in children's play are defined as

"transformational objects" – commercial or adult objects that are altered to suit children's needs and images (1999, 267). The use of everyday objects (such as blankets, towels, chopsticks, toothpaste, garlic-oil bottle, and shampoo) illustrate the child's ability to co-op, appropriate, re-work and transform everyday objects into fantasy objects that enhance the imaginative fan-play experience. In addition, this ability to transform and appropriate ordinary objects for play purposes allows children to participate in their fandom, despite their economic resources.

6.7   Spells and Curses as Performance and Power

Many child Potter fans usually cannot resist the impulse to cast a spell, whether they are role-playing or performing, which involves a collaborative performance on a popular culture text. Child scholars often observe and document this combination of popular culture and folk performance, and the ease with which popular culture and mass media is absorbed into play (Grugeon 2001, 100). For example, Grugeon observed children singing and dancing a performance of a popular Spice Girls' song, she writes:

> There was a spontaneous rendering of the Spice Girls' song 'Wannabe' – a large group of girls performed to an imaginary audience. The words and movements of the song were impressively imitated and sung with gusto. Like the cancan, this was much more of a performance than a game. Their games tended to be played holding hands in inward-looking and private circles with no need for any outside audience. (2001, 111)

This is similar to the performance of Harry Potter magic spells that incorporate the magical language and physical movement of the spells. "Certainly what is evident… is the cooperative and collaborative nature of the games they are playing and their inclusiveness…" (Grugeon 2001, 113).

One group of children performed a very complex form of imitation and re-enactment that I video recorded (2005). This happened in groups of two, Lyndsay and Lucas, and then followed by Amber and Scott. Each child performed a spell on the other, while the other responded to the spell. For example, when Amber recited her spell, Scott gave a bodily response to it (either with an imaginary jolt to his body, leaping backwards, jumping into the air, or writhing on the floor). What was interesting about this performance was the collaborative effort involved in perception, response and execution. Like a form of dance, the children demonstrate their understanding of what the spells mean, and illustrate their skill in responding to the spell cast at them by their partner. Amber and Scott were particularly excited to show me their display as they said they had practiced for the school talent show but were unable to perform on stage. The children requested to perform it as a part of an upcoming school assembly, but were not given permission.

Instead of a performance piece that takes place in front of an audience, children also perform spells to demonstrate a hidden agenda and a desire for power. A good example of spell performance occurred when I challenged the group of children with issues of good versus evil, stating that I liked Snape (a Hogwarts professor known to torment Harry). At the time of the interview in 2005, the children were unaware of Snape's true "good" intentions and honorable motives, as the final book was not yet released. They took great pleasure in punishing me for my comment, and while I was distracted and talking to one particular child, they orchestrated a group magic spell on me. This took place while they were doing impressions and talking about their favorite character.

Contessa:	And is Ron your favorite character?
Lucas:	No, I like Harry, ahm, most of the Defense against the Dark Arts, ahm, Dumbledore, Harry.
Britney:	You already said Harry.
Lucas:	Yeah, I know. Pretty much all of them except Snape. Pretty much, but, yeah, yeah.
Contessa:	I like Snape.
Scott:	No! He's, he's evil.
Lyndsay:	[To Contessa] Oh, you never!
Contessa:	I do!
Lucas:	He's mean to Neville, he's mean to Neville.
Scott:	He helps Voldemort. [While talking over each other, as Lyndsay quietly tells everyone to put their wands up]
Lyndsay:	[To the others] Okay, wands up.
Contessa:	So, why did you put your wands up? [Lyndsay laughs loudly]
Lucas:	He's badddddd! [Laughter]
Contessa:	Okay, I just have to ask one more question first… why did you put your wands up though?
Lyndsay:	To kill you.
Britney:	Because you like Snape!
Contessa:	Well maybe I do, maybe I don't.
Lucas:	Snape's evil and he's mean to most of the Gryffindors.
Lyndsay:	Snape's ugly that's why I don't like him.
Lucas:	He's mean to most of them. (2005)

This interview excerpt further illustrates their motivation for casting spells.

Because I challenged them with thinking I liked Snape, they acted out their difference of

opinion through their fantasy play by casting magical spells with their wands. (I believe

this was a good example of Cindy Dell Clark's childist approach (1995), using play as a

form of interview.) Planning, reciting and casting spells give children an outlet to express

their frustration and dissatisfaction in an imaginary attempt to exert power over their

victim.

This is illustrated a second time with another spell cast at me, mocking the

interview. While talking with one child, several of the other children grew restless and

pointed their wands at me, shouting their demands – firstly, they wanted candy (it was

Halloween) and secondly, they wanted to mock me interviewing them.

> Contessa: [All kids pointing their wands at me.] Okay, what are you guys
> doing to me? I feel threatened!
> Britney: Give us candy!
> Lucas: We want to interview you! I want to interview you! (2005)

Much to my amusement, I was cursed a third time in the same interview. While

discussing curses, one little girl decides to orchestrate a killing curse and cast it my way.

> All Kids: [Chanting spell together] [*Avada Kedavra*!]
> Contessa: So what happened to me then? What happened?
> Lucas: You died!
> Scott: It was the killing curse.
> Contessa: The killing curse?!
> Lucas: One of them.
> Lyndsay: I decided to make it so I would pass it on. (2005).

Many children explained to me how they use their magic spells on their friends,

pesky brothers and sisters, even parents whom they are frustrated with. When someone

bothers them, children select a spell to demonstrate their annoyance with those around

them (including me). Scott illustrates this fact quite clearly in the following quote:

"Whenever I put on my costume I feel like fighting Voldemort because my sister, she

be's mean to me, she starts being mean to me so I pretend she's the Death Eater and I

chase after her around the house with my wand!" (2005). Britney also told me that she

sometimes cast spells against her little brother, "Ahm, well, sometimes I use them on my

brother, my little [brother]..." (2005). However, for Nicholas, who is a year younger than

the Grade Three group, spells are directed "Usually at the monsters [that] are hiding"

(2005). Therefore, not only do children playfully perform and direct their spells at

particular individuals, but spells can also be cast defensively as an imaginary means of

warding off potential evil lurking in frightening spaces. This is also illustrated with

several other children in the following interview excerpt.

Contessa:	So, do you ever do these spells to people in real life, just playing and stuff?
All Kids:	Yeah.
Contessa:	Like, when would you do it?
Amber:	When we're outside.
Scott:	I do it on my friends and my sister.
Contessa:	When you're angry at them or what?
Scott:	Yeah. Sometimes when Dad says he's in Slytherin.
Lucas:	On the computer, ahm, like I play this little game and I pretend I'm killing Snape. Cause, like, Harry has his wand and he's going all around trying to get these thingies. And then, ahm, when somebody shows up, I pretend to sleep and I try to kill them.
Contessa:	And how about you? When do you do these spells?
Lyndsay:	When I get really mad at my sister and she annoys me very much, I use the killing curse. (2005)

Nine-year-old William is also quick to respond to my question regarding his

knowledge of magic spells.

Contesssa:	Do you know any good spells?
William:	I know bad ones! (2010)

While discussing the Harry Potter invisibility cloak he wants for Christmas, William also

points to the advantages of having the real thing – playing tricks on his sister.

Contessa:	And that Invisibility Cloak would be the best.
William:	Oh my gosh, I'd love that. I was thinking about asking Santa for that.
Contessa:	Oh really, can you buy that?
William:	Well, um, I'm pretty sure you can buy it but it won't actually make you invisible.
Contessa:	No. [laughing] That's okay because you can use your imagination and play with it, right?
William:	I'll just ask Santa for an actual one! [Mockingly] And I can actually become invisible.
Contessa:	That would be so fun! You could go anywhere…
William:	…and play tricks on my sister. (2010)

The following interview excerpt with Molly and Madeline, illustrates the wand as a

source of play and power, and also illustrates how children are empowered through their

play. Because the adult viewed them strangely when he saw them in their costumes, they

decide to cast a spell on him and stupefy him when he wasn't looking. Stupefy is one of

Rowling's spells featured in the storyline which, when cast, makes its victims stupid.)

Contessa:	Oh, wow. These are specialty wands aren't they?
Madeline:	Yeah. [proudly]
Contessa:	I guess, do you take special pride in the wand?
Madeline:	Oh yeah, no one touches it.
Molly:	[Interrupting and over talking] Yeah! No one touches the wands!
Madeline:	It's up on my shelf. No one touches it.
Contessa:	Oh wow. And do you do spells with your wands?
Molly:	Yeahhhhh. My mom, she has one too. She has Snape's.
Contessa:	Really? Do you do spells back and forth?
Molly:	Yeah, me and [Madeline].
Madeline:	Sometimes when we were younger we used to go around the streets with our wands and our robes…
Molly:	[interrupting and over talking] I know…
Madeline:	…and we used to be like "Wah-hoo!"
Molly:	And we'd get such weird looks; oh my god, it was hilarious. Remember that time we went down to the park and we were like jumping around…
Madeline:	…with our hoods up…
Molly:	and then like some dude, ah, like, some guy just came along and just like, stared at us…
Madeline:	Yeah.
Molly:	…and walked by, and we were like, "Doodity-doo…" [sic]
Madeline:	You know!
Contessa:	And did you throw a spell at him after?
Madeline:	Yeah! You know!
Molly:	Yeah! He wasn't looking.
Madeline:	We stupefied him.
Molly:	Yeah, after he wasn't looking, when he walked away. (2011)

The theme of power runs through children's folklore because children compose a

subordinate group in relation to adults; they also try to raise their own power and

subordinate other younger children. Simon Bronner notes, "Folklore is frequently a

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medium for the exercise of power by older children over younger children" (1988a, 32).

In this case, we see popular culture combined with the folk performance used in the same

manner. It is therefore not surprising that children use their imaginative fan-play to

express their frustrations with their positions in society and with adults. I believe that

these alternative forms of fan-play serve as an outlet for child frustration, and are some of

the best examples and evidence of popular culture acting as an outlet for aggression rather

than causing the aggression, as discussed in Chapter Three.

6.8   The Imaginal

Along with expressing their frustration with adults, parents and siblings by casting

spells, I also recorded incidents of children attempting to control their physical

environment through play. This can be explained as a form of "imaginal" play as defined

by Cindy Dell Clark (1995). In her book, *Flights of Fancy Leaps of Faith*, Clark looks at

the beliefs children have and the stories they tell about popular figures such as Santa

Claus, the Easter Bunny and the Tooth Fairy. She argues that these cultural myths for

children are "early excursions into culturally shared *imaginal* experiences…" (Clark

1995, 3). She defines the "imaginal":

> as that experience which is not physically present, but which is actually
> experience nevertheless. One finds imaginal experience across the life span and
> in different contexts; conversations with a doll or special teddy bear (what D.W.
> Winnicott [1971] has called the transitional object) or with a companion such as
> Harvey or Hobbes (in the cartoon strip *Calvin and Hobbes*); and in dreams,
> prayer, or fantasy. Such experience is called imaginal (rather than imaginary)
> since one cannot presume to label it as ultimately subjective or objective. The
> reality of these phenomena is sustained by the active participation of the
> experiencer's imagination, but they are not judged to be unreal. As Winnicott has
> argued about transitional phenomena, imaginal phenomena occupy a paradoxical

space which is neither within the individual nor outside in the world of shared reality. Imaginal phenomena depend upon faith. (1995, 3)

In my research, kids were playfully using their spells to imaginatively experiment within the limits of their mental powers, as seven-year-old Nicholas demonstrates in the interview excerpt below.

Contessa:	What do you do?
Nicholas:	I dress up as him and walk around the house.
Contessa:	But do you pretend to be Harry?
Nicholas:	Yup.
Contessa:	And then what do you do?
Nicholas:	We use magic spells to open up doors. (2005)

For some children and teenagers who role-play Harry Potter, they may base their experience on fantasy role-playing fantasy, live-action role-playing or the imaginal. For fantasy play, some children will dress as Harry Potter characters and quote their character's lines, a spell, or Rowling's text; in other words, some children pretend to be the characters and therefore act the role. But they may not necessary believe that they "are" the character as in the imaginal experience. The following interview excerpt also illustrates several examples of combining imagination with fantasy and the imaginal.

Lyndsay:	...Ahm, what he said, except I feel like when I'm reading books, I actually feel like I'm actually witnessing it with my eyes…. Like actually seeing what's happening.
Contessa:	And do you feel like you can do things differently than you wouldn't normally do?
Lyndsay:	When I was bringing down the lunch order with Megan, cause she's the other helper, I actually tried to do *Alohomora*,[33] and there was a clicking sound.

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[33] In the Harry Potter universe, *Alohomora* is a spell used to open and or unlock doors. The most popular spells which children were most familiar with include: *Alohomora* (Lyndsay 2005; Nicholas 2005) *Lumos* – a spell used to conjure light which illuminates from the tip of the wand (Nicholas 2005); *Wingardium Leviosa* – a levitation charm used to levitate objects (Nicholas 2005; Abby 2005); *Avada Kedavra* – the killing curse (Lucas, Britney, Lyndsay, Scott, Amber 2005); and *Stupefy* – a spell used to make one's victim stupid, in an unconscious state (Molly and Madeline 2011).

Contessa:	With your wand you mean?
Lyndsay:	Yeah, I took my wand with me.
Contessa:	Why did you try to do the spell?
Lyndsay:	I didn't think it would work, but ahm…
Contessa:	What's the spell for?
Lyndsay:	Unlocking doors.
Contessa:	And you heard a click? You think you did that?
Lyndsay:	Maybe.

Not only does Lyndsay explain how she can uses her imagination to visualize the story when she reads Harry Potter, but she continues to playfully contemplate how she may have caused something to happen by using a spell. She explains that though she "didn't think it would work," she amusingly tries to open the door with a spell. When the door seems to respond to her words and "clicks," she then considers if she may have caused it. According to Clark, children tend to have imaginal experiences involving things which give them meaning and sanctuary: "Children, when they know how, have the active ability to make real those things in which they can find sanctuary and meaning. Through the reality-making power of imaginal experience, children influence ritual in their own right. Nothing less than faith and tolerance hang in the balance of the developmental process" (1995, 119).

In the interview excerpt between Molly and Madeline below, the two twelve-year-olds explain how they hoped and dreamed to receive an invitation to Hogwarts like Harry when they turned eleven years of age.

Contessa:	So tell me, what do you like about Harry Potter?
Molly:	Oh my god, everything!
Madeline:	Everything!
Contessa:	Like what? What in particular?
Molly:	Just, you know, it's so magical and perfect. And it would be an awesome place to live; like, at Hogwarts. When we were eleven we used to be like, "Yeah, yeah, we're totally going to get our

letters!” and when we turned twelve, it was like, “Oh”
[disappointed]. It was like, there goes all hope. (2011)

I don’t believe that these girls really believed that they would receive Hogwarts

invitations; however, I believe what is “imaginal” about this experience is their

suspension of disbelief, while teasing themselves with the fantasy of living a real life

Harry Potter moment. The imaginal or fantasy experience exists in pondering what is real

and not real, and allowing oneself to play with the idea that fantasy could be real. Fantasy

is playing with reality, and temporarily suspending disbelief; not accepting it, but

suspending it for pleasure and play. It is the “what if” element which appeals to most

children in fantasy play. Declan describes how he contemplated the reality of witches

and wizards when he was younger, “All the mystical creatures that that guy Hagrid has in

the forest, and just how it all seems like it could be somewhat believable as a child. Just

that once you’re out walking around you start to look around wondering if anyone around

you could be a wizard. Well as a child I did anyway” (Declan 2008). Lucy adds, “When

reading/watching it sort of makes your wishes as a child to fly and cast spells come true

in your mind” (2008).

Some parents like Mrs. Collins believe that their children know the difference

between fantasy and reality,

> I think that anything that encourages children to read is a good thing. It’s fantasy
> but they understand fantasy. They know it’s not real, but it’s fun. They know the
> difference between what’s real and what’s not real, but that doesn’t mean that they
> can’t have fun with the “not real” stuff. It’s been one Halloween costume for
> about six years! (2011)

However, some other parents and adult groups fear fantasy and the Potter

phenomenon just for these reasons. Some adults, such as conservative religious groups,

believe that children are not capable of understanding the difference between fantasy and reality and therefore demonize and attempt to ban the literature. This conflict is at the heart of what is known as "The Potter Wars."

6.9   Adult Fear of Fantasy and "The Potter Wars"

According to Jenkins, there are two major issues disputed in "The Potter Wars." The first conflict is that over intellectual property rights and free speech, and the second is that by religious groups trying to remove books from schools (Jenkins 2006a, 170). For media producers and advertisers, Potter fans who write fan fiction (see Chapter Nine) pose a great threat to intellectual property rights and represent lost profits. For Anti-Potter religious groups, the literature and the fan fiction pose a threat to their children's innocence. Jenkins suggests that "the Potter wars are at heart a struggle over what rights we have to read and write about core cultural myths – that is, a struggle over literacy" (2006a, 170).

Fan culture scholars claim that fantasy, role-playing and fan fiction are valuable for children because they allow kids "to understand the books from the inside out; such activities involve a negotiation between self-expression and shared cultural materials, between introspection and collaborative fantasy building" (Jenkins 2006a, 204). However, some adults fear the power of fantasy and what a child can do or invite with fantasy play. While some adults praise the value of role-playing, fantasy and fan fiction, other groups see this introspection and fantasy building as dangerous and outside of their control. Fear of not being able to discern between fantasy and reality, may have been the reason why, in July 2011, members of St. Augustine's Anglican Church in St. John's,

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Newfoundland posted a sign about Harry Potter on their large church sign facing the street on Elizabeth Avenue. I did not have a camera at the time I observed the sign, but I did record the message written in bold letters, "GOD IS THE REAL POTTER, NOT HARRY."

Some conservative Christian groups view fantasy literature, shared fantasies and role-playing as dangerous because "they distract youth from serious moral education and leave them susceptible to the appeals of pagan groups and occult practices" (Jenkins 2006a, 204). These groups fear the content of the books and what kids do with that content, especially if it conflicts with their own Christian worldview. They fear that Harry Potter literature will turn children to pagan literature in order to gain power (Jenkins 2006a, 194), lead them to wanting to become witches and wizards (Kjos 2009), and will ultimately corrupt their Christian ways. Because Harry Potter books pose a dark influence over children, their participation in their fandom is viewed as a negative force in their lives (Jenkins 2006a, 192). Therefore, their goal is to prevent children from reading the books and to ban them from schools. Teachers have been ordered to stop reading the books aloud in classes; school districts now implement required parental permission for children to borrow the books from the library or to use them for book reports; some have stopped ordering future books in the series (*The Ethical Spectacle* 2000).

According to Jenkins, fundamentalists often underestimate children's abilities to manage fantasy and their ability to distinguish between fantasy and reality (2006a, 204). Potter literature is therefore viewed as dangerous. For Anti-Potter religious advocates, not only is the literature and fan fiction dangerous, but other activities that youths engage

in, such as dressing-up, costuming, role-playing or ritual behaviour, are dangerous. These activities are sometimes viewed as demonic worship, satanic deception and activities of the occult.[34] For example, in the article "Harry Potter Lures Kids to Witchcraft", Kjos Ministries argue that Harry Potter literature is dangerous because it makes kids want to become witches and wizards, "many children are pursuing the real-life version of witchcraft because they have learned to love Harry's world" (Kjos 2009). They also argue that Potter books are dangerous because Rowling, who "grew up loving the occult", "seductively" teaches children the dark arts through her books (Kjos 2009). "While children everywhere crave supernatural thrills, Great Britain, the birthplace of Harry Potter, has been a wonderland of options for exploring practical witchcraft. And plenty of youth have caught Harry's vision. They want to learn his wizardly ways" (Kjos 2009).

While Kjos cites a quote from a ten-year-old who says, "I was eager to get to Hogwarts first because I like what they learned there and I want to be a witch," it is weak evidence. Obviously this "child" understands the concept of imagination and fantasy because she says she wants to go to Hogwarts first. Unless she's referring to the new Universal Studios "Harry Potter" park, I assume she is using her imagination in getting to Hogwarts, and for that matter, becoming a witch. But nowhere in the Kjos article does it reveal any hard evidence of one child actually pursuing "practical witchcraft." Instead the author cites a "rise" in Britain's Pagan Federation (a federation that refuses to admit new members under the age of eighteen) as evidence. While there may be some kids out

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[34] According to Jenkins, some critics see the books "as a dilution of Christian influence on American culture in favor of a new global spiritualism" and fear a global or secular curriculum (2006a, 194). Some even argue that children are susceptible to the pagan influences of these books. "Ideas and practices that were once hidden from public view – say the Wiccan beliefs that fundamentalist critics claim are shaping the *Harry Potter* books – are now entering the mainstream, and these groups are struggling to police the culture that comes into their own homes and communities" (Jenkins 2006a, 198).

there pursuing this, I did not discover one. Nor did I interview any child who did not know the difference between fantasy and reality. Out of all the children and teenagers I interviewed not one of them said they were pursing "practical witchcraft." Even though they used their imaginations to pretend to be Harry Potter and throw spells with their wands, they weren't expecting real-life results. They were engaging in fantasy and having fun. Most importantly, Kjos completely fails to recognize that even little children are capable of understanding what fantasy is and what it isn't. While some children may believe in fantastical icons like Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny, most or all children quickly come to understand that they can still play with the idea of magic, fantasy and the imaginal, even if they don't believe.

Other Christian groups, defined by Jenkins as the "discernment movement", take a slightly different approach to children's reading of Harry Potter literature. They attempt to help kids educate themselves about the media. The Christian discernment movement does not prevent children from experiencing (reading, watching) popular culture, but they opt to give them the skills to study and analyze it (media literacy). According to Jenkins, they also offer children optional popular culture, by producing their own media products that fit in with their own acceptable views and beliefs (2006a, 204). The discernment movement aims to protect children and, most importantly, prepare them. Such advocates give children media literature skills and teach them to evaluate and interpret popular works within a Christian framework (Jenkins 2006a, 199). In addition, some Christians within this movement promote the use of role-playing and computer games as spaces for exploring and debating moral questions (Jenkins 2006a, 202).

Whether of the conservative or discernment movement, both groups are exerting control over children's experience of and participation in their fan culture. Their particular views have effectively banned Harry Potter books from many educational institutions, schools and libraries across the globe. In an interview with Wired.com, one American Sunday school teacher criticized the books for their trivialization of the battle between good and evil (Scheeres 2001). Viewing Potter as the Anti-Christ, some church groups have held good "old-fashioned" book burnings in order to destroy the offensive literature (Scheeres 2001).

> But the storybook sorcerer-in-training is still seen as the anti-Christ in conservative enclaves across the country.
> "*Harry Potter* is saying you can dabble in witchcraft as long as it's entertaining," said Beverly Green, a Sunday school teacher from Eastman, Georgia, and mother of three. "If it's not good, it's evil. There ain't no in between. When you start dabbling in demonic spirits, that's dangerous ground. You're opening up your home, yourself to all kinds of attacks from the Devil."
> Green's charge -– that the series trivializes the battle between good and evil -– is frequently cited by *Harry Potter* critics. Earlier this year, a church in Pennsylvania held an old-fashioned book burning to destroy *Harry Potter* books and other "offensive materials." Critics in Florida even produced their own *Harry Potter* video: Harry Potter: Witchcraft Repackaged -– Making Evil Look Innocent, sold online for $24.95. (Scheeres 2001)

6.9.1 Censorship, Book Banning and KidSPEAK

Harry Potter novels are some of the most challenged books in 21st century publishing history. The American Library Association (ALA) – an organization that works to ensure free access to information and condemns censorship – prepares an annual a list of the top ten most frequently challenged books of the year "in order to inform the public about censorship in libraries and schools" (ALA 1996-2013). Topping the 2001 list is Harry Potter by J.K. Rowling, due to "anti-family, occult/Satanism, religious

viewpoint, violence." The same book again tops the 2002 list, due to "occult/Satanism, violence"; but slips to second most challenged book in 2003, due to "occult/Satanism." In 2009 and 2010, the *Twilight* series by Stephanie Meyer made the top ten list; in 2009, due to "religious viewpoint, sexually explicit, unsuited to age group"; and in 2010, due to "religious viewpoint and violence." Also on the 2010 list is *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins, due to "sexually explicit, unsuited to age group, and violence"; and then again in 2011 *The Hunger Games* trilogy makes the list due to "anti-ethnic; anti-family; insensitivity; offensive language; occult/satanic; violence." While the ALA promotes a child's free access to information, other organizations like the American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression rally against censorship of Harry Potter books because of their immense power to get children to read. Christopher Finan, president of the American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression, asserts "The Potter books are helping turn videogame players into readers. We can't allow censorship to interfere with that" (*The Ethical Spectacle* 2000).

This isn't to suggest that children sit back and react passively to such aggressive censorship assaults. Some educators, freedom of speech advocates, parents, young adults and children have reacted strongly to book banning and censorship of literature in schools. Sometimes children, as individuals, become concerned and motivated enough to make a stand. Eight-year-old Madeline Daniel[35] donated the profits of her lemonade stand to the ALA to help support their fight against banned books. Not only did Madeline donate all $28 of her lemonade stand proceeds, but she hand-delivered the cash in person

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[35] I have not given Madeline Daniel or her mom, Laura Daniel, pseudonyms as their names have been published in the media.

to the Office of Intellectual Freedom (OIF), to help protect the right to read (OIF 2010).

The ALA documented Madeline's visit and posted the footage on their OIF Blog website

(also posted on YouTube under OIFTube) in 2010. Madeline's mother, Laura Daniel, is

also interviewed in the video. Daniel explains that her daughter learned about the history

of banned books and became upset by it, and wanted to do something about it.

> Because I really wanted to help. I really wanted to help fight against banned
> books. And I was like, brainstorming a lot, and I just came up with, a lemonade
> stand. And I decided to do that the next day. And we sold, like, three jugs, like,
> this big of lemonade. And I think a lot of people bought the lemonade because
> they wanted to help the American Library Association which I thought was really
> cool. (OIFTube 2010)

When asked why censorship is such an issue for her, she explains that banning her

favourite books like *Captain Underpants*, *The Lightning Thief*, *Harry Potter*, *Where the*

Sidewalk Ends is downright unfair, "Because I read so much. There are just so many

books that I just love so much and they're, like, almost all of them are going to be banned

and it's not fair – at all!" (OIFTube 2010).

While not all children are making lemonade stands to give their quarters to the

ALA, some youth who are offended by Harry Potter book bannings opt to join

KidSPEAK – an organization that gives children the place and opportunity to speak out

against censorship and stop censorship of books in schools (Jenkins 2006a, 196). The

website <www.kidspeakonline.org> (discontinued in 2014) was "Where kids speak up for

free speech." In 2001, KidSPEAK was formed out of a response to censorship of Harry

Potter books.

> KidSPEAK! was created in response to the outrage expressed by kids over efforts
> to censor Harry Potter books. But a recent survey of high school students has
> raised questions about how much kids really care about free speech. It showed, for

example, that almost half the kids do not believe that newspapers should be able to publish stories without government approval. (KidSPEAK 2001)

KidSPEAK teaches kids about censorship and fighting for freedom of expression using Harry Potter as a case study. The website, formally called "Muggles (Humans) for Harry Potter," publishes "news of censorship campaigns done in the name of children and instructs kids how to defend their First Amendment rights" (Scheeres 2001). As a place where kids can talk about censorship, this site is credited with "curbing the nationwide efforts of fundamentalists to get the books banned from schools" (Jenkins 2006a, 196).

In addition, KidsSPEAK is an excellent example of a grassroots formation of a youth protest group. When one superintendent in Michigan attempted to ban the book, it prompted a social uprising of 18,000 kids across the United States who were against censorship.

It all began with a memo sent out by a school superintendent in Zeeland, Michigan, restricting the *Harry Potter* books in the town's schools.
A group of infuriated Zeeland students created the website to pressure the school board to reinstate the books.
"There was a phenomenal reaction," said Finan. "Kids started getting a hold of the URL and passing it from hand to hand."
The protest worked in Zeeland, and the school district reversed almost all of the superintendent's directives. Over 18,000 kids across the country ended up becoming members of the site to fight censorship at their schools. (Scheeres 2001)

The KidSPEAK website also provides profiles of youth activists and their stories about how they have fought back against censorship. Indeed, this website is a great outreach for children, like Madeline Daniel, who want to learn how to become politically active with issues that concern them. Other youth activist groups, such as the Harry Potter Alliance (HPA), are discussed in Chapter Eight on Muggle Quidditch Wizard Rock.

6.10 Dialect Imitation

Another way children participate in their play performance of Harry Potter is through dialect imitation. Obviously influenced by the Potter films where each character is played by a British actor, these children mimic their favorite Potter characters by reciting lines and spells in a British accent.

Contessa: Who is your favorite character in Harry Potter?
Amber: Hermione.
Scott: Harry, Harry, Ron and Hermione.
Amber: I like all three of them too.
Lyndsay: Hermione. I can even do an impression.
Contessa: Oh, do you want to do it for us?
Lyndsay: Okay. [In English dialect] "Oh move over. Alohomora." It's from the first movie.
Contessa: That's very good. Anyone else do impressions?
Amber: Ahm, I can do it like, [English dialect] "It's not Wingardium Leviosa, it's Wingardium Leviosa."
Contessa: That's good, that's really good. And how about you?
Lucas: I can do a Ron one. [English dialect] "We're done for!" (2005)

As for Nicholas, Mrs. Turner said, "He used to speak normal English, like with the accent, and he didn't realize he was doing it. Then he'd watch *Coronation Street* and say, 'Oh, that's like Harry Potter' " (2005).

Not only does the British dialect become a performance feature, but it also illustrates their understanding of and acceptance of another language dialect. As demonstrated in Chapter Four, such willingness to embrace different cultural forms is not something Arthur A. Levine, the American translator for Scholastic, would probably agree with. Ironically, regarding the word "rubbish," [which Levine/Scholastic changed to "crap" in the American versions (Nel 2002, 262)], not only did the children I interviewed (who read the British/Canadian versions of the text) seem to understand the term but it was even used during the interview by two children. Although the second boy

seems to have been copying the first boy, it is certainly a term well understood.

> Contessa: What do, what do most adults think about Harry Potter? Or like, your parents? What do they all think about Harry Potter?
>
> Lucas: Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh. My pop, he thinks it's *rubbish*. He just thinks the idea of flying cars and all this owl-sending and, he just thinks it's weird and nuts. Like, how did they do it?
>
> Contessa: Do you mean your dad or your grandfather?
>
> Lucas: Ahm, my dad likes it, my mom enjoys it, my sister is like, "Oh, please!"
>
> Contessa: Okay. How about you?
>
> Scott: My uncle, my uncle, my dad's brother, he hasn't seen any of it, but he says, "Ah, that's *rubbish* b'y." My dad, my sister and my mom love it. (2005)

Such vocabulary illustrates the educational and cultural value of keeping texts in their original form, as "…awareness of national and cultural differences expands the reader's knowledge of the world" (Nel 2002, 282.) This is particularly important when such novels are said to broadcast a version of late-twentieth-century Britain that has been absorbed by millions, and by "replacing British vernacular with what Americans think of as British vernacular diminished the novels' realism" (Nel 2002, 267). Nel asks, "Why shouldn't children know there are other countries where things are done differently?" (2002, 271).

Although one can blame "the global arrogance of the American" (Nel 2002, 261), the fact is that many of the translations are also tied into marketing motives. To the publisher, Scholastic, "translation" and "marketing" are indistinguishable. For example, words like FIREBOLT are printed in the text as advertisement logos: "Without changing anything we could snip this description from the novel, attach it to a broom, and place it in a display window," writes Nel (2002, 273). As well, Scholastic's book jackets all have Harry Potter's name in a font that, "complete with its lightening bolt 'P', can only be

described as a logo. Indeed, the font has become a logo, appearing in this format on Warner Brothers' film…" (Nel 2002, 273). When considering such evidence and the obvious understanding these Canadian children have of British vocabulary and dialect, some adult translators seem to underestimate children, and edit their text unnecessarily.

6.11   Trivia Games and the Power of Knowledge

There are many manufactured games based on Harry Potter trivia which children can buy for their televisions, computers or game consoles. In the excerpt below Lyndsay and Lucas explain the manufactured trivia DVD game *Scene It* where players answer questions about a particular film or film series.

> Lyndsay: I'm getting a *Harry Potter Scene It* game for Christmas. 'Cause they were sold out, 'cause my mom tried to get it for my birthday but they were sold out.
>
> Lucas: You can play it on computer, the *Scene It* game. You click OK and then questions come up and you're either or a Muggle or a wizard or a professor. And I was a muggle once and then I was a wizard, and its like how many points you get when you catch a snitch, and who's your least favorite character and what's missing from this picture. It's like seeing. (2005)

Children and games go hand-in-hand. It is therefore no surprise that games have been created and mass marketed for sale as well as created for educational purposes. Some educational institutions take advantage of the interest generated in Harry Potter by creating games which can occupy or educate children, such as the games created by the Provincial Information and Library Resources Board of Newfoundland and given to children via the Newfoundland Public Libraries. These games include thematic word searches with Potter names and terminology including: "Hogwarts Houses" (with a word search for each house – Ravenclaw, Slytherin, Hufflepuff); "In the Library at Hogwarts";

and "Quidditch Quirks" (see Figure 6.15 and additional example in Appendix B).

Figure 6.15: Word search game for children created by the Provincial Information & Library Resources Board of Newfoundland and given to children at public libraries.

Despite having games designed by adults and handed to them by adults, children do craft, adapt and create their own games – often times combining the traditional with the creative, as demonstrated with the game of "Tag." The group of Grade Three children I interviewed, as well as Nicholas, reported playing the traditional folk game of "tag" and adapting it to include the Potter characters. "It" therefore becomes an evil character like Snape or the Dementors, and the children pretend to fly around on broomsticks and use their powers as they chase and pursue each other.

While many of the children said they purchased manufactured Harry Potter board and video games, and visited official online Potter websites (websites and online material are discussed in Chapters Eight and Nine), they also referred to games which were

entirely made up by their own local groups, outside of mass media and corporate

merchandise. One such game often took place during lunch hour at Mary Queen of Peace

school. Lyndsay and Britney invented a knowledge game based on Harry Potter trivia.

Lucas also regularly participates in this lunch-time game. They explain:

> Britney: …but sometimes me and [Lyndsay] and some other people have Harry Potter quizzes. … And I'm sorted into a house, into Ravenclaw.
> Contessa: How do you come up with the quiz questions?
> Britney: Just out of the book. One out of a certain book and each person, one day first, one day second, one day third, one day fifth.
> Contessa: What do you mean by that? Somebody gets to go on a certain day?
> Lucas: Yeah, like we make up a little thingy and put names on there and they have to write what number they're doing, and if that like is taken you have to do it the next day. We do like all of them in one week and then all of them in the next week and keep it going like that. (2005)

By using the Harry Potter series as their text book to draw questions and answers from,

the children create a homemade, non-manufactured game. Lucas's description reveals

this game to be highly structured with rules and procedures. It also reveals issues and

strategies of power.

> Contessa: Well, when you play your own quiz game, how do you get your questions? Do you pick them out yourself?
> Lucas: No, we look in a book everyday and we pick out questions and write them on a piece of paper, and we'll go over in the classroom in a little circle and you have to slap your lap when you have it. And then you get like, and people say like, this one will be two points, and this one will be ten or five.
> Britney: Once I had 30.
> Lucas: Once I had 95.
> Britney: Once I had 100.
> Lyndsay: No you got like 999, didn't you?
> Britney: Yeah.
> Contessa: So, who made up this game?
> Brit/Lucas: I did.
> Lyndsay: Me and Britney.
> Contessa: You did? So, did you make up the rules too?

Lyndsay   Me and Britney did, yeah.
Contessa: Okay, so you get in a circle, right? And then somebody got to the
             book to get questions, and you assign points to the questions?
All Kids: Yes.
Lucas: We'll make a schedule and then people will have to like, to say
             like, ahm, how do they get to school in the second Harry Potter
             book? They go by car, and then that one would probably be like
             two points, so you put two strokes under your name, like, and you
             keep going with points.
Contessa: What happens with the winner?
Lucas: They get to go next time probably.
Contessa: And you play this at lunch-time?
Lucas: Yeah. (2005)

Not only did the children invent the game, create the rules and point system, and research

and write the questions, but they also scheduled the competitions and assigned a prize (a

position of authority, being permitted to "go first the next time") to the winner. This

game and its social play is an excellent example of the child as traditionalist and

transmitter of culture.

McDonnell argues that childhood is a culture because it is able to transmit its

values and behaviours to succeeding generations (1994, 25). It is children who teach

children and who initiate them into the world of childhood. "This cultural transmission,

which begins virtually at birth, goes largely unnoticed by adults. This is partly because

much of it goes on almost in secret" (McDonnell 1994, 25) and adults tend to ignore

children's secret life. As the Opies (1959) pointed out a half century ago, children also

pass on and hand down much older folklore illustrating their being part of a wider cultural

group as children. "Children are not only adept at handing down their own culture. They

are also responsible for keeping whole segments of the wider culture alive" (McDonnell

1994, 26).

While some scholars point to children as tradition bearers as part of their nature, other scholars claim that children desire conservatism because they desire to be like other children, conform to the norm, and to protect the group and belong to the group.

> The desire to protect and sustain the group fosters the conservatism of children. Innovation in dress, manners, and speech is suppressed. The urge to be like other children is the motivating factor in choosing what cereal to eat for breakfast to what clothes to wear to school. (Zumwalt 1995, 42)

Mechling adds, "Many psychologists and folklorists claim that children seem to have a high need for affiliation, a strong impulse to belong to a group and to conform to its norms" (1986, 103). Sutton-Smith also attributes children's jealous regard for rules to their need for structure in social relationships (1972, 45-46), and Zumwalt argues "games provide the children with a reliable structure, a means of control in their otherwise powerless state" (1995, 43).

While conservatism in children's play can be a form of social structure and control, innovation can also be a form of power. Innovation is often socially valued among children. "A last, startling implication of the dynamism/conservatism opposition in children's lore is that, far from being the conservator of tradition, it is often avant-garde. There is a sense in which the creative flexibility and adaptability of children gives them an advantage in rapidly changing, post-industrial society" (Mechling 1986, 112). In addition, the power of possessing knowledge also appeals to children. In the case of my research, many kids and teens demonstrated their knowledge of the Harry Potter texts and mythology with pride and enthusiasm. Lyndsay, for example, considered herself to be the biggest fan in the group because of this abundance of knowledge and trivia which could put any average Potter fan to shame. This little girl's knowledge placed her in a position

of power over the other fans in the group. This same little girl also helped organize a

Harry Potter trivia contest during lunch periods in her classroom. This was a game she

was sure to win. Lyndsay's strategy is much like that of kids who adopt High Powered It

Roles to win games of "Tag" as demonstrated in the research of Gump and Sutton-Smith

(1965). Their research demonstrated how some kids strategically used their knowledge of

the outcome of the rhyme to achieve their win, and gain power over the other players. In

this case, Laura was using strategy (inventing a game and its rules, and organizing the

event in which to demonstrate the game) to create further feelings of mastery, power and

control.

> [P]ower, is something children generally do not have in their institutional settings.
> So they take power, or play at taking power, through their folklore. This is a
> rebellious grasp for power motivated out of their subordinate positions in the
> family and in school. Sometimes the power helps the child create and sustain a
> personal identity through competent performance. This is the power of mastery
> and maturity. Knowledge is power, so an important function of the children's lore
> is to help them acquire the knowledge that adult members of the culture take for
> granted. Sometimes the power helps the child to establish relations with others.
> Sometimes the power is purely antithetical and subversive. (Mechling 1986, 113)

Children will adapt the world around them, transform it, and use it for their own

purposes. In this case, Lyndsay understands that knowledge of the Harry Potter universe

is important and empowering. She therefore creates a trivia game that she can excel at;

this is just as children use riddles to demonstrate their knowledge, to compete as equals

with adults, and to feel a sense of power by earning victory. "Riddling is an ideal game

for young children and adults because they can compete as equals; a child who wins can

feel that his victory has been earned, not indulgently presented to him" (Knapp and

Knapp 1976, 105). As Mechling points out, "By violating and otherwise playing with the

conventions of this folklore genre [riddles], children develop competence and mastery

over a form" (1986, 101). In the following interview excerpt, Madeline praises Molly for

her Potter knowledge and quick reflexes with the television remote, saying that Molly

"owned" her. At the beginning of the excerpt, Molly even boldly boasts of her

competency and mastery over text and knowledge.

Molly: I'm the master at *Scene It*!
Madeline: *Harry Potter Scene It*, oh my god, we play it and she, she's just like *whip-whip-whip* [whipping sound] – "I owned you!" because I'm not very good at the whole, repeating everything. But, I still love it, but she's there "That's the spell" and all that, so she's pretty…
Molly: …yeah, quick reflexes with the remote!
Madeline: [Laughs]
Contessa: And it's trivia right? All trivia stuff?
Made/Molly: Yeah.
Contessa: So, you got to know your Harry Potter books to know…
Molly: They'll play, like, depending on what the movie is too, so they'll play clips from the movie, and then they'll ask you a question on the clip, like, um, like…
Madeline: …what spell is it or whatever.
Molly: …what spell did Hermione, what does the spell that Hermione just said, do? Or something like that. And you'll have to shout it out before the time runs out. (2011)

The Opies explain that games allow children to feel confident, "In games a child can exert

himself without having to explain himself, he can be a good player without having to

think whether he is a popular person, he can find himself being a useful partner to

someone of whom he is normally afraid" (1969, 3). These play examples help illustrate

how children use their folklore to feel confident and experiment with new power roles

which help establish their cultural independence.

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6.12   Harry Potter Parodies

Many folklorists have collected humorous verse, especially parody, from both children and adults, including the Opies (1959), the Knapps (1976), Bronner (1988), Brunvand (1968), and Jay Mechling (1986), dealing with children's parodies of "everything from nursery rhymes to political and religious songs" (Sullivan 2006-07, 33). In their book, *Greasy grimy gopher guts: The subversive folklore of childhood,* Josepha Sherman and T.K.F. Weisskopf (1995, 11) argue that children "strike back against chaos in the only way they can: through folklore" – which is why there is so much subversive folklore. Popular antithetical folklore genres include rhymes, songs, riddles, the sick joke, the moron joke and parodies. C.W. Sullivan argues "that one creates a parody by taking something – song, rhymes, advertising jingle – and changing it to make it humorous or more humorous and that the humor derives, at least in part, from the listener's knowledge of the original as juxtaposed with or to the parody" (2006-07, 33). Thus, in order to understand a Harry Potter parody and its humour, one must first know of Harry Potter.

A parody is "is a common antithetical device used by children in their expressive cultures" (Mechling 1986, 99). A parody often "makes a frontal attack upon adults" (Mechling 1986, 99). Parodies are said to emulate and mock adult behaviours: "Far from being dominated by media imagery and icons, however, the children select and recreate from them in a process which simultaneously emulates and mocks adult culture" (Bishop and Curtis 2001, 60). This emulation and mockery is another great example of Newell's paradox, the conservative/dynamic nature of children's play, children's ability to appropriate the media and exercise power over their oppressors. Children's "songs and

rhymes fearlessly take on the taboos and terrors of the adult world and turn them into things that can be safely mocked" (Sherman and Weisskopf 1995,11). Parodies reflect adult fears, taboos, subjects and places they fear to tread. These are the starting places for children to explore their power; adult pressure points that they've learned to take advantage of. When children begin exploring places and topics adults fear, adults often react in frustration. It is this reaction that children most desire – a reaction to their power play. I've seen children squeal with delight at the discomfort and embarrassment brought upon their parents by their very public "potty mouth" exclamations.

While some adults fear that global corporations control children's experiences and minds, children have, however, long resisted global influence and corporate domination through their cultural expressions. As long as children have been buying into corporate culture, they have also been parodying it, and the Harry Potter phenomenon is no exception. In their book *One Potato, Two Potato: The Folklore of American Children*, Mary and Herbert Knapp, write: "Parodies are more than high-spirited entertainment. They are a way of asserting one's perceptiveness and independence. We adults parody proverbs to show that we aren't taken in – by traditional wisdom in general, and by romantics, snobs, bureaucrats, and the like…" (1976, 161-2). Simon Bronner writes about parody:

> From nursery rhymes to television commercials, adults feed children messages. The barrage of repeated, adult-controlled messages is grist for the child's imaginative mill. Children are fond of parodying the standard and familiar, especially when in the process of doing so they can establish that they have a world of their own making. (1988, 77)

In a discussion of children who parody ads and commercials (such as Pepsi, Coke, McDonalds, Blue Bonnet, Sani-Flush, and Oscar Mayer), the Knapps explain that parody

helps children's ability to defend themselves and fight against the "intrusive, we-know-best-tone" (1976, 165). In fact, the Knapps cite research paid for and conducted by the advertising industry itself which confirms this supposition: "Second-graders are said to have a 'concrete distrust' of some commercials; by sixth grade the youngster's distrust is 'global' – they are suspicious of them all" (1976, 162).

Although the Knapps specifically look at commercial parodies, I argue that this concrete distrust of imposing commercialism is also illustrated in children's Harry Potter parodies. Bronner writes, "Besides mocking nursery rhymes and television commercials, children are fond of parodying popular culture figures such as Tarzan and Superman, bringing them down to earth…" (1988, 77). The Knapps also include examples of popular culture figures that children parody such as Robin Hood, Daniel Boone, the Addams Family, and Popeye. In my own research conducted in 1995, a Grade Three class at St. John Fisher Elementary School in Brampton, Ontario, used children's parody of Batman and Robin, Barney and G.I. Joe. It is therefore no surprise that Harry Potter has also received similar treatment.

While conducting interviews, I discovered evidence of two forms of parody: localized child-generated parody and mainstream commercial parody. When asked if the children wrote their own Harry Potter stories or fan fiction, two girls said that while they never wrote their own stories, they, however, created their own parody titles. These titles were inspired by the Nickelodeon's kids' sketch comedy show "All That." In this television program, young actors spoof Harry Potter in a sketch called, "Harry Bladder". Seven-year-old Nicholas explains this parody: "He's a weird person that, he uses a leaf blower for a boomstick. …They make up weird spells, and Quidditch is Squiditch"

(Nicholas 2005).

In response to Harry Bladder, Lyndsay and Britney came up with their own series titles based on Harry Potty. These include: Harry Potty and the Philosopher's Toilet; Harry Potty and the Chamber of the Toilet; Harry Potty and the Prisoner of the Toilet; Harry Potty and the Goblet of Pee-Pee; Harry Potty and the Order of the Toilet; Harry Potty and the Half-Blood Toilet Paper.

Contessa:	Have you written any stories about Harry Potter?
Britney:	Ah, me and Lyndsay, well we think of a story like Harry Potty.
Lyndsay:	Tell her all the titles.
Britney:	Like ahm, I forget the one for the fourth one.
Lucas:	You named them all out for me.
Contessa:	So you came up with all your own titles?
Britney:	And, like, yes, we used some things from Harry Bladder, it's a show.
Contessa:	What's that?
Britney:	It's like, it's ahm, there's a show it has like little short things, and it has Harry Bladder, and instead of broomsticks, it has leaf-blowers and stuff.
Contessa:	Oh, and where did you read this or where did you see this, or did you make it up?
Britney:	We made up Harry Potty, and a show made up Harry Bladder.
Contessa:	Okay, what's the first title?
Britney:	The first title, I'm pretty sure is, Harry Potty and the Philosopher's toilet.
Lucas:	The second one is called like…
Lyndsay:	Harry Potter and the Chamber of the toilet.
Lucas:	Yeah, something like… And the third one is like…
Britney:	The Prisoner of the Bathroom. [Laughter] The Goblet of Pee-Pee [Laughter]
Lucas:	And the fifth on is like The Order of the Pooh.
Britney:	No.
Lucas:	The Order of the Toilet.
Britney:	No.
Lucas:	It's like the Order of the Toilet because like, their ordering the toilet instead of the phoenix.
Britney:	Yeah, the Order of the Toilet, and the Half-Blood Toilet.
Lucas:	The Half-Blood Toilet Paper.
Contessa:	So why did you put them all, create them all as pee and toilet, and all that stuff? [Laughter] Why?

Lucas: Oh, oh, oh, oh.
Lyndsay: Because we wanted it to be funny. (2005)

Combining parody with children's ever-present intrigue with toilet-humor and bodily functions, these children create their own parodied book titles stemming from, in this case, a mass-mediated source. C. W. Sullivan (2006-07) also researched parodied Dr. Seuss book titles as "folkloric" (*Aunts in My Pants*; *The Cat in the Blender*) similarly to these Harry Potter book titles. My online YouTube research reveals many child and adult versions of Harry Potter parodies. (I also discuss specific online Harry Potter video parodies generated and posted by teenagers in Chapter Eight.)

There have been numerous mass-mediated Potter parodies including Cleolinda Jones's retelling of the third Harry Potter film, "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban in Fifteen Minutes" on her Livejournal.com site (2004). Research has also revealed commercialized parodies where, in essence, we see corporations profiting from the spoof of other corporations, for example, two performed sketches that appeared on NBC's *Saturday Night Live*. The first appeared on November 16, 2002 called "Welcome Back, Potter" (which placed Harry Potter in the Gabe Kaplan role from the 1970s sitcom *Welcome Back, Kotter*), and the other on May 1, 2004 called "Hogwarts Academy" (a sketch lampooning a suddenly blossoming and busty Hermione). As well, MAD Magazine produced a novel-driven parody "Harry Plodder and the Kidney Stone" (#391) in March 2000. Both novels and films were then used as source material for the next eight MAD parodies which followed, including: "Harry Plodder and the Sorry-Ass Story" (#412) in December 2001; "Harry Potter and the Lamest of Sequels" (#424) in December 2002; "Harry Potter and the Pre-Teen Nerds are Actin' Bad" (#443) in July 2004; and

"Harry Potter Has Gotta Retire" (#460) in December 2005; "Harry Plodder and the Torture of the Fanbase" (#480) in August 2007; "Harry Plodder is a Hot-Blooded Putz" (#501) in October 2009; and "Harry Plodder and It's Dreadful What Follows" (#507) in February 2011; and "Harry Plodder is Definitely Halted – Adieu!" (a special issue composed of a collection of all parodies as well as a parody of the final film, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2* (Harry Potter Wiki 2011).

Sherman and Weisskopf argue that while adults limit what can be discussed and mocked, for children "no subject is too fearful or disgusting; everything is interesting" (1995, 12). They claim that mockery is a form of liberation for the child. The need to mock taboos can help explain the presence of subversion in children's folklore. Taboo topics such as sex, pregnancy, birth, bodily functions, illness and death are often demystified by subversive folklore such as rhymes and parodies. As Sherman and Weisskopf write, "as soon as a bodily function is declared taboo by adults, children begin inventing their rhymes" (1995, 54).

Another good example of the fun children have with this subject, and in mocking adults, occurred when I asked the children why they were using such "low" words to describe the Harry Potter titles. Following their response, I had to ask, "So why did you put them all, create them all as pee and toilet, and all that stuff?" When I asked this question I received an immediate response of belly-aching laughter from the kids. The children took immense pleasure in my drawing attention to the topic of bodily functions, and, at least I think, for actually saying the words "pee" and "toilet" in front of them. As Mechling writes, the appeal of parody is that it can be done in the face of adults, because it is deemed "not for real." The power of parody is that it can be performed in front of

adults, and not have to be bound by secrecy. "The parody features fantasies of violent rebellion and revenge against the adult caretakers. But parody is 'not for real' and can even be sung in front of the teachers and principals who are its targets" (Mechling 1986, 99).

"Low words" (McDonnell 1994, 33), like "pee" and "poop", become valuable tools for the child – irritating parents with their embarrassing talk, AND providing a simple word for a challenging subject for children. It is easy for adults to forget what a challenge there is in learning how to physically control one's bodily functions. Children are obsessed with all stories having to do with bodily functions such as *I Have To Go!* by Robert Munch (1987) and *Walter the Farting Dog* (2001) by William Kotzwinkle. To illustrate the popularity of Kotzwinkle's book, *Walter the Farting Dog* became a five book series between 2001 and 2007. Mechling explains that children have so much folklore about bodily functions because so much of their lives are centred on their bodies, and on development. He writes, "Sex, food, and excretions appear prominently in the lore, but so do other body themes like illness, mutilation, exaggerated body parts, and death" (1986, 113-114). Furthermore, Mechling explains that children often resort to obscene lore in an attempt to shock their adult audience (1986, 98).

By owning such obscene lore, children throw their power struggles in the face of adults who take their own bodily functions for granted, or who are embarrassed or challenged by them. But, outside of the commercial parodies, how do we account for the fact that these children love, or are fans of, these characters, but also participate in parodying and making fun of them? For the answer, I return to the Knapps who claim that

by participating in commercial parody, children are learning to fight back at the advertisers who would teach them to say "gimme."

> But children don't tell their mothers not to buy these products. Rather, through the parodies they defend themselves against becoming mere bundles of reflexes that are dominated by the ads. They reserve for themselves the possibility of disagreeing, but they don't necessarily dislike the products. What they especially like is seeing the officious official world turned upside down (1976, 165).

In this case, it is not that children dislike the Harry Potter character, books or movies, but what they dislike is, as the Knapps suggest, the "officious official world" of the Harry Potter industry. Citing parody Popeye rhymes, McDowell writes that "Each parody creates a fictive world that stands as a miniature rite of rebellion, a vision of a counter-factual world…" (McDowell 1995, 55). "In reference to style as well as content, the parodies transform the original material into vessels expressing the child's sensitivities" (McDowell 1995, 55).

Children use parody to take ownership of and fight against the global corporate influence. I found an excellent illustration of this on a "Harry Potter spoof" message board on the Harry Potter Portal website. Below, online fans of Potter illustrate the fine line between making fun of something because they dislike it, and making fun of something because they love it. Quotes are presented as they appeared online between Dec 15, 2002 and February 9, 2003.

EmmaW8439:	yeah i also saw the Nickelodeon spoof for harry Bladder. There are a lot of people at my school who have seen that and they think it's really funny. But when I talk about how much I like Harry Potter they just start making fun of it. It makes me mad. (Dec 15, 2002)
katherine_beeler:	Nooooo! I would hate to see someone make fun of such a good series! (Dec 17, 2002)
Tickled Dragon:	Making fun of stuff doesn't get to me, cos normally at home we make fun of everything. It's only if someone's making fun of something because they hate it that it would get to me. (Dec 18,

	2002)
firebolt23:	I wouldn't want to see anyone making fun of things I like. It wouldn't really get to me. If they do it for fun thats fine. I don't like it when they do it because they hate it. (Feb 8, 2003)
Tickled Dragon:	…And finally, for FB23 - I know it's terrible when ppl make fun of HP because they hate it, I agree with you. But this isn't so much making fun of HP, more like, having a little fun with the HP characters by putting them in strange situations and making them say weird things and altering their characters and .... well, the point is, they're just writing stories for fun because they love the HP universe. (Feb 9, 2003)

Besides fending off corporate imposition and turning the official world upside down, parody can also illustrate, as Tickled Dragon suggests, reverence for the Harry Potter phenomenon. For example, when asked why they made up the Harry Potty parodies, Lyndsay simply states, "Because we wanted it to be funny" (2005) – demonstrating children's motivation for fun. Most importantly, as Tickled Dragon points out, the purpose of the parody is not to make fun of Harry Potter but to have fun with and engage with Harry Potter.

Parody emulates and mocks adults, and is a form of rebellion, power and play. It acts as a release of anxiety, and is a way to extract pleasure from pain and terror (like jokes). Parody is also another example of how children use convention (tradition and structure) with inventiveness – a power that lies at the conservative/creative heart of children's culture. As Mechling writes, "The original song establishes a rigid formula within which the parody must operate, but within that convention the children may exhibit a considerable range of inventiveness" (1986, 99).

6.13   Conclusion

This chapter has presented Potter fan-play activities such as costuming, fantasy play and role-playing, games and parodies. It illustrates that children are much more likely than adults to "put to use what they see, to transform it in their play and use it as a basis for their own imaginative creations" (McDonnell 1994, 31). Evidence of children's local fan-play also reveals that children do not consume commercial culture uncritically:

> Advertising, television shows and popular songs heard on the radio and video TV are the shared culture of the masses in America and as far across the world as American television programs penetrate. It is reassuring that, rather than consume this commercial culture uncritically, children engage in the widespread and lively folk parody… (Sherman & Weisskopf 1995, 149)

In this chapter I have therefore cited research that illustrates how children (1) craft their own homemade costumes, (2) invent imaginary objects, (3) create their own games, (4) engage in fantasy play and make-believe, (5) imagine and perform parodies, *all the while* combining popular culture with their traditional play activities. As my research reveals, children's culture is far more complicated, critical and engaging than most adults give them credit for. These numerous examples of local fan-play activities also act as evidence against the most popular myth-conceptions held by adults discussed in Chapter Three.

By analyzing costuming behaviours at various fan-play events including Halloween parties, sci-fi and fantasy conventions, Quidditch, book and movie launches, Potter Parties, and unsupervised, free play and role-playing, I have revealed how children use their costumes to identify with their characters and wear them as a form of play and to experience empowerment. I have also addressed the incorporation of fantasy, live action role-playing, and the imaginal in children's fan-play. Games as demonstrations of

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mastery of knowledge and parodies as demonstrations of subversion were also illustrated.

In conclusion, my analysis reveals that children do indeed have their own ways of

creating their own culture, and are active social and cultural agents. Most importantly, I

have illustrated how children experience tradition, creativity, identity expression, and

power in their play.

Chapter 7

Muggle Quidditch, Kidditch and Wizard Rock:
Fan Play, Sport and Activism

7.1   Introduction

During my investigation of Harry Potter fan-play, three activities stood out amongst all the others, primarily because they have attracted a large following and garnered their own terminology. These are Muggle Quidditch, Kidditch and Wizard Rock. I came to learn of Quidditch when I interviewed children in 2005. They described their live-action role-playing (LARP) based on Rowling's fictional sport. By 2007, with the advent of the Inter-Collegiate Quidditch Association in the United States, organized teams of teens and young adults were coming together on North American college campuses. Not long after, the term Kidditch, Quidditch for young children with slightly modified rules and adaptions, came into use.

While Quidditch and Kidditch are based on physical sport, Wizard Rock is based on song-writing and music; fans write lyrics and perform music based on perspectives of the Harry Potter characters. Many kids and teens join these activities based primarily on the fact that they are fans of the series. Some Quidditch players even confess to not liking physical sports, and some Wizard Rockers say they had no previous music experience.

My primary Quidditch informant was Jennifer who began reading the Harry Potter books when she was twelve years old. At the time of our interview in 2008, Jennifer was twenty one years old and studying linguistics at Memorial University of Newfoundland. She explains that she has grown up with the series, participating in numerous Potter fan-

play events and activities, including starting up her own "ship" website by the time she was fifteen years old; writing and posting her own Harry Potter fan fiction online (her fan fiction and website is discussed in Chapter Nine); going to book and movie launches and Harry Potter conventions, and traveling large distances to do so; learning sewing skills to make her own costumes; learning to play guitar and writing song lyrics for her Wizard Rock band; and organizing community and university Muggle Quidditch matches. I met Jennifer at a publicly organized "Muggle" Quidditch match in St. John's, NL on April 19, 2008 at the 2nd Annual St. John's Science Fiction and Fantasy Convention ("Sci-Fi On The Rock") held at the local Holiday Inn, 180 Portugal Cove Road.

Quidditch is a fictional sporting game created by J.K. Rowling. In the world of Potter, Quidditch is a magical sport, governed by the Department of Magical Games and Sports, where members of opposing teams (keepers, beaters, chasers) fly in the air on broomsticks (Harry's famous broomstick is called a Nimbus2000) attempting to score a goal against their opposing team – in this case, by throwing a "quaffle"[36] through the goal hoop. Rowling has provided fans with a vast working knowledge of the sport by centering a large portion of her storyline on Quidditch matches that her characters compete in at Hogwarts. Harry becomes Gryffindor's youngest Seeker in a century.

"Muggle Quidditch" or "Ground Quidditch," on the other hand, is a game played by "muggles" (non-magical humans) including children, teenagers and adults. Organized "official" young adult teams usually require participants to be at least thirteen years of age (St. John's Quidditch League), or fourteen years of age (St. John's Area Quidditch Scrimmage, and the International Quidditch Association), whereas the MUN Quidditch

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[36]A "quaffle" is an enchanted ball used to score points in the game of Quidditch.

League requires participants to be attending MUN and therefore are at least seventeen years of age. But the main challenge, is of course, playing a magical sport when one isn't magic. This involves a clever adaptation of Rowling's sport rules to the real world, role-playing and suspension of disbelief. By 2007, this LARP Quidditch movement had taken hold of the imaginations of Newfoundland youth who were then forming groups of their own, and reaching out to other fans at MUN, the Sci-Fi on the Rock Convention and the St. John's community. And as of 2014, there is still an active group of participants in St. John's, Mount Pearl and Paradise. This official and organized Quidditch movement is different from kids informally playing Quidditch in their living rooms or backyards with their friends or siblings. Informal, unorganized, unsupervised, free play Quidditch is also discussed in this chapter.

7.2   *Sci-Fi On The Rock* – A Science Fiction and Fantasy Convention

The 2008 *Sci-Fi on the Rock* convention consisted of display rooms and scheduled events including workshops, a charity auction (in aid of the School Lunch Association), a masquerade costume contest, a video game expo and video game tournament and a Muggle Quidditch match (see Figure 7.1). It also hosted a variety of knowledge and trivia competitions such as Star Trek Jeopardy and Geek Survivor, as well as special guest appearances, Q&A sessions and autograph signings by actors from popular science fiction shows including Jeremy Bulloch (Boba Fett of Star Wars) and actor Brian Downey (Stanley H. Tweedle of Lexx). The convention also hosted a Writers' Circle where audience members could meet with both local and visiting writers and illustrators including, author Matthew LeDrew (The Black Womb, Transformations in Pain), author

Kenneth Tam (*His Majesty's New World: The Grasslands*), author Willie Meikle (*The Midnight Eye Files: The Sirens*), and comic book artist Paul Tucker (*The Underground Railroad*).

Figure 7.1: Online video game tournament at the Sci-Fi on the Rock convention.

Workshops held during the two-day convention provided instructional sessions from light saber basic techniques (Star Wars) and learning how to speak Klingon (Star Trek) to learning how to draw costumes and make homemade costumes. Other session titles included: Flair for the Gold: Ric Flair, Cosplay: Costuming for Anime, Comic Drawing, Doctor Who for Dummies, Getting Your Novel Published, Costume Designing and Making, Fan Film Making: Scene Filming, Dungeons and Dragons: Character Building Basics, Magic Deck Building, Star Wars 30th Anniversary, Star Trek Bloopers and Mistakes, BattleStar Galactica, The Re-imagined Series, Star Trek Jeopardy, Girls in Geekdom, Miniature Figure Painting, Back Yard Astronomy, Supernatural Beasts: Is there a rational explanation, Make-Up Special Effects, Sci-Fi Influences on Modern

Technology, LexxZone.net, Filk Music: Learn how to Filk. See Figure 7.2 for cover of

schedule of events. It was also at this convention that the workshop on "The Rules of

Muggle Quidditch" was led by Jennifer and presented in anticipation of the scheduled

Quidditch Match. Since 2008, the Sci-Fi On The Rock Convention has taken place

annually, and has grown substantially to include more participants and more science-

fiction, fantasy and popular culture franchises. The costume and masquerade events, in

particular, have significantly evolved in terms of popularity, success and attendance.
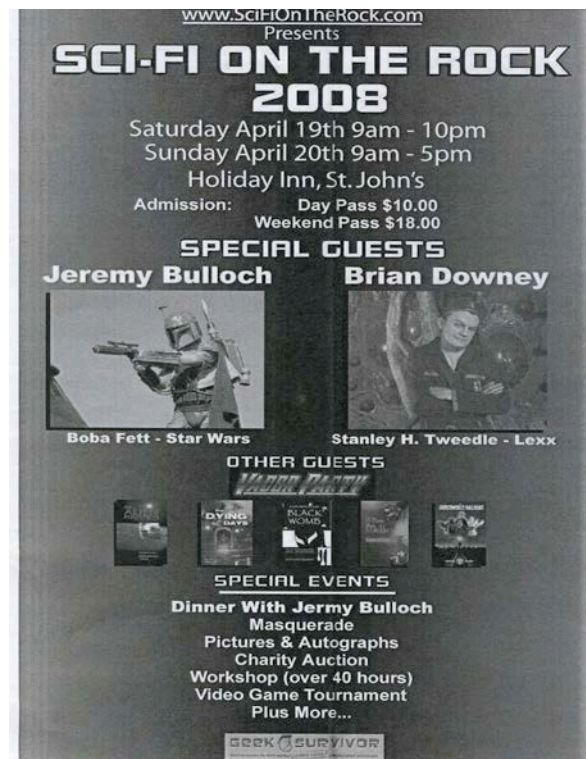
Figure 7.2: Sci-Fi on the Rock 2008 schedule of events booklet (cover).

The highlight of the 2008 convention was the main display conference room

which held an Internet café and numerous tables, booths, displays and products based on

popular science fiction and fantasy franchises such as Star Wars, Lexx, Star Trek, Manga

and Anime (see Figure 7.3). Local comic vendors and collectable venders, like

TimeMasters and Downtown Comics, sold a variety of paraphernalia and merchandise including toys, comic books, trade paperbacks and hardcovers, table-top miniatures, collectible cards and board games, statues and model kits, collectible action figures, games, books, posters and other various collectibles which were displayed on tables or booths in the main conference room. In this main room, participants circulated throughout the room, engaged socially in conversation, bought products and played games. At the autograph signing (which also took place in this room), you could purchase a photograph of the actors to sign for twenty dollars.

Figure 7.3: Tables at the Sci-Fi on the Rock Convention display science fiction and fantasy merchandise for sale. Groups of fans can also be seen in the background playing sci-fi and fantasy card games.

The MUN Quidditch and St. John's Quidditch Leagues presented a display table in the main floor room was and manned by three young women who were all undergraduate MUN students, Jennifer, Danica and Ryley, who participated in the MUN Quidditch League. Their booth contained information and photographs of the St. John's

and MUN Quidditch League in action (see Figure 7.4). An introduction to the league and an overview of the gameplay were also made available to convention attendees and potential Quidditch players (see Appendix C for the MUN Quidditch Handout and Appendix D for St. John's Quidditch League Handout). There was also a sign-up sheet for anyone interested in playing the game.

Figure 7.4: MUN Quidditch League and St. John's Quidditch League booth at the Sci-Fi on the Rock Convention 2008. MUN students Danica, Ryley and Jennifer help man the booth.

Featured prominently on the display table was a handmade collage made with simple folk art techniques of crafting, cutting and pasting. "MUN Quidditch" and "St. John's Quidditch League" is spelled out in hand-coloured paper letters attached to the top of the Bristol board. Photographs of the players both practicing and playing Quidditch were also mounted on construction-paper framing the photo and then adhered to the board with transparent tape. In the photos on the collage, players can be seen posing on their

brooms, posing with their team, running, jumping for the quaffle, and scoring through goal hoops (see Figure 7.5).

Figure 7.5: Folk art collage made by the MUN and St. John's Quidditch Leagues and displayed at the 2008 Sci-Fi on the Rock Convention.

In addition to the photos, selected passages and quotations are also written on small pieces of coloured paper and taped to the board. These Quidditch quotations were selected from two sources – Rowling's first Harry Potter novel, and Wizard Rock band lyrics. Passages and quotations, particularly from Quidditch player Oliver Wood, were taken from Potter novels: "'A Nimbus Two Thousand!' Ron moaned enviously. 'I've never even touched one!'"; "'Harry, this is no time to be a gentleman! Knock her off her broom if you have to!' ~ Oliver Wood"; "'Harry had learnt that there were seven hundred ways of committing a Quidditch foul and that all of them had happened during a World

Cup match in 1473;…'"; "'Now Quidditch is easy enough to understand even if it's not too easy to play.' ~ Oliver Wood."

Included among these selected quotes are some of the most famous Wizard Rock bands and lyrics that reference Quidditch. "'I know you're a seeker, I'd say you're a keeper!' ~ The Remus Lupins." This quote is from a song performed by Wizard Rock band, The Remus Lupins, called "Ravenclaw Seeker." This song is about a crush, in particular, Harry's crush on Cho Chang, a Ravenclaw Seeker. See Appendix E for full lyrics to this song.

"'All the kids at school are gonna be jealous, I got the Firebolt!' ~ Harry and the Potters" references the song "Firebolt" written by Wizard Rock Band Harry and the Potters from the perspective of the boy wizard and his broomsticks (The Firebolt and Nimbus 2000). The lyrics follow Rowling's narrative, from a perspective where Harry anticipates jealousy from other students. See Appendix E for full lyrics to this song.

"'Take off on my broom, I'm gonna fly circles around you.' ~ Harry and the Potters." This comes from Harry and the Potters' song "Gryffindor Rocks" and is primarily about overcoming and defeating your opponent in competition and then rubbing their faces in it. In this case, the song is written from the perspective of a Gryffindor Quidditch player who taunts other weaker players. See Appendix E for full lyrics to this song. Like parodies, taunts are especially important and traditional to children and teens as they face opposition and competition.

Two lyric excerpts are chosen from the same song performed by the Wizard Rock Band, The Parselmouths called "Quidditch Is My Favorite Sport" (see Appendix E for full lyrics). The first lyric "'I think sports are lame but I never ever miss a Quidditch

Game.' ~ The Parselmouths" is discussed further in upcoming section on Quidditch as physical activity. The second lyric, "'I don't care if it's raining, I don't mind if it's cold, Because boys in Quidditch outfits are a sight just to behold!' ~ The Parselmouths" illustrates an important reason why kids participate in Quidditch – for socializing and potential courtship. In this song, it's the girls who are coming out for Quidditch just to see the boys play it. (The topic of courtship is discussed further in the conclusion of this chapter.)

The homemade Quidditch collage is another example of kids using their traditional competences for popular culture purposes, in this case their folk art skills of collage making. This homemade piece, with its colourful cut-out letters, photographs and quotations, stood out against a lot of other manufactured items at the convention, and achieved its goal of luring interested fans to sign up for the competition. Juxtaposed with the handmade board was a manufactured Harry Potter lunch box. Jennifer contributed it to help decorate their display table: "I bought a lunch box – and I've no use for a lunch box – but it had Harry Potter on it…" (Jennifer 2008). This is another great illustration of the easy mixing of the folk and the popular (folk traditions and popular culture influences) so commonly found in fan-play.

7.3   Muggle Quidditch

Jennifer formed the St. John's Quidditch League in the fall of 2007. In the St. John's Quidditch League handout, Jennifer explains that the group was formed "following the lead of countless other groups of enthusiastic Harry Potter fans that wanted to play the game of Quidditch!" (Appendix D). She originally got the idea to start

a group after she attended a Harry Potter symposium in Toronto in 2007, and realized that

she would like to bring the game and experience to Newfoundland.

> …Quidditch looked like fun, so, you know, got me into starting it. And I was in a Harry Potter symposium in Toronto last summer. There were so many people there; they have it every year in a different spot. There were so many fans there. And I wanted to bring it back here, you know, because there isn't a whole lot of, you know, I'm sure there's a lot of fans, of course, but there's no groups. So… I'm trying to start some stuff here. (Jennifer 2008)

Influenced and inspired by the Inter-Collegiate Quidditch Association (consisting of

teams from colleges and universities around the US and Canada), Jennifer learned the

games rules and initiated the MUN St. John's Quidditch League.

Like the Department of Magical Games and Sports that govern Rowling's

fictional sport of Quidditch, The International Quidditch Association Inc. (IQA) claims to

be the governing body for the real-life sport of Muggle Quidditch. This body is not

associated with Time Warner, Warner Brothers, or J.K. Rowling. The Association

organizes and hosts the world's major Quidditch events and tournaments including nine

regional championships, the World Cup, International Open, Global Games, and QuidCon

(USQ "Mission" 2014).

"Muggle Quidditch"[37] began as intramural league in Middlebury College in

Vermont in 2005 (*Wikipedia* 2014a). In 2007, the group was founded as the

Intercollegiate Quidditch Association, and changed its name to IQA in 2010. In 2014, the

IQA saw its induction as an international sports federation with its creation of the

Congress, and is now comprised of nine national Quidditch associations including US

Quidditch, Quidditch Canada, Quidditch Benelux, Belgium Muggle Quidditch, Muggle

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[37] "Muggle Quidditch" is a popular name for Quidditch played by people or "muggles" (non-magical humans) in real world competitions.

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Quidditch Nederland, QuidditchUK, Australian Quidditch Association, Australian Quidditch Association, French Quidditch Association, Associazione Italiana Quidditch (*Wikipedia* 2014a). In addition to structure change, the IQA "will transition to become USQ (United States Quidditch) taking much of its staff, and the new IQA will be composed of an international body titled IQA Congress, whose job it is to facilitate and oversee quidditch development around the world, including within the United States and Canada" (*Wikipedia* 2014a). Also in 2014, the association changed its website name and address from the International Quidditch Association (IQA), found at <iqaquidditch.com> (2007-2013), to the US Quidditch (USQ), found at <usquidditch.org> (2014).

According to the website, US Quidditch (USQ) is a nonprofit organization "dedicated to governing the sport of quidditch and inspiring young people to lead physically active and socially engaged lives" (USQ 2014). As of 2014, Quidditch is played at over 300 colleges and high schools throughout North America, Australia and Europe. The IQA also produced an official magazine dedicated to the sport of Quidditch called *Quidditch Quarterly*. It is the only magazine dedicated to the real-life sport.

Figure 7.6: An advertisement for the IQA US Midwest Regional Championship found on the IQA website at <iqaquidditch.com> (website URL changed to <usquidditch.org> as of 2014).

7.3.1 Quidditch as Creativity, Community and Competition

The IQA has a three-fold mandate that they claim was necessary for Xander

Manshel, the founder of the IQA, to conceive and create real-life Quidditch. "Our three

goals… represent the progression from an idea to a fully-fledged national organization.

They can be emulated on any scale and unfold in the following order: creativity,

community, and competition" (IQA "Rulebook 5" 2007-2011). The IQA serves the fan

community, and encourages its engagement with the larger community.

> We want to be the one-stop shop for our members, players and fans all over the
> world to keep up to date on all quidditch news. We work with the media to
> arrange demonstration matches to showcase the sport to a wider audience and
> attract new participants and supporters. Our volunteers work with teams all over
> the world to set up local matches, tournaments, and quidditch conferences with
> regular season play. (IQA "Rulebook 5" 2007-2011)

When Jennifer learned of the league at a Harry Potter symposium in Toronto, she

decided to investigate the group on the Internet in order to bring the sport to

Newfoundland.

> I've just seen it around the Internet, stuff about Quidditch and there's been a lot of
> stuff in the media; I think [the television network] CBS did a piece on it recently,
> and yeah, well, basically, on Facebook I found the Inter-Collegiate Quidditch
> Association, and so we got the rules from them. But I've been seeing it around
> everywhere, so I just thought – St. John's Quidditch League, you know, just to get
> a general population to try to join. And we did get a lot of response, we got thirty
> plus people in the group, so there is an interest in it. And the MUN Quidditch
> League, we wanted to try and play other universities. We thought that would be
> pretty cool. (Jennifer 2008)

The IQA provides a standardized rulebook to groups of fans that enabled teams to

compete. It allows small groups like Jennifer's to play, and it also allows for university

students to compete against one another in the International Quidditch Association World

Cup. Jennifer also hosted a workshop at the convention where she provided a summary

of IQA's rules and explained how to play Muggle Quidditch. Most importantly, the IQA advocates gender equality and inclusivity with a "two-minimum rule." This regulation requires each team to have "at least two players on the field who identify with a different gender than at least two other players" (IQA "Rulebook 7" 2013).

Muggle Quidditch is a semi-contact, real-life sport played between two teams of seven players. In fictional Quidditch, Rowling's characters fly around on magical broom sticks high in the air above a pitch, while in real-life or Muggle Quidditch, players use real brooms, and hold the brooms between their legs as they attempt to score a goal against the opposing team. Each team consists of seven players: three Chasers who try to get the "quaffle" into a goal hoop; one Keeper who acts as goalie protecting the goal hoops; two Beaters who defend and protect their teammates from dangerous "bludgers;" and one Seeker whose aim is to catch the flying, "Golden Snitch." If the Snitch is caught, the game is over.

Figure 7.7: Manufactured Quidditch toys featuring a Quidditch quaffle, bludgers, bat and Golden Snitch. Photo from Hogwarts Alumni website (2011).

There are three balls used during game play. A fan may purchase official Harry Potter merchandise, such as a Quidditch quaffle, bludger and Golden Snitches (see Figure

7.7) or they may substitute other balls they already own or have access to such as through

their school and physical education programs. The quaffle is used to score a goal. The

IQA use a volleyball for the quaffle in competitions.

Figure 7.8: Muggle Quidditch game with both children and teenagers at the St. John's Sci-Fi and Fantasy Convention 2007. A "Spiderman" medium-sized ball is used for the quaffle which is thrown in the air at the start of the game.

In the game I observed, a smaller, softer bouncy "Spiderman" ball was used rather than a

volleyball (see Figures 7.8, 7.9, 7.10). This ball was probably selected for safety reasons

and to accommodate the fact that children, as young as nine-years-old, were playing

alongside teenagers and full-grown adults. When younger children or middle school

children play Quidditch, it is called Kidditch, and these kinds of adjustments and

accommodations are often made for young children. On the IQA forum page there was a

discussion on Kidditch and how to play it for young children. Along with advice for

simplifying the rules, the writer, Maz Havlin, who taught Kidditch at a summer day camp,

suggests using the same equipment, except for the size and density of the balls.

> I used the same equipment that we use in college. If you are teaching younger
> kids, I recommend just to change the ball size so they can hold them better. Also,
> try to get the bludgers in a uniform color and try to make sure the quaffle has a
> distinct different color from the bludgers. Besides that, equipment stays the same.
> (IQA "Discussion 385" 2010)

Also posted in the forum section of the IQA website under the topic of "Kidditch"

LukeChanget suggests lowering the goal hoop, and smaller balls and foam balls.

> I would assume you'd use the same equipment, unless you're dealing with very
> small children. In that case I would just improvise, make the hoops lower, try a
> size 2 or 3 soccer ball for a quaffle and maybe foam dodgeballs for bludgers?
> (IQA "Discussion 123" 2011)

Figure 7.9: Boys playing Muggle Quidditch. The boy in the Montreal Canadians jersey runs with the Quaffle (small Spiderman ball) attempting to score a goal.

In the magical world of Harry Potter, bludgers are made of iron and are enchanted to

chase players indiscriminately targeting the player closest to them. The Beater's goal is to

knock the bludgers away from their teammates as far as possible (Rowling "Quidditch"

2001, 46). While the IQA may use dodge balls for the bludgers, organizers of this local

game were purposefully age-appropriate and opted for smaller foam balls for the bludgers

others (others have used under-inflated balls). In fictional Quidditch, the Beaters also use

short, wooden clubs to hit the bludgers either away from their player or towards an

opponent. However, in Muggle Quidditch, clubs are not used. Rather the bludger

(volleyball) is grabbed by the beater's hands and thrown at members of the opposing

team. Again, given that this game was being played by children and adults, a softer ball

was a practical choice.

Figure 7.10: The boy in Montreal Canadians jersey (the Beater) makes a grab for a bludger, while three teenagers (chasers) attempt to take the quaffle.

The Seeker's duty is to catch the Golden Snitch. The Golden Snitch is roughly the

size of a walnut, and is enchanted to evade capture. In *Quidditch Through the Ages*,

Rowling has given the Snitch a local legend. She writes:

> There is a tale that a Golden Snitch evaded capture for six months on Bodmin
> Moor in 1884, both teams finally giving up in disgust at their Seekers' poor
> performances. Cornish wizards familiar with the area insist to this day that the

Snitch is still living wild on the moor, though I have not been able to confirm this story. (2001, 48)

According to IQA, the Snitch is a tennis ball held inside of a yellow sock tucked in the back of a Snitch runner's shorts. The Snitch is an unaffiliated, neutral player who is permitted to roam outside of the designated playing area. In this photo (Figure 7.11), Jennifer (as the Golden Snitch/Snitch Runner) is seen holding the Snitch (tennis ball) wrapped in a Hogwarts scarf. Because she is wearing a skirt as part of her Gryffindor House school uniform, she adapts the rule to accommodate her outfits, and holds the scarf wrapped Snitch. Once the seeker catches the Golden Snitch, the game is over.

Figure 7.11: Jennifer as the Golden Snitch, or the Snitch Runner, running outside the play area.

Although there have been many organized high school, university and community Quidditch groups and games, children too have played Quidditch in their imaginative and physical play, long before the release of IQA's rulebook. Many children I interviewed referenced playing Quidditch with their friends. For eight-year-old Nicholas, a Quidditch lover, all that's required in playing this magical game is a golf ball for the Golden Snitch; two baseballs for the bludgers; and a basketball for the quaffle. Using a baseball bat, and playing with his brother Ned, Quidditch regularly takes place in the Turner household. While this is not a formally organized activity, I still consider this form of live-action role-playing as Kidditch.

Contessa: Do you ever make things like a Golden Snitch?
Nicholas: Yeah, I usually use a golf ball for that.
Contessa: What else?
Nicholas: In Quidditch, two bludgers and one quaffle.
Contessa: What do you use for that?
Nicholas: I use a basketball for the quaffle, and two baseballs for the bludgers. …I just take red gloves and cut the fingers out. (2005)

Obviously Nicholas and his older brother have adapted their own rules to Quidditch, including the use of his mother's kitchen broom (as seen in Figure 7.12).

Figure 7.12: Twin siblings and Potter fans, Annie and Nicholas, wear homemade robes and play with a homemade wand and the household broom.

The children not only played with the household broom, the Turner parents also made their son a broom to "fly" around on during Quidditch game play, "And the broom, he had a broom, and he was riding around on that for a while. With grass tied on to the end, it was like a witch's broom. But it wasn't grass; it was like a birch broom kind of thing" (Mrs. Turner 2005).

Brooms are central in the sport of Quidditch and fans love to focus their attention and folk art skills on making their own and proudly demonstrating their craftsmanship and ownership. Jennifer's broom, for example, took time and effort to create. She had no previous experience constructing a broom, but she was able to locate the tree limbs and

twigs in her local area, assemble and varnish it. She recalls that it was surprisingly easy

for her to make given the availability of wood from her own neighbourhood and pictures

of brooms on the Internet to copy.

Figure 7.8: Teenage Quidditch organizer, Jennifer, in Gryffindor Quidditch robe at the St. John's Science Fiction and Fantasy Convention.

Along with her handmade broom, Jennifer also made two costumes to showcase at

the convention and Quidditch match: (1) a Hogwarts Quidditch robe (as seen in Figure

7.13), and (2) a Gryffindor school uniform and robe (as seen in Figures 7.14). Her

costumes come together in a collage and mix of thrift store items and hand-sewn pieces.

Most importantly, she learned to make the robes on her own, without the use of patterns.

With the help of her mother who showed Jennifer some basic sewing techniques on a

sewing machine, Jennifer made her costumes out of the items she bought at a thrift store

(special pants), online purchases, as well as hand-sewn pieces.

> Contessa: Is it all homemade what you're wearing?
> Jennifer: Some of it is. Like the robes, the robes I like to make myself. They're not, like, you know, I stuck holes in there, I don't use patterns or anything, I actually use existing clothes and cut it out because I have no idea how to use a pattern. So, but, it's like a mix of clothes from Value Village and stuff that I had myself. And I went out and bought pants for it and everything. And you can go, like there's a bunch of websites where you can order pieces for your costume, which I've done for a few of my costumes. (2008)

Figure 7.9: Jennifer changes into her second costume (a Gryffindor school uniform and robe), to referee the Muggle Quidditch. In this photo, Jennifer explains the game rules and introduces the Golden Snitch.

While costume making is a form of fan-play, Jennifer explains that there is also a

practical reason why she decided to make her own costumes: because what is available to

buy (1) is not particularly appealing, and (2) is not age-appropriate, as manufactured

costumes are often made for children to wear.

Jennifer: I think that the bought costumes are pretty generic, and they're not that good; and you could only buy them for children, that's the thing. You can only buy, like, you can go to Walmart and buy a Harry Potter costume if you're five, but you know, I couldn't go out and buy myself a Harry Potter costume, I'd have to go online and order it for myself.

Contessa: And you had never sewn before in your life?

Jennifer: No, not really, I you know, sort of knew how to use the sewing machine, but my mom, basically, you know, went through it with me. Took a lot of trial and error. (2008)

7.3.2   Quidditch and Creativity: Localization and Adaption

Certainly IQA's creativity mandate is evident in the costuming, as well as in the localization and adaptation rules, techniques and materials (such as brooms, balls and hoops). While IQA offers the rules to play Quidditch, it also offers the ability to be creative and adapt to any environment and situation. The need to be creative is what the IQA promotes as the heart of its mandate.

Xander Manshel's first steps toward creating real-life quidditch required a creative solution to a seemingly insurmountable challenge – how do you recreate a magic game without magic?

But creating a game requires more than just problem-solving; it requires confidence and the belief in a mandate for change. Quidditch was founded in the spirit of experimenting with new ideas and daring to participate in an unproven and often unpopular activity. We are born into a pre-fabricated world, and innovation along with the courage to share those ideas is essential for inspiring the next generation of leaders. Quidditch demands creative solutions every day to assemble a team and equipment, raise money, design uniforms and iconography, and plan events. (IQA "Rulebook 5" 2007-2011)

Constructions of goal hoops are good examples of variation and local expression. Similar to the ways in which children and youth will adapt and use their immediate environment around them to suit their immediate play needs, such as using a stick for a wand, the construction of goal hoops often show localization. Below is a close-up image

of one of the goal hoops used during the 2008 Sci-Fi on the Rock, Muggle Quidditch

match (Figure 7.15)

Figure 7.10: Hand-made Quidditch goal post made from a hula-hoop, tree limbs and rope.

The most common object used for a Quidditch hoop, is an inexpensive hula-hoop.

I suggest that this is a major reason why both children and young adults have pursued it –

it does not involve a large financial investment in expensive equipment. The goal hoop

can easily be assembled with simple materials like a hula-hoop, tree limbs, and rope or

twine as in the Newfoundland example (Figure 7.15). In some instructions, hoops are

made out of aluminum and the post made out of PVC piping. The making of Quidditch

hoops illustrates how children and youth adapt their play traditions, and create new play

traditions in order to align them with their natural environment, current circumstances and

popular culture trends and fandom.

7.3.3 Quidditch as Physical Activity and Social Change

One of the more surprising observations I made during my Quidditch investigation is that some Quidditch players do not actually enjoy participating in physical activity or sports. This sentiment (of not liking sports, but liking Quidditch) was also expressed in the lyrics of the Parselmouth's song "Quidditch Is My Favorite Sport" (Appendix E for full lyrics) found on the MUN Quidditch and St. John's Quidditch League Folk Art Collage (Figure 7.5), "'I think sports are lame but I never ever miss a Quidditch Game.'" Again, I believe this lyric illustrates how socializing and courtship are significant reasons why youth participate in Quidditch. In many ways, a true statement of Jennifer's fandom comes from her confession that she doesn't really enjoy participating in sports.

> I'm not much into sports at all. So, Quidditch, even though it's a sport, it's just, you know, another way of showing that you're a huge fan of Harry Potter. And to get out there and take something that is, ah, you know, there's flying balls and flying brooms, and adapting it to your own methods on the ground, you know, it just shows how big of a Harry Potter fan you are. (2008)

Despite her lack of interest in the majority of physical sports, for Jennifer, initiating and organizing Quidditch is another way to show one's commitment to Harry Potter fandom. Publicly demonstrating one's fandom to the world is obviously significant to youths. By organizing the sport and its players, Jennifer has formed social groups, taken on leadership responsibilities, engaged in social activism, all the while being physically active.

Although some players dislike physical sport, the health benefits are something the IQA strongly advocate. This aligns with the IQA's mandate "To create, connect, and enhance our communities":

We are strong advocates of the health benefits of quidditch and its potential for positive social change. Sports participation drops off during puberty, even among formerly active children, and the average teenager spends over seven hours a day in front of screens. We know from hosting clinics at elementary and middle schools around the country that quidditch gets kids excited about exercising, especially those who are uninterested in traditional sports. For that reason we work to bring quidditch to children in the form of sustainable school programs paired with a mentor team at the high school or college level. (IQA "Rulebook 5" 2007-2011)

Physical activity is therefore achieved by also facilitating competition, the third prong of

the IQA mandate:

Xander understood that the competition was the glue that would hold the organization together and keep people coming back, making competition the final, keystone element of the triad.

The IQA continues to follow Xander's dream by providing, facilitating, and promoting as many opportunities for competitive quidditch as possible. These include but are not limited to: the annual World Cup event, sponsored regional tournaments around the country, reporting and tracking global rankings, and setting and developing rules and guidelines for organizing and officiating games. (IQA "Rulebook 5" 2007-2011)

In fact, the IQA made a plea for their sport to be included in the Olympics when the

London 2012 Olympic torch arrived in Oxford (*The Telegraph* 2012). In the July 10,

2012 online edition of *The Telegraph*, Alex Benepe of IQA argued that Quidditch is a

sport worthy of inclusion in the Olympics,

There are a lot more ridiculous sports in the Olympics right now if you ask me, so I think anyone who doubts it should come out and see Quidditch and see how intense it is, it's a rough sport it's an exciting and dynamic sport and I would encourage anyone who has their doubts to come out and try it for themselves. (*The Telegraph* 2012)

The IQA also cite the literary roots of their activity and are social activists for

literacy.

Additionally, the literary roots of real-life quidditch underscore the role that reading plays in our creative development and demonstrates, again, that books

have the power to unite and forge new communities and traditions. To make sure others can benefit from the role that one book played in creating this game, the IQA takes strategic steps to promote literacy. (IQA "Rulebook 5" 2007-2011)

Considering how socially active Jennifer was, the IQA seemed like a natural fit for her leadership skills. At this point in time Jennifer was actively involved in attending symposiums, organizing Quidditch leagues, writing fan fiction (see Chapter Nine), studying and practicing fiber arts and textile skills, and learning music to play wizard rock. Without doubt, Jennifer is a leader in her field.

> Contessa: So, why did you become the organizer of all of this? Because you really seem to be the ring leader, right?
> Jennifer: Well, no one else is doing it really. I mean once it started here, and I really wanted, I really love Harry Potter so I want to find out who else is out there who loves Harry Potter as much as me, and get together and have these Quidditch games and discussions. (2008)

From charity auctions to literacy advancements, Potter fans reveal their play is more than just pleasure seeking. It is ironic that a book so often demonized as satanic literature is also the source of such generous community activism for issues such as literacy, community engagement and physical education. When discussing Jennifer's leadership and organization of the Quidditch match, teenage Stephen said that fans like Jennifer had the "magic to move people!" (2008), and observes that fans emulate and model their behavior on their favourite characters. In the following example I begin by explaining to Stephen how Jennifer organized the Quidditch leagues and match.

> Contessa: Do you think the books do anything in that way? Empower people or make them leaders or anything like that?
> Stephen: I'm sure they do. They tend to, they sort of have this kind of magic to move people. And you know, they tend to follow the character's examples from the books themselves. (2008)

Identifying and following the character's example is explored further in Chapter Nine on fan fiction.

7.4   Wizard Rock and Social Activism

Wizard Rockers sing about Harry Potter characters, plotlines, and perspectives. In addition to an online encyclopedia devoted to celebrating the Wizard Rock genre (<wizrocklopedia.com>), there are hundreds of Wizard Rock bands (Vineyard 2007). Several notable groups include Harry and the Potters [Figure 7.16), The Whomping Willows, The Owl Post and the Mudbloods, The Remus Lupins, DJ Lovegood, Tom Riddle and Friends. Wizard Rock song lyrics are inspired by the Harry Potter universe: "Yes, there have been songs inspired by other cult books and movie series (think Led Zeppelin and 'Lord of the Rings,') but wizard rock isn't a song here or there or even a concept album. It's become a genre" (Vineyard 2007). The musical arrangements of Wizard Rock songs are mostly original, however sometimes Wizard Rockers will rewrite the lyrics to a popular song while maintaining the song's original musical score. There is no specific style of music to Wizard Rock, as it can range from pop to jazz in musical style.

Figure 7.16: Image of Wizard rock band, Harry and the Potters (*Wikipedia* 2013a).

In the following interview excerpt, Jennifer explains Wizard Rock.

Jennifer:	And my friend and I, one of the girls at the table, we started a Wizard Rock Band. I don't know if you've heard of Wizard Rock?
Contessa:	No.
Jennifer:	Well, basically it's music about Harry Potter and it's all original stuff; people write their own lyrics and music and everything and it's pretty popular. It was started by Harry and the Potters, that's one group. And most of my iTunes is filled with Wizard Rock. And so we decided that we wanted to start that here too.
Contessa:	Okay. That's something else also in the works?
Jennifer:	Yeah.
Contessa:	So, you mean, you literally will just sing about it, or…
Jennifer:	Well, there's so much different stuff. There's stuff from the perspectives of the characters; like Harry and the Potters usually write from Harry's perspective. And there's The Remus Lupins they're another really popular one, Moaning Myrtle, and Parselmouths, there's all kinds of groups, and every genre of music is in there.
Contessa:	And, so, are you singing?
Jennifer:	I'm not. My friend is because I can't carry a tune. But I picked up the guitar specifically for the Wizard Rock Band. The thing is though, with Wizard Rock, is that, most of them can't sing.
Contessa:	Oh really?
Jennifer:	Yeah, like Harry and the Potters you know, they're fun to listen to, and, you know, they're not that bad but most of them, like, it doesn't really matter with Wizard Rock, you just get up there and sing.

Contessa:	And it's all original?
Jennifer:	Yes. I've only ever heard one cover, it was "Ninety-Nine Red Balloons," it was turned into "Ninety-Nine Death Eaters." That's the only one though I've ever heard that…
Contessa:	That's a parody of it?
Jennifer:	Yeah. The rest are all original. (2008)

Jennifer doesn't let the fact that she isn't able to play a musical instrument stop her. Rather, she takes it upon herself to learn guitar and form a band with someone who can sing in her place. Upon returning from the Harry Potter symposium in Toronto, she began both Muggle Quidditch and Wizard Rock. I have observed that fans like Jennifer often push their own personal abilities and take on challenges that they are eager to learn (such as sewing, art, writing, music and sport) in order to pursue their fandom.

Wizard Rock bands are formed by fans of all ages, however they are predominantly teenagers, including male groups like Harry and the Potters, and female groups like The Parselmouths (Figure 7.17). Wrought with teen angst, the sound of Wizard Rock (also referred to as Wrock) can range from folk and electronic, to metal, hip-hop and rap, but is unified as a genre by its Harry Potter perspective. Many Wrockers produce their own music and videos and share them on social media networks. For example, there are hundreds of featured Wrock videos on various Wizard Rock playlists on YouTube. Numerous videos show Wizard Rock bands playing at various book stores and locations, sometimes in celebration of a book release. For example, The Remus Lupins and The Parselmouths played at the University Bookstore in Seattle, W.A. on June 29, 2007. The Remus Lupins also have their own YouTube channel and, as of August 4, 2014, they had 4,539 subscribers (this is up from April 19, 2009 when they had 2,204

subscribers) and 208,821 total video views (compared to 38,026 channel views as of April 19, 2009).

Figure 7.17: Wrock band, The Parselmouths. Photo from The Parselmouths' MySpace page (photo removed as of 2014).

Wizard Rockers write about scenarios, plots and characters from the books; they retell a particular scene such as Harry fighting Voldemort. "'I call it wizard angst,' said Jace Crion of the Texas band Talons & Tea Leaves. 'My parents weren't killed by an evil wizard, but people relate to all that teenage angst'" (Vineyard 2007). "'At some point, you're going to identify with Harry,' said Devin Overman of the Owl Post. 'People really like the concept that this world is just not enough – we have to find something else'" (Vineyard 2007). Wizard rock music is similar to fan fiction in that it adopts perspectives from the characters, and how they feel. "For every Potter character, there is a corresponding wizard-rock band, singing from that character's perspective. Harry and the Potters (which features two 'Harry' brothers), for instance, have songs about saving Ginny Weasley from the Basilisk in the Chamber of Secrets as well as from romantic rival Dean Thomas" (Vineyard 2007).

Matt Maggiacomo from the Whomping Willows explains that he developed his

character "by thinking about what the Whomping Willow does and what it means, and I

realized it's protecting an outcast – so [the tree] itself became an outcast who is reaching

out" (Vineyard 2007).

> On an indie level, bands are recording albums, shooting videos, touring, putting together compilations and, like Harry, trying to save the world. Via collectives such as the Harry Potter Alliance and charity compilations such as "Wizards and Muggles Rock for Social Justice," there's a strong push in the wizard-rock world to connect issues in the book to those of the real world. (Vineyard 2007)

> "'Literature is open to interpretation,' Maggiacomo said, 'but you can relate

Voldemort and his movement to what's happening in Darfur. The theme of purebloods,

it's pervasive'" (Vineyard 2007).

> 'With the Ministry of Magic denying Voldemort's return, denying a great danger to the community, you can see the parallels,' said Harry and the Potters guitarist/singer Paul DeGeorge. 'Our songs, like the books, are really about the real world, so that people can find meaning to it outside of the fact that it's about Harry Potter.' (Vineyard 2007)

The site is also linked to <www.freepress.net>, a website that advocates media

reform, transforming democracy and saving the Internet, and protests media consolidation

through concerts and albums featuring Wizard Rock bands. One such project is called

"Rock Out Against Voldemedia," an album composed of Wizard Rock music (including

such songs as "Save the Quibbler" by Gred and Forge and "The Rebel Call" by The

Whomping Willow) that encourages people to protest to Congress against a bill that

would allow media consolidation. This project was released by The Harry Potter Alliance

in 2007, and available for free digital download. (See Figure 7.18 for album cover.)
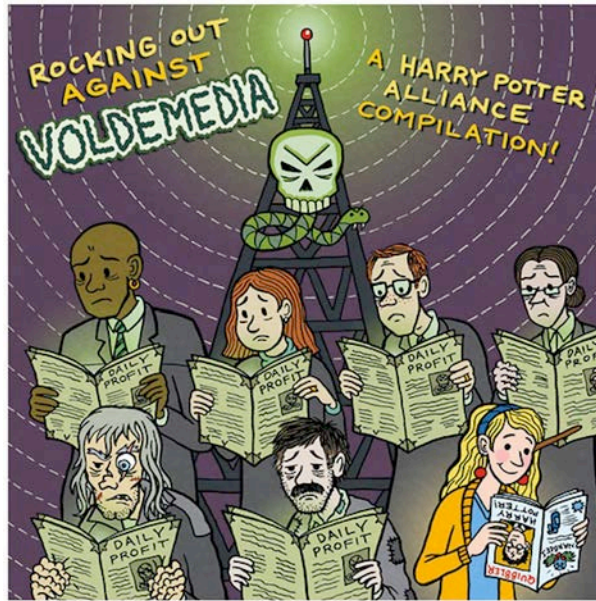
Figure 7.18: Album Cover for Wizard Rock band compilation, "Rocking Out Against Voldemedia" (Fanlore Wiki 2012).

The Harry Potter Alliance (HPA) is another group which includes child, teen and adult Potter fans who come together to create political alliances around global issues such as censorship and media consolidation: "The Harry Potter Alliance is a coalition of fandom leaders and members who feel passionate about the power of story to inspire and affect social change. Just as Harry and his friends fought the Dark Arts in JK Rowling's fictional universe, we strive to destroy real-world horcruxes[38] like inequality, illiteracy, and human rights violations" (*The Harry Potter Alliance* 2012). According the HPA's mandate, harnessing the power of popular culture is key moving fans towards making the world a better place to live. The Harry Potter Alliance (HPA) is a

> nonprofit that takes an outside-of-the-box approach to civic engagement by using parallels from the Harry Potter books to educate and mobilize young people across the world toward issues of literacy, equality, and human rights. Our mission is to empower our members to act like the heroes that they love by acting for a better

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[38] A "horcrux" is a magical object used by a Dark witch or wizard to achieve immortality by hiding a part of their soul in the device. In the Harry Potter storyline, Voldemort divides his soul into seven horcruxes.

world. By bringing together fans of blockbuster books, TV shows, movies, and YouTube celebrities we are harnessing the power of popular culture toward making our world a better place. Our goal is to make civic engagement exciting by channeling the entertainment-saturated facets of our culture toward mobilization for deep and lasting social change. (*The Harry Potter Alliance* 2012)

Not only does this Alliance provide a place for fans to support global initiatives like sending books to Rwanda to encourage literacy, but they also provide a means of protesting, in this case against media conglomeration and censorship. In many ways, Rowling's book has become an inspiration for a collective movement against censorship.

The Harry Potter Alliance (see <thehpalliance.org>) takes its stance on censorship, based upon the morals and philosophies of Harry Potter (love, generosity, freedom of speech) and applying it to volunteering and activism such as spreading literacy to Darfur, and also trying to end genocide in the same region. For Wizard Rockers, new meaning is generated by the text. They use the text to express the personal, social, and political, commenting on relevant topics ranging from love interests to genocide, human rights, censorship and media consolidation.

In becoming politically active and creating political alliances, children and teens learn the power of their own agency. For some youths, Harry Potter has allowed them to grow and develop their leadership skills. Jennifer is an excellent example of this. As a child, she read the books, attended book and movie launches, and by the time she was fifteen years old, created her own Harry Potter website. As a young adult, she continued her fan activities and began organizing community Quidditch groups and a Wizard Rock band.

7.5   Socializing, Courtship and Drinking Games

Without doubt, Quidditch appeals to participants for different reasons. For some

teenagers like Jennifer it is an opportunity to demonstrate one's fandom to the world; for

Jacob, it is an opportunity to be social; while for others, like Chad, it is an opportunity to

play a game.

> Contessa: So, you're not really a fan, but you would engage in stuff like this?
> Because it's a social element, is that what it is?
> Jacob: That's just it.
> Chad: No, it's a different kind of game really. These people are really
> into what they are doing, so they really enjoy it and that makes
> everything more fun. It's not so much that it is social; it's a game.
> (2008)

Quidditch is fun, even for self-proclaimed non-fans, like Chad:

> Contessa: But why would you be here today?
> Chad: Well, Muggle Quidditch just sounds fun. It does sound fun, and it's
> all geeky people, even if they have different tastes than me. Might
> as well try it out right? (2008)

Nine-year-old Gregory who played Quidditch that day, was just looking for something

fun to occupy his time: "I just wanted to come here and have some things to do" (Gregory

2008).

For courting teenagers who love Harry Potter, it is also the perfect place to spend

an afternoon. While they were there to watch the Quidditch match, these two Harry Potter

fans took the opportunity to snuggle on the sidelines (Figure 7.19). After taking their

photograph, Janey approached me to ask if I could email it to her so that she could have a

memento of their date and day together. I willingly agreed and emailed her the photo.

This demonstration of courtship complemented The Parselmouths lyric selected by the

female organizers of the Quidditch match that day, "I don't care if it's raining, I don't mind if it's cold, Because boys in Quidditch outfits are a sight just to behold!"

Figure 7.19: Teenage Potter fans spend an afternoon date at a Quidditch match.

One of the most significant reasons why children and youth participate in some form of Quidditch (whether it be a physical sport or a drinking game like Quidditch Pong) is the opportunity to socialize. Quidditch Pong, for example, is adapted from the traditional game Beer Pong and is often played by college students, particularly those who love Harry Potter. Numerous photos of youth playing Quidditch Pong (sometimes while wearing Potter costumes), and their homemade Quidditch Pong game pieces, can be found on the Internet, demonstrating another form of material culture fan play (see Figure 7.20).

Quidditch Pong is a game that implements a table, cups, beer and ping pong balls. Up to ten cups (often plastic red cups) of beer are placed at opposing ends of a long rectangular table and formed in a pyramid. Players stand at opposite ends of the table,

facing one another, and try to throw or bounce their ping pong balls into their opposing

player's cup. If a player makes the shot, the opposing team player drinks the contents of

the cup and removes the cup from play. The first player (or team) to make all shots into

the opposing team's cups is the winner.

Beer Pong is adapted to Quidditch Pong in several ways. With Quidditch Pong,

the ping pong ball becomes the quaffle and is used to score points. Quidditch goal hoops

are made for players to throw the ping pong ball through. According to Louie's Loops

website at <www.louiesloops.com> (operated by a twenty-year-old male college student

and crochet maker) where he posted his group's Quidditch Pong game creation, "if the

quaffle goes through a hoop the enemy team is allowed to use bludgers (hands) to knock

it out of the way." As well, when there is only one cup remaining, the Golden Snitch may

be used in order to make the last shots more challenging. According to the website,

Quidditch goal hoops can be made with clothes hangers and yellow duct tape, and the

Golden Snitch can be made by wrapping a ball in yellow duct tape and applying paper

wings.[39] The photo below found at <www.louiesloops.com> demonstrates the group's

creativity.

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[39] The website also provides a homemade recipe for a Potter fan-favourite, Butterbeer: seven parts Rootbeer or Cream Soda; one part butterscotch schnapps; and one part vanilla vodka. There are, however, numerous non-alcoholic Butterbeer recipes online that are popular with underage Potter fans. Commercial versions of Butterbeer also exist. "Cold" and "frozen" versions of Butterbeer are sold in the Harry Potter theme park at Universal Orlando (Ross 2010), and Starbucks has a version available from their secret-menu (Strecker 2013).

Figure 7.20: Quidditch Pong (Louie's Loops website 2011).

In fact, this photo became extremely popular and went viral as a meme.[40] The meme

below (Figure 7.21) was found on the website.

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[40] The term "meme" was coined by evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins in 1976. A meme is "a contagious unit of information (such as an idea, slogan, or fashion) that replicates through communication networks" (Webster's 2003, n.p.).

Figure 7.21: Quidditch Pong meme (JPEGY 2012).

7.6   Conclusion

Socializing and courtship possibilities, leadership and activism opportunities,

along with the element of physical competition, may be part of the reason why Quidditch

in Newfoundland has continued on since 2007 when leagues were first formed. In 2012, a

new duo of fans (Lori Wareham and Rebecca Hynes, both MUN students) attempted to

revamp and reorganize the leagues, and form a Newfoundland Quidditch team. The St.

John's Area Quidditch Scrimmage Facebook page, found at

<www.Facebook.com/QuidditchNL>, was started in August 2012 and encompasses a

larger area of eastern Newfoundland, including St. John's, Mount Pearl and Paradise.

This is somewhat surprising given that the final movie was released in 2011, but a

revealing sign that Harry Potter fan activities have not ceased since the release of the final

book or the final movie. In fact, the new group also created a booth at the 2013 Sci-Fi on

the Rock Convention in April. This photo, of the St. John's Quidditch Scrimmage

League's display at the science fiction and fantasy convention, was found on their

Facebook Page (see Figure 7.22).

Figure 7.22: St. John's Quidditch Scrimmage League display at the 2013 Sci-Fi on the Rock Convention in St. John's, Newfoundland (St. John's Area Quidditch Scrimmage League Facebook page).

The group's Facebook page <www.Facebook.com/QuidditchNL>, provides a

description of their activities:

> Love Harry Potter? Or sports? Or just trying something new? We're starting a little Quidditch Scrimmage league in St. John's/Mount Pearl/ Paradise area. Anyone ages 14+ is more than welcome to come out! Absolutely no experience is required, all we need you to bring is some energy and be ready to have some fun!

Also posted on the group's Facebook page is an advertisement for their organization and

a call out to participants (see Figure 7.23). Playing on the Quidditch word "Keeper," the

quote "My name may not be Oliver Wood, but baby I'm a Keeper," uses the lure of

socializing to appeal to youths, "There's nothing like a good pick up line. Especially one

coming from a Quidditch Player." This ad also illustrates how youth groups use social

networking sites (such as Facebook and Twitter, and technology such as QR Codes that

can be scanned with Smart Phones) to advertise their activities.

Figure 7.23: Advertisement for QuidditchNL (St. John's Quidditch Scrimmage League Facebook page).

Quidditch in St. John's has therefore taken on a new face with these two new organizers.

In May 2013 the group led a Quidditch event as part of Mount Pearl Youth Week.

Quidditch in Newfoundland continues to appeal to youths; it's fun, and leads to

socializing, where people can meet new people. In an interview with the MUSE, which

featured an article on the group, Wareham expresses her desire to bring people together,

and provide them with something they can't get anywhere else.

> Wareham emphasizes that her goal for the Newfoundland Quidditch league is to
> bring people together, and to have fun. She mentions that people who would never
> have met otherwise have found a common ground through the Quidditch matches.
> "People who play rugby really like it, but people who like the books also like it,"

said Wareham. And you don't get that anywhere else." (Skanes 2012)

This chapter demonstrates the numerous ways for youths to engage in the world of Harry Potter and socialize with fellow fans. Whether it be through Wizard Rock, or participating in an Intermural Quidditch game, a community Quidditch game, a children's Kidditch game, or a college student's Quidditch Pong, there are plenty of opportunities for fans to engage in their favourite play activities all the while socializing with one another. The adaption, creation and continuation of Harry Potter fan based activities and events, such as Muggle Quidditch and Wizard Rock, not only stems from the fact that, as literature, it continues to engage new readers, but as a social phenomenon, it offers exciting opportunities for fans to be creative, engage in their community, compete in physical activities, protest injustice and most importantly, socially engage with one another.

Chapter 8

Children's Fan-Play on the Internet:
Websites, YouTube and Viral Videos

8.1   Introduction – The Internet as a Playground

Children's folklorists Felicia R. McMahon and Brian Sutton-Smith tell us that

"today's more symbolically mobile children are sometimes more likely to be found in

their own bedroom or in front of a television set or at a home computer than in the streets

or the playground" (McMahon and Sutton-Smith 1995, 296-7). While my research in

Harry Potter youth fandom reveals that this fandom exists on playgrounds and in

backyards and bedrooms (Chapters Five, Six, and Seven), it also reveals that the Internet

has become the fan's playground (Chapter Eight and Chapter Nine).

Ellen Seiter explains that despite economic and social factors which influence a

child's access to the Internet (limited and slow or available and fast), "children of all

social classes rapidly find engaging materials on the Internet and master the technical

skill necessary to use the Web for game playing and downloading pictures and audio and

video files" (Seiter 2005, 1). Children's access to fan materials on the Internet and their

ability to use technology was proven numerous times in my interviews with young

children. For example, by the time Madeline was twelve-years-old, she played games on

multiple Harry Potter websites, created and registered a Potter fan email address

<Hermione@xxxx.xx>, [41] watched the launch of the last movie online, purchased Potter

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[41] A common play activity for fans is to create and use Potter-inspired email addresses, which are often based on their favourite characters.

merchandise on eBay, tweeted about Harry Potter, used a Potter picture as her Facebook

profile pic, and even bought her movie-launch tickets online. Madeline explains, "I

watched online, the premiere, and everyone, and all the dresses and stuff, and like, they

were all crying because it was over, and I was there tearing up because it's like, 'Ah, it's

over!' And like the slogan, 'It All Ends!' Like my Facebook profile picture was Harry

with 'It All Ends!' Like, I thought it was sort of depressing" (2011).

        Madeline and Molly also monitored and purchased their movie launch tickets online:

Contessa:	And when did you get your tickets?
Molly:	Ah, the day they started selling…
Madeline:	The day they came out.
Molly:	…[Madeline] like, called me….
Madeline:	I was like, "[Molly] they're on sale!"
Molly:	I was like, "Oh my god!" and we ran to the computer.
Madeline:	Yeah.
Molly:	Yeah. Because [Madeline] was checking everyday.
Madeline:	Oh, I checked every single day [in unison] from like May…
Molly:	…from like May…
Madeline:	Oh, April.
Molly:	From April? Like, and, late April, early May, we checked every day, and then she, like, calls me and is like "[Molly!]" I said, "What?", I said. "Tickets are on sale!" I said, "Oh my god!" [Excited]
Madeline:	I was actually at my friend's house and she was on Twitter and… one of the hashtags was #harrypottertickets and I was like, [very serious] "Give me the laptop! I need to check the website." And they were on sale, and… I texted [Christine] and [Molly], and I was like, "THEY'RE ON SALE!" So I was pretty excited! (2011)

These two girls also referenced their online interactions with computer games, movie

websites, purchasing online tickets, Pay Pal, Facebook, Twitter and eBay. Nine year old

William illustrated his knowledge of fan merchandise and his ability to order online. He

was extremely impressed at receiving it in the mail two days later.

William:	Well, there's a Marauder's Map in The Prisoner of Azkaban, and I ordered that. So I have that.

Contessa:	Oh, where did you order that from?
William:	Ahm, warnerbrothers.com. [sic]
Contessa:	Oh, you ordered it online? Wow.
William:	And it came in two days after.
Contessa:	Oh wow. And why did you order that?
William:	I don't know. It really caught my eye. It was really cool. (2010)

Both children (from babies and toddlers up to pre-teens) and teenagers (from thirteen to nineteen) are affected by and actively participate in Internet activities. YouTube videos of children include a wide range of ages, mostly doing or saying something humorous. For example, babies are often captured laughing hysterically, or biting fingers (such as the popular "Charlie Bit My Finger") to the plot of Star Wars being retold by a 3-year-old (see YouTube video "Star Wars According to a 3 year old"). Both viral videos have reached 100's of millions of viewers. Teenagers play a more predominant role in the arena of online fan fiction, but that is not to say that non-literate children cannot tell a story – they just do so orally or via drawings. But these things too have made their way onto the Internet placed there by proud parents.

There is no denying that children are using the Internet for a variety of purposes; however, primarily, children are using the Internet to play, interact with their peers, purchase, and protest. Most importantly, for children, the Internet can empower them with access to what interests them, a way to subvert restraint and parental control, a way to explore what is often unavailable to them in the classroom: "The Internet has the potential to empower students by making it possible for them to delve into topics of interest that are not normally covered by school resources" (Seiter 2005, 1). (Similarly, in the following Chapter Nine on fan fiction, I argue that fan fiction and fan art also

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provide children with ways to explore topics that are of interest to them, and that aren't normally discussed in the classroom.)

The Internet provides a playground for children to explore their fandom. Children can explore official J.K. Rowling websites, such as <www.jkrowling.com> and <www.pottermore.com>, or children can explore unofficial fan sites, such as the Leaky Cauldron <www.the-leaky-cauldron.org> (also available at <www.leakynews.com>). They can also watch or create their own viral videos on YouTube and Vimeo. Not only do these sites offer children a variety of ways to engage with the Harry Potter universe but, while online, children find an eager audience with fellow fans who are equally excited to share their interests and opinions. In chat room and discussion boards, children have a mostly sympathetic and understanding audience to share their common views with.

The following chapter explores the Internet as a playground for children, investigating what is available for children on the Internet, what children do with Internet playground opportunities, and how they use the Internet to express their identities. Like local, folk-group play demonstrated by the children in Chapter Six and Chapter Seven, I argue that play also offers equal opportunities for children to locate and express their own interests, come together and unite in solidarity, while often subverting authority. Susan Murry calls the Internet "a contested site where [children] can enact a tiny battle for visibility" (1999, 233). A case example demonstrating the power-struggle between kid fans and corporate America over their rights on the Internet is also explored in the conclusion of this chapter.

8.2 Fan Websites

Many teens revealed their interest in online chat rooms and fan websites:
[I] Used to read websites on what people thought was going to happen in the next
books; sometimes alone, sometimes with friends. (Sienna 2008)
 [I] followed the Warner Brothers online website for upcoming movies, and other
various sites for spoilers and predictions. (Sophia 2008)
I take part in online chat rooms and discussion boards at Mugglenet.com. I
usually go into this website at least once or twice a day. I discuss the books and
movies with many different people at any time. (Shara 2008)
Sometimes I go on Harry Potter's official site to see what's going on. (Roary
2008)

Contessa:	Do you go online?
Madison:	I go on Mugglenet and I go on all the… I go on *Wikipedia* and read all the articles on Harry Potter when I'm bored.
Contessa:	What's your favourite site?
Madison:	Oh, J.K. Rowling.
Contessa:	…You say J.K. Rowling is your favourite site?
Madison:	Yeah, because she has like, if you've never gone on her site, she has all these secret things you can do and find, like, original writings from the book, and you can collect them all, all these little magic port keys and all these things to play with. (2007)

For seven year old Nicholas, the Internet has a host of games to play including a

website that allows online users to play Quidditch, enter Harry and Ron's room,

Hermione's room, Gringott's bank, and the troll's bathroom: "On the computer there's

this puppet show where they're killing, the, ah, ahm, evil Voldemort, and Voldemort

takes their wands so they go get machine guns" (2005). Nicholas' father, Jim Turner,

also added, "He also goes on HarryPotter.com" (Mr. Turner 2005)

Fan websites appeal to children for a number of reasons. Not only are they

aesthetically pleasing (colourful, bright, playful images, icons and texts), they also entice

children with free downloadable images, videos and music, quizzes, fun facts, house

points, countdown clocks to anticipated events or releases, sweepstakes, contests and fan

promotions. They offer fans opportunities to purchase Potter merchandise, from plastic

toy wands to movie replicas made of pewter. They even offer ways of appointing online participants to the Hogwarts houses, sometimes collecting house points for their team as Adele explains, "I participated in what was an online Hogwarts School called Hogwarts Online (HOL). Everyone would get sorted into houses through a personality quiz, and would attend online classes, chat in the common [room] (I was in Ravenclaw), which was basically just answering HP [Harry Potter] trivia" (Adele 2008). Lyndsay also explains her online experience:

> Contessa: Do you go on websites?
> Lyndsay: I go on the website and get sorted into different houses. Once I was, I was never Slytherin, but I was Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw like three times, and Gryffindor like twenty times. (2005)

Although colourful and enticing, what is most important is that fan websites also provide an outlet for children to explore their own interests, with or without parental monitoring. Fan sites, such as Mugglenet, Leaky Cauldron, and Harry Potter Fan Fiction, offer child and teen fans opportunities to play and explore their interests through a variety of online choices including chat rooms, discussion forums, blogs, vlogs, podcasts, online games, video sharing and publishing fan fiction and fan art. Figure 8.1 shows a Mugglenet poster found on the MUN Campus, St. John's in 2008, advertising Harry Potter podcasts. To children and teens, fan sites are invitations to explore their own interests and play, while at the same time creating a folk group where children feel a sense of belonging and unity with those who share their interests. Scott's comment below was followed by his laughter and amusement at his father being sorted into the Slytherin House online. "I was on the Harry Potter website yesterday and I sorted myself on Saturday into Gryffindor, and my mom got sorted into Gryffindor and my dad he got

sorted into Slytherin" (Scott 2005). In the Harry Potter universe, students are assigned one of four houses when they enter Hogwarts as a rite-of-passage. This tradition has been mimicked by website designers.
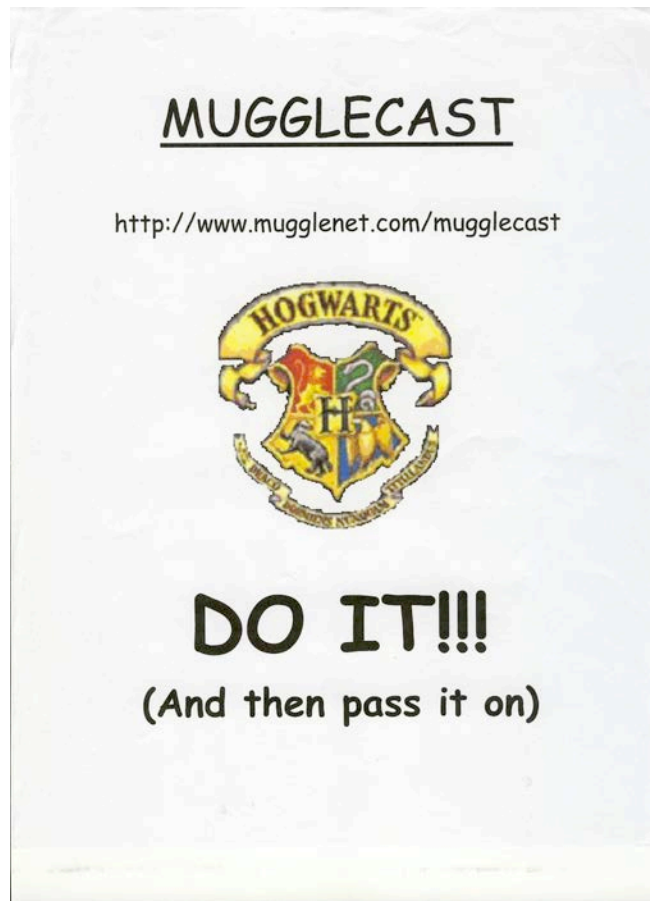
Figure 8.1: Fan posting for the Mugglenet.com found on the MUN St. John's campus in 2008.

Online games are very popular activities and are particularly appealing to children. Eight year old Lucas explains "I go on the computer and yeah. … And you can do different things on it. Yeah, and it tells you like, they make up things and like, its kinda cool. I just like playing" (Lucas 2005). Many of these online games are traditional games (often played with paper and pen like crosswords, word searches, visual puzzles, etc.) that have been combined with technology to give the children an interactive,

innovative, and involved experience. These websites also provide children with a technological playground to play with their fandom. For example, on The Leaky Cauldron website, creators offer children traditional paper-and-pen games remade as Potter games. Other games allow for participants to play as their favourite characters, as Lucas explains, "On the computer, I play this little game and I pretend I'm killing Snape, like 'cause Harry has his wand and he's going all around trying to get these things. And when somebody shows up, I pretend to sleep and I try to kill them" (Lucas 2005).

Fan websites often offer up-to-date media coverage of book, film, author, and celebrity news, often in the form of podcasts and YouTube videos. Many youths I interviewed went to these websites for coverage of movie release dates and details and actor interviews. The change of the final movie launch date from November 2011 to July 2011 also sparked an online rumour that Rowling addressed on her website. Podcasts also provide updated Harry Potter and J.K. Rowling fan new including information on actors, Rowling's appearances, tours and media releases. The Leaky Cauldron also hosts the official HP podcast called Pottercast. Pottercast podcasts are free to download from iTunes at <harrypotterpodcast.net>, where fans can discuss the Harry Potter story, post their fan fiction, as well as narrate it through online podcasts. The majority of writers and readers on podcasts are teenagers, and users can subscribe to this service.

8.3   Chat Rooms and Discussion Forums

Discussion groups, forums, chat rooms, blogs or vlogs give opportunities for kids to share their opinions and interests with one another, and to have an open-minded and non-judgemental audience who understands them and who they are as fans – a group who

value their thoughts and opinions. Some adults fail to take seriously children's opinions

regarding popular culture and fantasy literature; however, in these forums, youth listen to

each other. These websites therefore create online folk groups where children are able to

discuss their shared interests together which ultimately gives them a sense of belonging,

unity and power. There are a lot of these on the Internet. For example the Leaky

Cauldron website declares itself as the largest Harry Potter social network on the Web. It

also has links to its other online affiliations with MySpace at

<www.myspace.com/leakynews>, and Facebook <www.facebook.com/pages/The-Leaky-

Cauldron/8339265398>. Fans can join these groups and blog on their pages.

Susan Murry calls a fan's online engagement with discussion forums a form of

"participatory spectatorship, making meaning collectively as well as individually" (1999,

223). For Murry, who studied teenage girls' fandom of the television series, *My So

Called Life* in the 1990s, online discussion boards allow fans to bring "their individual

interpretations, snippets of emotionally significant moments, and fetishization of repeated

dialogue or images" (1999, 223). These forums allow children to express their own

interpretation (based on their personal experiences and emotions), and enjoy a

conservative, traditional or collective experience. Both their creative/individual needs

and their collective/conservative needs are met. Such comments stimulate debate and

results in what Murry calls a second level of reading:

> This second level of rereading, the meshing of individual viewing experience with
> others, result in an encrustation of meaning surrounding the original television
> text. Jenkins points out that this process of meaning making extends the life of the
> text and provides additional reading strategies or 'poached meanings' for a
> spectator's engagement with a favourite text. In addition, I would argue that the
> self is continually intertwined with these 'poached meanings,' as the text prompts
> self-reflection… (1999, 223)

Potter fan chat rooms, discussion boards and fan fiction become a second level of

rereading and create new meanings, or what Jenkins defines as "poached meanings"

(1992, 27). These new poached meanings provide fans with an additional way of

engaging with their favourite text.

8.4   Online Video Sharing Websites and Viral Videos

YouTube and Vimeo are flooded with videos of children; some videos are

recorded and posted by their parents, while others are created and posted online by

children themselves. Some of these videos become viral and take on a life of their own

garnering multi-million views from around the globe. When a child is old enough and

motivated enough to learn the technical skills necessary to film and edit online video,

some children create, star in, and post their own videos online. A viral video is

> a video clip that gains widespread popularity through the process of Internet
> sharing, typically through email or Instant messaging, blogs and other media
> sharing websites. Viral videos are often humorous in nature and include televised
> comedy sketches such as Saturday Night Live's Lazy Sunday and Dick in a Box;
> amateur video clips like Star Wars Kid... Some 'eyewitness' events have also been
> caught on video and have 'gone viral,' including the Battle at Kruger. (*Wikipedia*
> 2009e)

Video creating and sharing not only gives the child/teenager more active control

over what is posted, but it also allows children to express themselves, their fandom and

their opinions, perform, sing, tell stories, parody, and most importantly, share information

with each other. Referring to an October 2006 YouTube video that featured a group of

children performing the ritual of levitation, Elizabeth Tucker explains that seven months

from its original posting, 4,424 others had viewed it. "This is a good example of

children's folklore: traditional knowledge shared by a group of two or more children, usually without the involvement of adults" (Tucker 2008, 1). Tucker credits "the children's underground – a network of children that transmits children's folklore, with creative variations," as keeping these types of traditions alive (2008, 1). Once practiced in the privacy of children's bedrooms and sleepovers, traditions like levitation, "now belong to the constantly changing stream of video culture" (Tucker 2008, 1). "Internet technology offers just one of many expressions of the rich array of games, songs, rhymes, jokes, riddles, tales, legends, pranks, toys, and other amusements that comprise children's folklore" (Tucker 2008, 1-2). In addition, Steve Stanzak's research on the Yo Momma joke cycle illustrates that YouTube offers "innovative new ways for participants not only to manipulate jokes' performance contexts, but also to create new contexts entirely" (2012, 7).

8.4.1   YouTube Video Fan-Play Example: "Harry Potter's Greatest Fan Tribute From All Over the World"

As YouTube is proving, the children's underground network has learned how to transmit their culture, lore, traditions, and creations via audio, video and the Internet. This sharing of interests is a new genre of storytelling – video storytelling. A good example of the types of videos children and teenage fans of Potter are filming can be seen in the YouTube video "Harry Potter's Greatest Fan Tribute From All Over the World" (originally called "Harry Potter YouTubers Video" uploaded on October 30, 2007, and has since been made private. As of May 27, 2013 this video had 45,815 viewers (up from 21,374 viewers as of March 24, 2009). The 4:27 minute video consists of a montage of

YouTube videos, and reveals how children show their fandom and participate in the series. This video was edited by YouTube user MuggleSam <www.youtube.com/user/MuggleSam> as a tribute to J. K. Rowling. MuggleSam (Samantha) issued a call to fans to submit their online play and videos. MuggleSam then edited a video compiling the videos she received. Videos such as these illustrate youth fan-play activities such as costuming, role-playing, dialect imitation, performance and acting on the Internet.

Potter fan-made videos are often performances steeped in role-playing, costuming and props. Because they are in costume, many children will exclaim into the camera that they are the character, such as the teenage boy who says "I am Snape!" directly into his webcam. Fans dress up as their favourite character, or most often, dress up as a character that they physically resemble to some degree – teenage girls in purple wigs or purple dyed hair as Tonks, Hermione, Luna Lovegood and Cho Chang. Little boys and male teenagers are seen dressed as Harry Potter, Ron, Neville, Voldemort, Dumbledore, and Snape. Just as was illustrated in Chapter Six when the children identified with the character they physically resemble, this too is demonstrated in online youth videos. Not only do they opt to dress as their favourite characters, but some fans will go further and dye their hair to match a particular character. In these cases, fans want to look like their favourite character not only during play, but also during their daily life. This is seen in the video by a teenage girl who has dyed her hair purple to look like Nymphadora Tonks – a character known for her hair magically changing colour whenever her mood changes.

Not only do kids dress in a combination of official and homemade costume pieces, but they also play with a variety of props, from wands to cast magic spells, to stuffed

socks to imitate the great Basilisk snake in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. Homemade and manufactured wands are emphasized and often used to throw spells, curses, charms at the audience (YouTube viewers). In this video, Potter spells such as Expelliamus, Reducto, Ridulus, Wingardium Leviosa are cast, mostly directed to the camera. The kids in the video perform spells with verbal repetition of the text and bodily performance, in a similar manner to the elementary schools kids during Halloween 2005. For Harry Potter characters, scars are often applied to the forehead – some with official temporary tattoos, and some with make-up (eyebrow pencils or eyeliner, markers). Here again we see children and teenagers combining homemade and manufactured items and costume pieces as they did in their fan-play in Chapter Six.

　　　With the Internet acting as a playground, it is not surprising that children are taking their local fan-play, role-playing online, often posting it on YouTube. In Mugglesam's tribute video (dedicated to Rowling), fans act as the character of their choice by either quoting the script or improvising, sometimes attempting a British dialect. Many fans speak the lines of their character; for example Snape says in a slow voice, "Clearly fame isn't everything, is it Mr. Potter." Sometimes fans engage in imaginary two-sided conversation when they are alone. After delivering a line, they often pause, pretending to listen to other character's response, and then continue with their dialogue. Some other popular quotes and examples from this video include: (1) two children chant "Wesley is our King!" when Ron excelled at a Quidditch match; (2) two Hermione fans mimic a famous Hermione line, "You're saying it wrong. It's not Leviosa, [in which she stresses] it's Leviosa!"; (3) several fans cite characters' philosophies "It does not do to dwell on dreams, and forget to live" says a preachy Hermione; (4) a Tonks fan who has

dyed her hair, offers some folk wisdom adapted by Rowling, "Don't count your owls before they're delivered"; (5) and a Luna Lovegood lookalike offers folk wisdom to her viewers, "Do not pity the dead, pity the living, and above all, pity those who live without love."

Many children also make up their own lines, improvising, narrating their own view of the character and the plot. For example in one clip, the teenage boy playing Tom Riddle begins by quoting from Harry Potter literature, and then moves into narrating his own version of the book. Not only does the boy (as Tom Riddle) transition between memorized text and improvised text, but he also adopts a second role by acting as the film actor who played Tom Riddle in the Harry Potter movie, *Chamber of Secrets*. The boy narrates into the camera, "Life isn't easy for an apparition in a Horcrux. I've never heard of a Basilisk who is so inept at dispatching students, as this one. How do you think I feel? And besides I get all killed in the end, that's not a good career move is it?" Adopting several voices, Tom Riddle's role-playing is anything but simple mimicry. It can reveal creativity, criticism, insight, analysis and humour.

8.4.2   YouTube Video Parody Example: "Harry Potter Goblet of Fire Parody"

A survey of fan-play YouTube videos also reveal that kids like to make videos that parody online viral videos that feature kids. For example, the viral video "Charlie bit my finger – again!" (Figure 8.2) has been parodied by numerous children and teenagers on YouTube. This video depicts two little boys sitting in a chair. The youngest toddler Charlie is biting the finger of his older brother who cries in response and tells his father (who is video taping the event) that "Charlie bit my finger!" Many adolescents create

parodies by re-enacting the scene, then laying the audio track of the original video over their new video. However, other versions will feature the kids imitating the scene with their own interpretation or adaptations such as using someone else's name, instead of Charlie. This viral video has become so popular that it has since become a brand, offering official merchandise such as t-shirts, mugs, and an app/game. [42]

Figure 8.2: Screenshot from viral video "Charlie Bit My Finger" (*Wikipedia* 2013b).

There are also hundreds of Potter parodies currently on YouTube. For example, "Harry Potter Goblet of Fire Parody" (Figure 8.3) is a 10:08 minute video performed by three teenagers (one girl and two boys) who cleverly take on all the characters in the movie. Using the space of the family home and backyard, these kids present a 636-page book (157-minute movie) in ten minutes. The interior of the house, rooms, windows, curtains, exterior of the house, fences and foliage are used. This video demonstrates creative interpretation and improvisation, especially in recreating the magical special

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[42] The "CharlieBitMe" brand has since been created. At The Official Webstore for Charlie Bit Me, customers can purchase official t-shirts and mugs <charliebitme.firebrandstore.com>. Customers can also purchase a "Charlie Bit My Finger" App/Game from iTunes and Google. The two boys, Harry and Charlie, continue to be featured in videos and posted on YouTube.

effects. Using everyday items and some imagination, the kids recreate the scene where the Goblet of Fire magically produces the names of the tri-wizard champions. Using dark lighting, and a piece of shiny line attached to a piece of paper, the paper is yanked from a cup, creating the illusion of magic. Through simple lighting effects, sound clips and camera tricks, the kids present the story with what materials and technology they have available to them. A large glass is used for the Goblet of Fire, household sweeping brooms are used as flying boom sticks, and a small white egg is used as the Golden Egg.

Except for well-known phrases and slogans that appear in the book/movie, such as "Potter Sucks," the script is improvised. It is built on the plot of the books, but re-told in the teenager's own words. Actions are also improvised; shoving and pushing are often used to show conflict between two characters. Characters are also based on the book, but some are based on other current celebrities; for example, in this version Cedric Diggory, a Hogwarts student, is a combination of Cedric and American rapper, Snoop Dog. The actor mimics some of Snoop Dog's catch phrases such as "Izzle" and "dog." For example he says to Harry, "Yo, dog!" and "It's Voldemort dog!" – creating his own Cedric. Slang terms, such as "That was freaky," are also used. The actors also often break frame laughing uncontrollably.

Music and sound effects help punctuate major plot events, such as using a splash sound cue to summarize the whole final third task underwater. Simple editing can create magical effects (such as turning the camera on and off to make it look as if someone disappeared). As well, the videographer sometimes interjects with sound effects, like the mermaids singing when the Golden Egg was opened underwater or starting and stopping singing as Harry dips his white egg into a little bowl of water while sitting in an empty

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bathtub. In addition, simple effects such as flicking the lights on and off, and spinning

while holding the camera, help mimic Harry and Cedric as they use the Portkey.[43] Basic

creative techniques are used to resemble the original effects described in the book, or

used in the movie. Following the curtain call for the three teenagers (one girl and two

boys), the last shot is of the teen who played Cedric, lying on the floor. The camera

zooms in closer, and the videographer says "In memory of Cedric Diggory" who died at

the end of *Goblet of Fire*. This video was viewed 4,406 times as of August 16, 2014 (up

from 2, 201 views as of March 24, 2009).

Figure 8.3: Screenshot from "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire Parody" YouTube video (3KwaC 2007).

As demonstrated in this video, children and youth often resort to creative, out-of-the-box,

simple and cheap video editing techniques in lieu of expensive editing software and

ability to edit. Unusual special effects may be a necessity but, for some kids, it also

becomes the reason their videos go viral. An excellent example of this is the video

known as "I didn't even know" posted by teenage YouTube user Ethan Nudd. On May

29, 2013, Nudd posted a twelve-second video of himself flying on a broom in his

backyard (see Figure 8.4). Nudd filmed himself on the broom and used a simple editing

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[43] In the Harry Potter universe, a Portkey is magical device, disguised as an everyday item, which instantly transports a witch or wizard from one place to another when they touch it.

technique and sliced his video to make it appear as if were flying the broom in midair. While it is unclear whether Nudd is a Potter fan or not, he writes in the Comments section of the video that he saw a similar video using the same techniques and he copied it because he thought it humorous: "I saw a video of this and laughed my ass off so i decided to make one of my own :) hope everyone enjoys!" This video not only demonstrates that kids are using inexpensive and creative techniques, but it also illustrates that doing so can often be the reason why it appeals to so many people in the first place and goes viral. In just three days, this video was viewed 2,108,963 times (as of June 1, 2013).

Figure 8.4: Using a simple video editing technique that he copied from another video, teenage YouTuber Ethan Nubb posted the video "I didn't even know" of him flying on broom. Screenshot from Nudd's YouTube video (2013).

8.5   Parentally Controlled Videos and the Cult of Cuteness

There are several particularly good examples of parentally controlled videos of children – videos that are more significantly run, directed and operated by parents who control the video documenting, the editing and the publication of the video on websites like YouTube and Facebook. MuggleSam is an excellent example of this type of video

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production. When I first began researching MuggleSam in 2009, the owners had created

two websites <www.mugglesam.com> and <www.artgirlsophia.com>[44]

(artgirlsophia.com site since removed). These websites have since been redirected to two

YouTube channels, <www.youtube.com/user/MuggleSam> and

<www.youtube.com/isophia>. The MuggleSam YouTube channel is a parentally operated

website which posts videos of their children, Sophia and Bella. The now non-existent

<www.artgirlsophia.com> website, which featured videos devoted to Sophia making art,

also sold prints of Sophia's artwork on merchandise like mugs, t-shirts and buttons. The

YouTube channel <www.youtube.com/isophia>, included many art education videos

taught by Sophia, but now primarily directs and links. viewers to the MugglSam

YouTube channel.

The "MuggleSam" brand was first born when the parents of the children posted

their first video of Sophia in 2006 on YouTube. Obviously, Samantha was a Potter fan.

In the magazine, she explains how she came up with MuggleSam:

> I am a huge Harry Potter fan so when I was trying to come up with a YouTube
> username in 2006, I had Harry Potter on the brain. I came up with MuggleSam. In
> the Harry Potter books a muggle is a person without any magical powers.
> Basically a normal human. And Sam is short for my name Samantha. I then
> handed my daughter a Harry Potter doll and that was the inspiration for our very
> first YouTube video. (YouTube Creator's Corner Blog 2010)

According to the website <www.mugglesam.com> (site discontinued and linked to her

YouTube channel), the Canadian mother explained that she created the site for her

daughter, Sophia, who always has a sketchbook in her hand. Therefore many of the

YouTube videos are of Sophia drawing, painting, or explaining a famous painting such as

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[44] The .com sites at the time also donated the proceeds from selling Sophia's art to charities like the Cheetah
Conservation Fund.

DaVinci's Mona Lisa. But there are also many videos that show Sophia playing and storytelling. The first video, posted on November 26, 2006, was of Sophia playing "Harry Potter as the Phantom of the Opera." This began an interaction with online viewers from all over the world, who wrote to have Sophia personally create art for them. Then on February 3, 2007, Sophia was featured on YouTube's front page with the video "Sophia draws for the YouTube Kings." As a result, the MuggleSam channel subscription jumped from 100 to 3000.

What followed was an upswing in popularity both online and on television. On February 10, 2007, the ABC television network show *Good Morning America* asked Sophia to draw a picture of each media personality, Diane Sawyer, Sam Champion, Robin Roberts and Chris Cuomo; on March 1, 2007 the video aired on *Good Morning America*. On July 3, 2007, the video of the children playing as "The iPhone and the Blackberry" was featured on the Metacafe-Best Videos and Funny Movies home page and Will Video For Food video site. As Sophia's and Samantha's MuggleSam videos grew in popularity, many new videos became ad-oriented. However, other videos such as "Muggle Power Video(s)," are created for the purpose of sending positive messages about beauty, health and self-esteem.

Upon their videos going viral, on December 4, 2007 MuggleSam became a member of YouTube's ad revenue sharing program, and on January 21, 2008 was featured in the online magazine *Advertisement Age* <www.adage.com>. There is no doubt as to the advertising interest in these videos, often driven by the "cult of cuteness" (Broverman 2009). For some parents, posting their children's videos means using them

as advertising machines. Online videos of Sophia playing and telling media narraforms are discussed in detail in Chapter Nine.

Figure 8.5: Mugglesam photo of Sophia painting found on Sophia and Bella's Facebook page.

Many times, parents do not intend for their children to become Internet icons. Parents of three of the biggest viral video child stars – Star Wars Kid, Capucine and Sophia – have said they had innocent intentions. Many parents who post videos for small groups of family and friends are surprised when their video receives attention, circulates and goes viral. (See Chapter Nine for further media narraform analysis of such viral videos.) In a February 26, 2008 YouTube update comment, a parent of the three-year-old "Star Wars Kid" comments:

> Wow. What was expected to be a short movie that would circulate within a small circle of friends has turned into something much more quickly. I'm thrilled that so many people have enjoyed this video but also somewhat mortified that I added this without my daughter's consent. Maybe someday she will find some humor in it. (fistofblog 2008)

Here, the parent raises the issue of ethics and consent. She fears the lack of consent, and therefore has chosen to protect her from it by not getting her further involved in the media

entertainment business. In fact, the parents disabled the comments on this site, and stated

to agents and business partners that they are not interested in commercial exploitation:

> Thanks for your interest. At the current time we have no intention of exposing our little one to the destroyers of youth that is the entertainment industry (with the exception of Star Wars, heh.) Hopefully if she chooses to follow this path on her own someday she will find a door still open for her. (fistofblog 2008)

In an interview with Alison Broverman of *The National Post*, Anne (last name

withheld for privacy), the mother of another famous viral video child (Capucine from

France who is known for her storytelling adorableness <vimeo.com/2113477>), says that

her daughter's fame surprised her.

> "At the beginning, my videos had very few views – mostly my friends and family" she says. "It's really not my purpose that she becomes a 'star.' Sometimes it is overwhelming to see how many sites and blogs are talking about her. If I had to stop tomorrow for whatever reason, I would." (Broverman quoting Anne 2009)

Both parents' comments reveal their shock to discover the popularity of the video and the

public's reaction to it. But there is also a sense of nervousness or caution, due to the fact

that they want to protect their child. While the Star Wars Kid's parents have opted not to

pursue any more YouTube videos of their daughter, others like MuggleSam have

embraced it. The parents of Sophia and Bella did not shy away from further promotion

and social media ventures. Not only has MuggleSam been on YouTube since 2006, but

MuggleSam has since joined Tumblr <mugglesam.tumblr.com>, Twitter

<twitter.com/mugglesam> (with 8,798 followers as of August 18, 2014), and Facebook

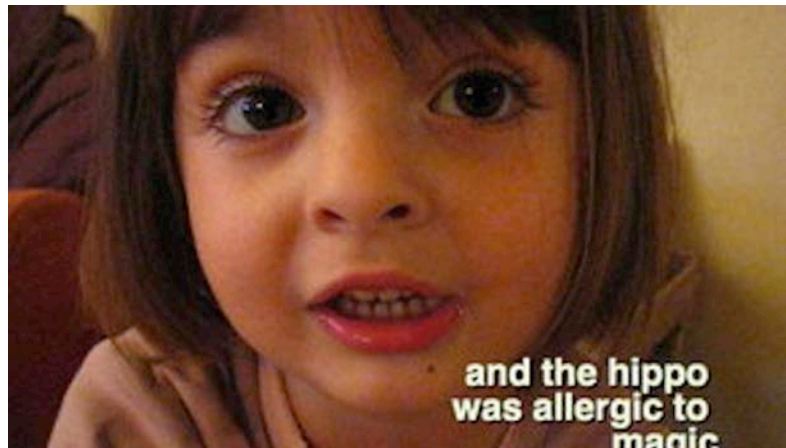<www.facebook.com/SophiaAndBella> (with 6,189 likes as of August 18, 2014).

Figure 8.6: Screenshot from Vimeo viral video "Once Upon A Time..." posted by user Capucha (2009).

While many viewers are drawn to the child's cuteness and creativity, the question whether the child really wants him or herself exposed to the public, begs to be asked. Viral video child "stars" are popping up every day and receiving millions of viewing hits. The MuggleSam website now boasts 118,554,926 video views and 282,839 subscribers as of August 18, 2014 (up from 13,000 subscribers as of March 22, 2009). Such websites illustrate how child videos that are published online (often with the help of editing skills of the parents) can be consumed by the public and sold to advertisers. This situation obviously raises ethical concerns, but it does not remove the fact that videos featuring children are available in the public domain. For whatever reason or motivation, viral videos featuring children exist and can provide a wealth of research and data. Specific examples of young children retelling popular stories is discussed in the media narraform section of Chapter Nine.

8.6   The Internet as a Contested Site: The Harry Potter Domain Name Battle

A popular case illustrating how the Internet acts as a contested site where youths

struggle for visibility, began in 2000 and involved a young girl and one of the biggest

cross-platform entertainment industries on the planet, Warner Brothers (WB). The

conflict started when Warner Brothers bought the rights to produce the Harry Potter films.

In doing so, Warner Brothers also directly bought the rights to "all things Potter" (Whited

2002, 11), including ownership of more than one hundred Potter-related domain names

(Borah 2002, 353). In essence, this marked the beginning of mass marketing and

commercialization of Harry Potter worldwide, which also brought with it the global take-

over of previously-existing Potter fan based websites. For then fifteen-year-old British

girl Claire Field,[45] this take-over was too important to be ignored.

On October 11, 2000, Claire launched her Potter fan site,

<www.harrypotterguide.co.uk> (originally under the name "Harry Potter Guide"), and on

December 2, 2000 she received a cease-and-desist letter from Warner Brothers. The

letter, posted on her website, begins by re-affirming that "J.K. Rowling and Warner Bros.

are the owners of the intellectual property rights in the 'Harry Potter' Books." The letter

continues:

> Your registration of the above domain name, in our opinion, is likely to infringe
> the rights described above and we would ask therefore that you please, within 14
> days of today's date provide written confirmation that you will as soon as
> practicable (and in any event within 28 days of today's date) transfer ownership to
> Warner Bros. the above domain name. (The Boy Who Lived 2010)

The letter concludes with "If we do not hear from you by 15 December 2000 we shall put

this matter into the hands of our solicitors. Yours Sincerely, Neil Blair, Director, Legal &

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[45] As Claire is an advocate and has publicly spoken in the media on numerous occasions, she has not been
assigned a pseudonym.

Business Affairs" (The Boy Who Lived 2010). However, Claire did not rollover easily nor take the threat lightly. After a discussion with her family, Claire decided to fight for her website domain name and take her story to the media, but her battle would not be easily won.

On December 8, 2000 Claire's story appeared in a British tabloid paper, *The Mirror*, which prompted thousands of visitors to her site offering support. Her story then made it onto several Internet sites. Negotiations then began between her father and herself, and a US Warner Brothers spokesperson who suggested that she could maintain the site, but the company would own the domain name. But losing her independence and giving control over to Warner Brothers was not something Claire was willing to do. "I wanted it to still be my site, not with anyone else controlling it and having power over me" (The Boy Who Lived 2010).[46]

Because she was still receiving tremendous public support in her battle against Warner Brothers, Claire's family hired a lawyer and a public relations manager. At this point, as a protective measure and to strengthen their case, Claire reluctantly changed the site name and registered a back-up URL as "The Boy Who Lived" at <theboywholived.co.uk>. A support website for Claire and other Harry Potter domain name cases was created by Alistair Alexander called PotterWar (this site was no longer available as of April 16, 2009). An online community immediately emerged in support of

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[46] According Claire's website, one week later, a *Hollywood Reporter* article (dated Dec 8, 2000) stated that "According to Warner Bros. spokesperson Barbara Brogliatti, the studio sent United Kingdom teenager Claire Field a letter simply asking her to clarify the intent of her site." However, Claire explains, "but nowhere in the letter, did it ask this. After pointing this out to Brogliatti, negotiations stopped after [being] accused of manipulating the media and the case was handed over to WB's lawyers" (The Boy Who Lived 2010).

the young webmasters who received similar letters, creating a group called "The Defense Against the Dark Arts Project" (DADA).[47]

Despite this, writes Claire, "WB were still adamant that the domain name should be signed over to them" (The Boy Who Lived 2010). By mid-February, it seems as if the matter would go to court. Claire took part in a weeklong publicity campaign doing global interviews in newspapers, radio, TV and the Internet. However, before reaching court, on March 9, 2001, three months after Claire received her letter from Warner Brothers: "WB backed down and were 'prepared now to rely on good faith and assurance that there were no plans other than to continue present non-commercial use of the domain name" (The Boy Who Lived 2010). The fifteen-year-old webmistress writes on her website that the experience was emotionally stressful: "Throughout the 3 months, many things were misquoted about me, many thing happened that I didn't agree with and it was a very stressful time for all concerned in the matter...." Indeed, youngsters with similar sites and similar letters were said by the *Globe* to be "scared to death" (Whited 2002, 11). And while Warner Brothers announced that it would take no further action against Claire Field or anyone else who received a letter, Alexander explains "Warner Brothers did not expediently clarify this position to all the young webmasters they had previously targeted and that one young man permanently lost his domain name" (Whited 2002, 11). However, for Claire, the site name may have changed to "The Boy Who Lived," but it can still be located at Claire's original domain name <harrypotterguide.co.uk>. As an

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[47] The DADA group was "jointly spearheaded by two webmasters who did not receive Warner Brothers letters: sixteen-year-old Heather Lawver of Reston, Virginia, and Alastair Alexander, thirty-three, of London" (Whited 2002, 11). According to Whited, Lawver and Alexander called for a complete boycott of Warner Brothers, including Harry Potter tie-in merchandise and the film *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, and in February 2001, Lawver sent press releases about the DADA project to national media organizations in the United States and the United Kingdom (2002, 11).

expansive resource of information for fans, the site received its one-millionth visitor in September 2004. The website was last updated November 15, 2010, but is still live on the Internet as of August 18, 2014.

Claire's story and experience with WB not only illustrates the kind of power struggles youth face while trying to participate in their own fandom; but it also illustrates how children and teens can create political partnerships and gain strength in numbers against big corporations. In many ways, Claire has become a folk-hero – a defender of free speech for the "common man," using the media (Internet, TV and newspapers) to fight against censorship. The case may be argued that Warner Brothers would have won their case against Claire, but for some reason before going to court, they backed down. The bad press was getting too much. In WB's attempt to take ownership of her site, mute and discredit her, the bad press and boycott mounted and the teenage fan of Harry Potter won her battle against a big corporation.

Despite adult interests and attempts at regulation, restraint and control, the Internet and its social network groups provide a place and space where children can come together in shared interests and forge political alliances (Jenkins 2006a, 205). Not only did Claire Field create a social network of fans on her website, but as a cultural agent, she also used the Internet and other forms of mass media to forge a political alliance against the take-over of her domain name and the domain names of others.

8.7   Conclusion

This chapter makes a case for exploring children's play on the Internet (via official and unofficial websites, chat rooms, discussion forums and viral videos). I have

presented data that support the analogy of the Internet as the new playground for children in this digital age. The Internet and websites such as these provide excellent fieldwork opportunities to explore children and teen fandom and identity. Video-sharing sites like YouTube and Vimeo also offer a "place" to observe children's play and narraforms through videos. Elizabeth Tucker observed this with her research on teenagers on YouTube who made videos about levitation. It is vernacular videos such as these that make YouTube valuable to scholars studying children's culture, play, storytelling, as well as being valuable to advertisers.

Media-inspired stories can also provide new insight into transmission and variation online. Focusing on Dr. Seuss parodies found on the Internet, which comment on political and social current events, C.W. Sullivan writes: "An interesting aspect of this context is that the oral transmission of these parodies has become almost material, and it may be that we can now study this new transmission mode in ways different from the ways in which we have always studied the transmission of strictly oral folklore (2006-07, 33). Social activity around video-recorded fan-play on the Internet is never static. Popular YouTube videos involving children's fan-play and folklore (such as Sophia's play or the Potter parodies) are repetitively viewed and shared by kids. Such videos also encourage alterations and inspire new re-tellings and versions such as parodies. Kids are viewing videos that other kids are making, and copying them and creating their own versions, such as the "I didn't even know" video. From this perspective, videos of fan-play can therefore be considered as the foundation – the traditional pattern, structure or formula that kids use to base their new creations on. According to Sullivan, a new

approach to studying children's folklore transmission in the advent of the Internet and

computer access is therefore necessary. He writes,

> we children's folklorists have dealt with the materials that we believed children and adolescents passed on orally by customary example within their high-context group. But children have ready access to the internet in ways that they do not have access to textbooks and folklore collections, and there is no reason not to believe that a young person could google Dr. Seuss, find the parodies, and orally transmit them, perhaps as his or her own creations, to other members of the group. There is cause for further study… (Sullivan 2006-07, 36)

This new approach to digital culture is illustrated in Elizabeth Tucker's "'LMAO, that

Wasn't Even Scary': Legend-Related Performances on YouTube" (2011), and Trevor J.

Blank's edited collection, *Folk Culture in The Digital Age: The Emergent Dynamics of

Human Interaction* (2012). However, as Stanzak points out, despite the rich and vital

possibilities of Internet folklore, "much work remains to be done in the realm of

vernacular culture on the Internet" (2012, 28). Redefining the concept of children's

folklore transmission and providing an alternative approach is explored further in Chapter

Ten.

Chapter 9

Media Narraforms, Fan Fiction and Fan Art:
Participatory Literacy and Hybrid Narratives

9.1   Introduction

This chapter addresses the topic of participatory literacy, and presents examples of

media narraforms, fan fiction and fan art. I have devoted a chapter to this topic because

fan fiction and media narraforms are intricately woven into literary phenomena like Harry

Potter. Potter fan fiction has taken on a life of its own, and has become an extremely

popular form of fan-play involving many children and teenagers from around the globe.

Websites have been devoted to such activity, containing tens of thousands of stories

written by kids. Kids are writing and drawing their own stories; some share their stories

with family members and friends only, while others post them online for the public.

When shared with others, fan fiction becomes something more than pleasure and play; it

becomes a vehicle for exploring new topics and expressing one's concerns and identity,

as well as a means of learning literary criticism and writing skills.

9.2   The Media Narraform

Sylvia Ann Grider, who studied the effects of mass media presentations of the

supernatural on children's oral storytelling traditions, found that such popular

presentations do not destroy children's oral storytelling traditions but rather inspire a new

genre of storytelling – the "media narraform" (Grider 1976, 1981). Her research

demonstrates that popular culture does not prevent tradition and innovation from

happening (by destroying culture), but rather support it. Grider coined the term media narraform in Chapter Five of her 1976 dissertation, "The Supernatural Narratives of Children." She writes: "[T]here is a new category of children's narratives which are basically re-tellings of mass media presentations about the supernatural, using traditional storytelling techniques. These symbiotic renditions are so distinctive that I have designated them as *media narraforms*" (1981, 125; emphasis in original). Grider specifically investigated supernatural narraforms, and the media in this case consisted of TV programs and specials, comic book episodes, Saturday morning TV programming, cheap paperbacks, late night horror movies and horror comics – programming that combined the supernatural with sex and violence, where children were the target audience (Grider 1981, 125). Although Grider focused her media narraforms on the supernatural, I have extended her definition to include retellings of a mass media presentation of any genre (not only the supernatural), which can also then be passed on orally and/or digitally online via YouTube and other video sharing sites. These media narraforms can include retellings in the oral form, literary form (fan fiction), and material form (fan art which tells a story).

Due to its often rambling, spontaneous and lengthy nature, the media narraform, as a genre, has been ignored by folklore fieldworkers argues Grider. She writes, "Part of the problem, of course, is its dependence on the mass media, which is anathema to many folklorists. Nevertheless, the affinity of the narraform to traditional narratives, especially the legend, cannot be denied" (Grider 1981, 130). However, some scholars have not shied away from studying storytelling and the connections between mass media and oral culture. Elizabeth Tucker, for example, investigated the connections between mass media

and oral culture. In her research "'Text, Lies and Videotape': Can Oral Tales Survive?"

(1992) Tucker discovered that while video versions of folktales dominated traditional

print versions of stories, "This does not mean, however, that the original story structures

are gone or that narrative creativity is waning" (1992, 25). Tucker wanted to know how

creative children could be in their retellings, and what vestiges of other versions existed

in their narrations (1992, 27). Most importantly, Tucker observed that, "All the plots and

characters of familiar videotapes and other narratives provide raw material for creative

storytelling, which narrators can put together any way they like for their own amusement

and the entertainment of their audience" (1992, 29-30).

Tucker is yet another scholar to debunk the adult myth-conception that mass

media and popular culture destroy kids' creativity.

> While we should keep an eye on children's involvement with VCRs, we needn't
> be too concerned about creativity being wiped out by repeated viewing of stories
> on videotape. At present there seems to be a productive interdependence between
> the TV screen and that old-fashioned storytelling device, the mouth. If the mouth
> can hold its own while ideas continue to proliferate, oral tales should continue to
> thrive well into the twenty-first century. (Tucker 1992, 31)

Similarly in this case, the Harry Potter literary and film worlds have provided

the foundation/universe consisting of plotlines, characters and motifs for creative

storytelling, which the narrators can piece together and select from in any way they like.

Rowling has produced seven books in the Potter series with repeatable actions, characters,

events, terminology, customs and daily habits which provide ample content for kids to re-

interpret and re-work. In fact, an investigation into the structure of *Harry Potter and the*

Philosopher's Stone reveals that Rowling followed many stock characters and traditional

storytelling plots and motifs, including Vladimir Propp's thirty-one folktale functions (as discussed in Chapter Four).

The use of folklore content in Rowling's books reinforces the bond between media portrayals and oral tradition. As Grider points out, the media and oral tradition are complementary, and often create hybrid narratives: "The media narraforms thus embody a symbiotic relationship between the media and oral tradition: the media provide the content, and oral tradition provides the situation and format for the performance of these contemporary, hybrid narratives. (1981, 126)

Sometimes oral media narraforms are transmitted via technology and over the Internet. As discussed in Chapter Eight, videos of children telling media narraforms have become a hot commodity on YouTube, from MuggleSam's "Phantom of the Opera According to a 3 Year Old" and "Harry Potter According to a Four Year Old" to the extremely popular and viral "Star Wars according to a 3 year old" which has received a whopping 22,111,868 views as of August 19, 2014 (up from 11,255,609 views as of April 17, 2009). Also keep in mind that this count doesn't include the number of spin-off videos that parody the posted media narrative or add real Star Wars video clips as explanatory text, such as "Star Wars according to a 3 year old (with clips)" with 857,149 views as of August 19, 2014 (up from 473,021 viewing hits as of April 17, 2009).

Figure 9.1: Screenshot from viral video and media narraform "Star Wars according to a 3 year old" (fistofblog 2008).

9.2.1 Media Narraform YouTube Example: "Harry Potter According to a 4 Year Old"

"Harry Potter According to a 4 Year Old" is an excellent example of a Potter media narraform found on the Internet. I first encountered this video in 2009 when it was called "A Harry Potter Story by Sophia" (video since made private). The video was posted by MuggleSam on June 28, 2007 and, as of April 1, 2009, it had received 26,971 views. Since the modification to MuggleSam's website and YouTube Channel (as discussed in Chapter Eight), this video (reposted on June 7, 2009) has received 65,778 views as of June 1, 2013. However, as of 2014, MuggleSam has made the video private. MuggleSam may have been inspired by the title of the viral video, "Star Wars according to a 3 year old" when she retitled her video, "Harry Potter According to a 4 Year Old."

In "Harry Potter According to a 4 Year Old," four-year-old Sophia, dressed in her costume as Harry Potter, is being filmed by her mother Samantha (MuggleSam). Sophia comments on her costume and the experience of wearing the costume, and also narrates an imaginative story based on *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, a media narraform, consisting of her own version and interpretation of the story and its events. This video is edited with both Sophia's comments as well as her mother's editorial comments strategically placed throughout the video for humorous effect. The editor has also added music to the video, and a graphic backdrop of Hogwarts grand staircase.

Figure 9.2: Screenshot of YouTube video "Harry Potter According to a 4 Year Old" starring Sophia dressed as Harry Potter.

The video begins with Sophia, dressed in her costume, saying, "Hello, my name is Harry" which is then followed by the introductory text, "Harry Potter, by Sophia Age 4." Sophia then proceeds:

> Today, I'm Harry Potter, and I'm wearing my cloak. I'm wearing my, I have my wand, my glasses, my tie, I also have my shirt. ...What is a muggle? A muggle is a boy who doesn't, ahm, no magic. Harry Potter is a boy. ...I'm a boy? I'm not a boy, I'm wearing a boy wig. I'm a girl, but wearing a boy wig. See? It's my pony. See? See? [Trying to show her ponytail underneath her wig.] My glasses fell. [Without glasses] Hey, I'm back normal. I'm normal again. Whoo-hoo! [Puts glasses on] I'm not normal. [Takes glasses off] I'm normal. [Puts glasses on] I'm not normal. [Takes glasses off] I'm normal. Hee-hee. (2007/2009)

Although she is only four years old, Sophia demonstrates her developing concepts of masked behaviours, costuming and fantasy; she perceives herself as "not normal" when she wears the glasses/costume, and "normal" when she removes them. When her glasses suddenly fall from her face, Sophia recognizes a change in her appearance and identity. Once she recognizes this, she then proceeds to play with her duality for the camera. She also seems to understand how costumes can allow for gender swapping; she is a girl, but pretends to be a boy. She explains to the camera that she is a girl, but when she wears the

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boy wig she is Harry, illustrating how she easily accepts and plays with gender swapping

through costuming and play.

> I'm a muggle. I do magic. I'm very good. Gimme my magic wand Mommy.
> [Cut in video. Now with wand.] ...I'm gonna disappear this [showing her glasses
> to the camera]. Today I'm gonna disappear the glasses with my magic wand.
> [Places glasses up her cloak sleeve, and waves her wand over the sleeve]
> Abracadabra! And it's gone! [Sound effects added of hands clapping.]
> (2007/2009)

Sophia shows her audience a magic trick and makes her glasses disappear, but instead of

reciting one of Rowling's famous spells, Sophia waves her wand and says the age-old

magical motif, "Abracadabra!" Sophia is then cut from the screen and the next caption

reads, "The End."

In the June 28, 2007 version of this video, Sophia also told her own Harry Potter

narraform. However, in the most recent version uploaded on June 7, 2009, MuggleSam

omitted all but the last two lines of her narrative. The original version said:

> One day Harry Potter was walking around the forest. And he found a magician
> who played lots of spells on bad people. He thought that he was a bad person, so
> he cast a spell on Harry Potter, and he was no longer needed[?]. He could not
> breathe underwater. He was a sea serpent. [Video cut...] She could breathe
> underwater like a fish. A fish, she could swim like this [moving arms in
> swimming motion, makes fish lips]. And someone has to save her and kiss her.
> And then he could no longer breathe underwater again, he would stay up on the
> surface. The end. Bye. I ripped my cloak! [Looking at cloak, then at camera,
> then to cameraperson] Everybody's gonna see my shirt! (2007)

In this video, Sophia re-tells her story based on Harry Potter books which act as

the basis for her creative interpretation. Some of her narration comes directly from the

text; for example, when she explains that Voldemort is a bad person who cast a spell on

Harry, and that Harry swam underwater during the Tri-Wizard Tournament. However,

while her story seems to pivot around these events and plot lines, Sophia also seizes the

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opportunity to emphasize, exaggerate and act out what is most significant to her –

swimming like a fish underwater. She pretends to swim by moving her arms, and

puckering her lips like a fish. Here we see that the story text supports children's

imaginations by giving them structure or a foundation to explore creatively.

9.2.2 Media Narraform YouTube Example: "Phantom of the Opera According To A 3 Year Old"

Figure 9.3: YouTube video "Phantom of the Opera According To A 3 Year Old" which features a media narraform as told by Sophia.

Sophia also stars in another video called "Phantom of the Opera According To A

3 Year Old" (video now private) in which she presents a media narraform based on the

story of *The Phantom of the Opera*.[48] (This 3:50 minute video was originally uploaded

under a different name, "Harry Potter as Phantom of the Opera.") Posted on November

21, 2006, it received 19,548 views by March 26, 2009, and then rose to 45,783 views by

June 1, 2013 (video now private). Sophia's media narraform is an excellent example of

children's imaginative play and storytelling. Using Harry Potter toys and a Barbie doll,

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[48] *The Phantom of the Opera* is a novel written by Gaston Leroux. Published in 1909-1910, it has been adapted to both the screen and stage, including the 1986 musical by Andrew Lloyd Webber.

Sophia tells the story of *The Phantom of the Opera*. Sophia's play begins by clarifying to her audience (mother's camcorder and eventual YouTube audience): "He's [Harry Potter doll] going to pretend he's the Phantom – Harry Potter, and she's [Barbie] going to pretend she's Christine." Sophia then uses the dolls to re-enact the major plotlines of *The Phantom of the Opera*. However, Sophia's play constantly deviates from the story script of *Phantom*, and she sometimes incorporates her own distractions and asides into her narrative.

Sophia's deviations from the story support McDonnell's observations when she discovered that children were departing from the script set out by Barbie doll ads (1994, 13). In McDonnell's case study, instead of following the prescribed sex-role stereotyping script set out in Barbie doll ads, girls were exhibiting concepts with girl-positive themes in their Barbie doll play. "Barbie may not entirely deserve the bad rap we feminists had pinned on her" (McDonnell 1994, 14). In Sophia's narrative, she explains that the Phantom wants Christine to stay with him, but she says no. As with most three-year-old child play, Sophia jumps non-linearly between major plots without explanation. In addition, her mother (the editor) then combines the video footage of her daughter with humorous editing and captions. For example, after Sophia says "Don't burn the castle," the editor interjects with the caption "Oh no, a fire!" The parent as editor has edited the video and applied her own interpretation and humour to the video.

Using a Hermione doll for Raoul and a Barbie doll for Christine, Sophia makes the dolls fly about and says, "But then one day they woke up because they were flying. They were flying like ghosts in the air." The mother's caption interjects Sophia's narration which reads, "And Hermione dreamed of flying with Hagrid like birds (not

ghosts)." Sophia makes Hagrid (a doll) and Hermione (a doll) fly together and says, "They wanted to fly like birds all day." The video editor then humorously uses the sound effect of an uncoiling spring and inserts the caption, "OK, enough flying."

As the Hermione doll (Raoul) and the Barbie doll (Christine) fly about, Sophie sings some of the lyrics to *The Phantom of the Opera*, and the conflict escalates with the Harry doll (Phantom) entering the scene from below the kitchen table, and says "She is mine!" Sophia then hits the doll's feet down heavily on the table for emphasis. Music is used to create effect of a dramatic climax. The editor then inserts the caption "You go Phantom!" But the video suddenly freezes when Sophia notices that the glasses on her Harry Potter doll have fallen off, "Wait a minute, his glasses came out!" Sophia breaks the frame easily, and goes from storytelling to fixing the doll, pausing the story while she does so. The editor then jokingly writes in a caption, "We will return shortly due to a wardrobe malfunction."[49]

Holding the dolls (Barbie and Harry) tightly together Sophia continues her narration: "And then they were both hugging each other in the cave, the Phantom and Christine. They're finally at the cave. And then they went in the boat, the Phantom, the Phantom is pushing the boat and Christine is lying down." Water sound effects are then heard, and Sophia then breaks out in song, "Come to me angel of music, but she's behind him." Dramatic sound effects are heard and the caption appears: "Oh no!" Sophia continues, "Come to me angel of music! Christine, my angel!" The caption then reads, "Play music!" The scene then cuts to Sophia who is singing the song in another part of

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[49] The term "wardrobe malfunction" was popularized in 2004, after an incident at Super Bowl XXXVIII, when Justin Timberlake exposed Janet Jackson's breast during the halftime performance show.

the house in a different video recording. The two videos are then edited together, going

back and forth between scenes of Sophia singing and playing with the dolls, "You have a

dress and I have a cloak!" (Harry Potter doll and Barbie doll). *The Phantom of the Opera*

music is then heard playing over this scene. Sophia then makes the dolls Phantom and

Christine kiss, and makes her own kissing sound effects with her lips saying, "They love

each other. You love me, I love you."

Sophia continues to play with her dolls, flying them around the room, but is

distracted by Barbie's long dress and what is underneath her dress. She momentarily

pauses her imaginative play just long enough to investigate what is under Barbie's dress,

by lifting it up and looking beneath the doll's clothes. This make-believe scene is

punctuated with a beginning, middle and end. The characters are introduced, the story is

set (Phantom wants Christine), the middle has the fire and the flying, the conflict between

Phantom and Raoul is reached, the boat, and then the kissing to mark the conclusion.

With emphasis on the plot, the story is told without explanatory detail, and can be

momentarily suspended for small distractions like fixing the doll or looking under

Barbie's dress.

9.2.3   Media Narraform Function

Media narraforms can function in several ways. First and foremost is the fact that

because kids share popular culture as their common currency, almost any child can

participate in the telling of a narraform (Grider 1981, 129). This makes the media

narraform a more inclusive storytelling method in that children who struggle with their

storytelling abilities can still participate, "Even children who are less talented and creative

when handling traditional narratives can help with the performance of a media narraform"
(Grider 1981, 129); however, Grider also reminds us that "But the less talented
storytellers are by no means the only ones who tell narraforms; skilled narrators enjoy
telling them too. The skilled narrators, whose renditions are usually more coherent and
entertaining, often use the narraforms as fillers between the more traditional narratives"
(1981, 130). I believe this explains why children as young as three years old are able to
participate in this form of fandom and storytelling; by sharing a common language of
popular culture and various media, children are able to express their interests.

By listening to or retelling a media narraform, children "become accustomed to
participatory and communal storytelling and thus become increasingly receptive to the
aesthetic of more sophisticated legend as they grow older" (Grider 1981, 130). In
addition, media narraforms, particularly supernatural media narraforms, have been said to
help children deal with terrifying concepts, which may explain children's attraction to
them. "Children's storytelling sessions intersperse legends and folktales with narraforms.
The narraforms provide a change of pace by neutralizing the fear sometimes generated by
an especially well-told legend. Narraforms give the narrators – and, vicariously, the
audience – control over otherwise terrifying concepts" (Grider 1981, 130-131).

Grider's investigation into children retelling supernatural stories revealed that
children tend to gravitate toward the dramatic and the grotesque. The same can be said
for fantasy. In retelling fantasy stories inspired by the media, writers are drawn to the
more expressive qualities of the fantasy world. They will use and manipulate the Harry
Potter world to suit their interests, needs and desires. They are drawn to conflict, action,
sex, and other taboos. These retellings aren't pretty; children's narraforms often "dwell

on the dramatic media productions which deal with the more perverse and grotesque aspects of violence, vengeful corpse, or pacts with the devil" enhanced with "darkness, mysterious sounds, and howling winds as well as a parade of deformed old men, crazy scientists, graveyards, and dilapidated Gothic mansions" (Grider 1981, 126). Sophia's emphasis on the evil spells cast on Harry, and on the underwater challenge and swimming, illustrates Grider's observation. As a hybrid category of narrative, the media narrative, "deserves detailed investigation by folklorists" (Grider 1981, 131). The cultural impact of the mass media has been studied by sociologists and others, but folklorists have been primarily concerned with "the influence tradition has exerted on the media and not vice-versa" (Grider 1981, 131).

9.3 Children's Fan Art as Storytelling

Just as the media narraform levels the playing field for kids who do not have the best narrative abilities, fan art can also provide a form of storytelling for children who do not yet have significant literacy skills and abilities. Although typically thought to be predominantly a teenager's domain, child fans also create fan fiction and fan art. Eight-year-old Lucas explains how he was so inspired by watching Quidditch that he had to write it down and read it to re-experience his favourite moments.

> Contessa: Does anyone write their own Harry Potter stories?
> Lucas: I just write about Quidditch, and sometimes when I watch the movie, I just feel my favorite part and I write it down and just read it. (2005)

Here Lucas explains how popular culture can even inspire him to write, once again disproving the myth-conception that popular culture destroys creative competencies.

For children who do not yet possess strong language and literacy skills, some opt to draw the popular culture story they wish to tell. For example, as a pre-kindergarten child, Nicholas drew a Harry Potter adventure storybook. In an interview, when he was seven years old, Nicholas revealed his storybook creation to me:

Contessa:	And do you ever write any stories about Harry?
Nicholas:	I used to.
Mrs. Turner:	He wrote a book one time.
Nicholas:	You wrote a book? Do you still have it?
Mrs. Turner:	It's tucked away somewhere.
Contessa:	I would love to read your book.
Nicholas:	[To mom] You threw it out when you took out the old bookshelf.
Mrs. Turner:	He drew pictures and little stories.
Contessa:	What was it about?
Nicholas:	All the movies.
Contessa:	And did you make some stuff yourself?
Nicholas:	[Nodding.] (2005)

Before he was old enough to write full sentences, Nicholas drew the story he wanted to tell with pictures based on the Potter movies he has seen. He then took his storybook of illustrations to adults (family members and his babysitter) to write on the page the narrative and words he dictated to them. Although Nicholas thought his mom threw the book away, she reveals that she still has the book in safekeeping, and agrees to photocopy it for me (copying one page and a half at a time). See Figures 9.4 – 9.12 below as well as the Appendix F for many of Nicholas's storybook drawings not presented in this chapter.

It is obvious by the change of adult handwriting that more than one adult helped Nicholas transcribe his storybook. In addition, the adult text writers make various spelling and grammar mistakes (which I have corrected in the text and indicated with []), and seem to be writing Nicholas's exact dictation. Nicholas's storybook was written and drawn in a school exercise book, and when opened up, images are presented on both sides

of the page which sometimes blend together, for example on pages 6 and 7, the snake Nagini is drawn across the two pages. Nicholas fills the book from cover to cover. He doesn't stop until all the pages are used.

Nicholas's storybook text is as follows: Page 1, Front Cover (Figure 9.4): "Harry Potter." Nicholas's story has a front page, entitled "Harry Potter." This is one of only two pages out of thirty-one on which Nicholas uses his own handwriting. An adult to whom Nicholas dictated his story has handwritten the rest of the text.
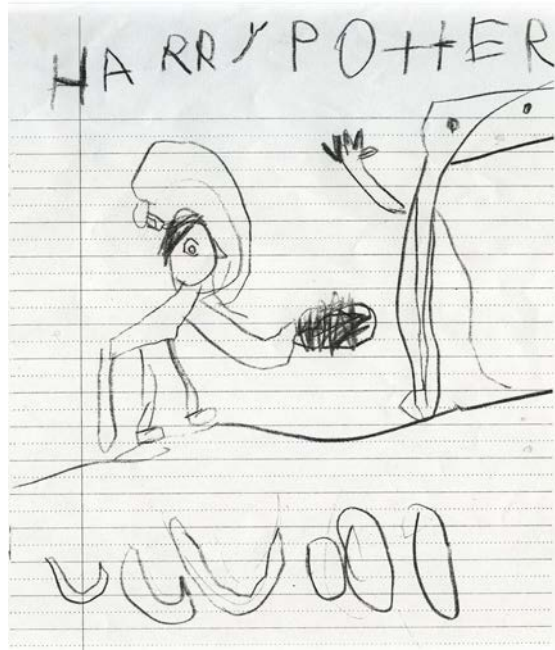
Figure 9.4: Child's storybook page 1 (front cover).

Page 2 and 3 (Appendix F): "The snake chased Harry as fast as he can." (Page 2 was not photocopied separately and therefore only partially appears in the photocopy of Page 3.)

Page 4: (Figure 9.5) "Harry was flying on the Nimbus 2000 and he was gaining on the Snitch."
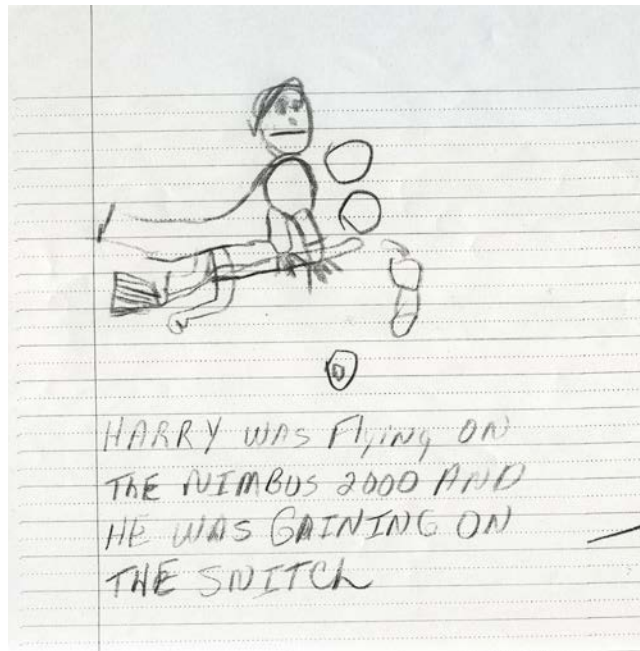
Figure 9.5: Child's storybook page 4.

Page 5: (Appendix F) "Harry was walking down the highway at Hogwarts and heard a funny noise."

Page 6: (Appendix F) "Harry went over to the Hogwarts chest to get his magic."

Page 7: (Appendix F): "Harry was in [Moaning] Myrtle's bathroom thinking to himself."

Page 8 (Appendix F): "Harry went outside bringing the Quidditch case behind him."

Page 9 (Appendix F): "It was almost time for the [dueling]match. Harry and [Malfoy] were excited to beat each other."

Page 10 (Appendix F): "This is the magic box at Hogwarts. If you use the right spell on this magic box."

Page 11 (Figure 9.6): "The flying Ford with Fred and Ron inside go into Harry's bedroom window and then Harry's cousin Dudley and his Aunt and Uncle were gone out."
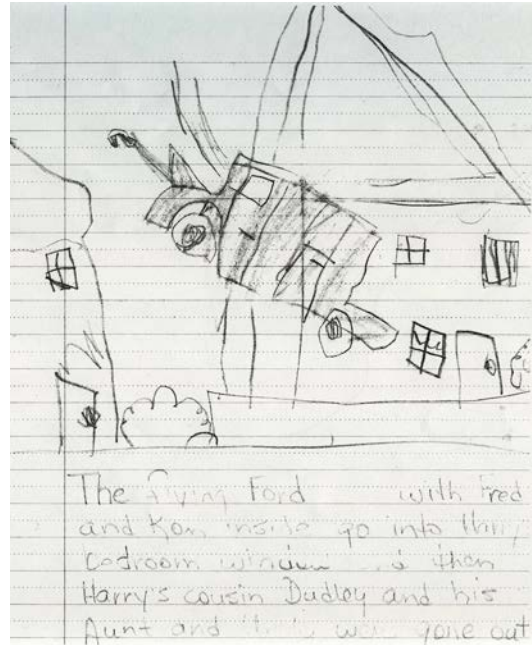

Figure 9.6: Child's storybook page 11.

Page 12 (Appendix F): "Hagrid's House." This page was not photocopied separately and therefore only partially appears in the photocopy of page 13.

Page 13 (Appendix F): "Harry went over to Hagrid's for tea."

Page 14 (Appendix F): "It is almost Pet Day at Hogwarts."

Page 15 (Appendix F): "This is the magic bow and arrow at Hogwarts."

Page 16 (Figure 9.12): "This is the magic necklace at Hogwarts. It shoots magic powers out of the locket."

Page 17 (Figure 9.7): "This is Ron's house. He lives on a farm."

Figure 9.7: Child's storybook page 17.

Page 18 (Appendix F): "This is Ron's kitchen table."

Page 19 (Appendix F): "These goblins take your [Bertie Botts] every flavour beans."

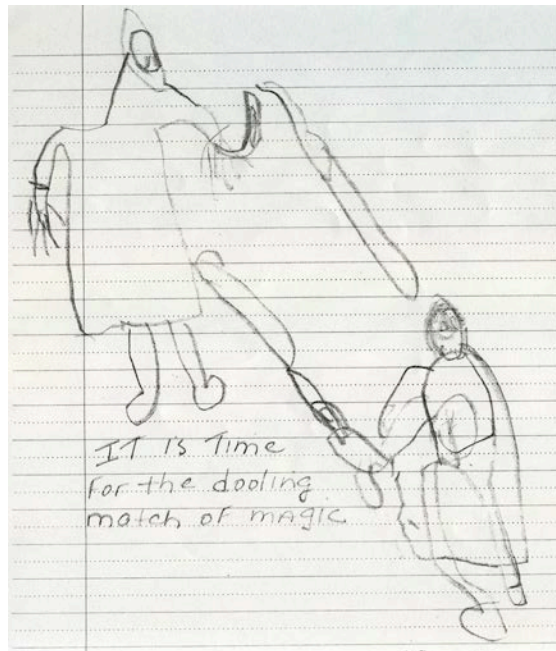Page 20 (Figure 9.8): "It is time for the [dueling] match of magic."

It is Time
for the dooling
match of magic

Figure 9.8: Child's storybook page 20.

Page 21 (Appendix F): "It is time for Pet Day at Hogwarts."

Page 22 (Appendix F): "I'm so excited that [Scabbers] is doing his best tricks every year."

Page 23 (Appendix F): "This is my pet owl. Her name is [Hedwig]."

Page 24 (Appendix F): "This is my pet Meem Mo. He is doing tricks that I taught him."

Page 25 (Appendix F): "My pet owl is the best pet of the year!"

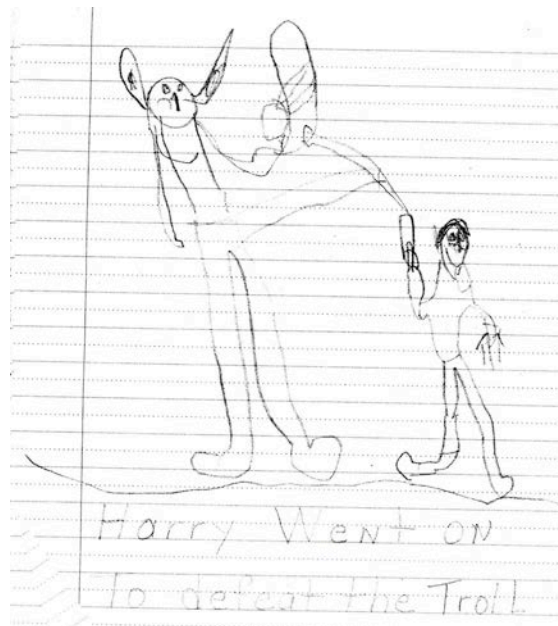Page 26 (Figure 9.9): "Harry went on to defeat the troll!"

Figure 9.9: Child's storybook page 26.

Page 27 (Appendix F): "Harry on snowboard." The text at top of page is not evident in this picture due to partial image only.

Page 28 (Appendix F): "Hagrid bought the Nimbus 2000 out of the money that Hagrid got Harry."

Page 29 (Appendix F): "Harry finally got the Nimbus 2000."

Page 30 (Appendix F): This image is indistinguishable due to photocopy quality.

Page 31 (Appendix F): "The End." Based on the handwriting, it looks as if "The End" is first written by an adult, and then was written again (below it) by Nicholas.

In November 2005, Nicholas also drew some fan art that included "Potter Puppet Pals[50] Bothering Snape," (Figure 9.10) and "Hogwarts" (Figure 9.11) which depicts Harry, Hermione and Ron battling Voldemort with machine guns instead of wands. See

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[50] Potter Puppet Pals are manufactured puppets made in the image of Harry Potter characters. Plays involving Potter Puppet Pals can be found on YouTube, often performed by adults.

Figures below as well as the Appendix G for all of Nicholas's drawings not presented in this section. This time, Nicholas is old enough to write, so he takes the time to spell out what he is drawing. Nicholas had these pictures prepared for me when I came to pick up the storybook his mother photocopied. I believe that the act of talking to Nicholas, showing genuine interest in his fandom, and giving him positive attention, are some of the reasons why he drew these pictures and gave them to me.

Figure 9.10: Nicholas's drawing of "Potter Puppet Pals Bothering Snape" (2005).

Figure 9.11: Nicholas's drawing of Harry, Hermione and Ron shooting Voldemort with machine guns (2005).

Nicholas's book is filled with Harry Potter inspired images and text derived from film and popular culture. His narrative is a media narraform – a retelling of some of the significant moments of the story that appeal to a preschooler, such as Nagini chasing Harry, Harry dueling with Malfoy, and Harry getting his Nimbus 2000. In addition, Nicholas creates brand new plotlines and action not found in any of Rowling's novels such as Pet Day at Hogwarts.

Nicholas portrays himself as Harry and in the course of action, he defeats his enemy Malfoy in a Quidditch match, defeats Voldemort in a dueling match, defeats the troll, wins the Pet Day contest (his original concept/storyline), and finally receives his magic flying broom the Nimbus 2000. In this story, Nicholas, as Harry Potter, is hero and

always comes out on top. The storybook is thirty-one pages which is quite a substantial literary and artistic commitment for such a young child (Nicholas's mother stated that he wrote/drew the story in 2001 which meant that he was only three or four years old at the time). Nicholas was proud of his work, which is probably why he feared his mother threw it out when she disposed of the bookshelf where it was stored. His narraform is filled with: magical abilities, spells and objects (Nimbus 2000, flying "Ford" car, chest, magic box, bow and arrow, and a magic necklace as seen in Figure 9.12 below); magical animals (Scabbers/Ron's rat, Hedwig/Harry's Owl, and Nicholas's own Meem Mo animal creation); and plenty of competition, action and suspense (snake chase, Quidditch match, defeats the troll, and dueling match with Draco).
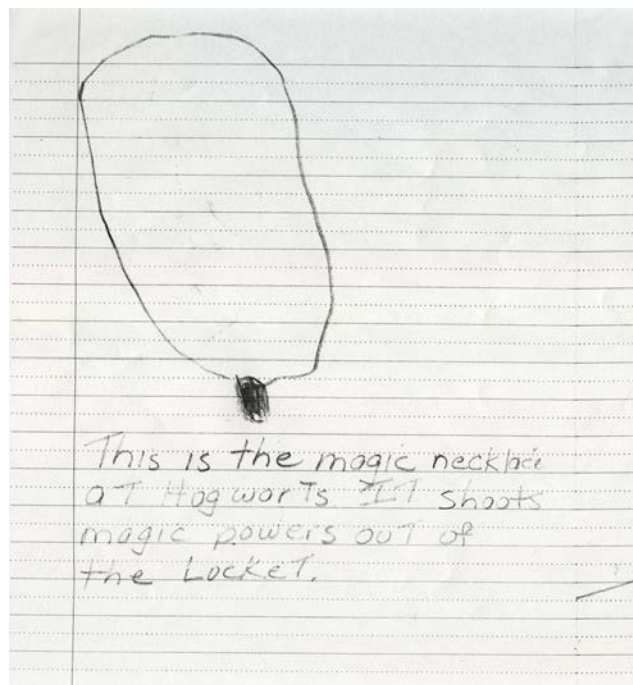

Figure 9.12: Nicholas's magical necklace that shoot magic powers out of the locket.

Not only is Nicholas's story filled with popular culture images and storylines (such as fighting Nagini and or in the bathroom with Moaning Myrtle), but his story is

also comprised of original creations including snowboards, tea parties, magic necklaces that shoot magic out of lockets, a flying "Ford" car, and a Pet Day competition with his own "Meem Mo" pet. The Harry Potter universe has given Nicholas the shared storylines for him to base his new stories and imagination on, once again illustrating how popular culture can act as tradition for children who want/need structure for their creative musings.

9.4   Fan Fiction

As a type of media narraform, fan fiction offers fans a unique ownership of the Harry Potter series in which children and adults extend narratives beyond Rowling's novels. These narratives are called "fan fiction"[51] – "fiction that utilizes pre-existing characters and settings from a literary or media text" (Tosenberger 2008, 185). Anchoring their stories in the Potter world, some writers write themselves into the storyline, while others write existing characters into the realm of the romantic, subversive and forbidden. Children compose stories as a "spontaneous response to a popular culture" (Jenkins 2006a, 178). Bond and Michelson write that this work "signifies a breakdown of the borders that, as adults, many of us have accepted as natural" (2003, 113). By writing fan fiction, children and adolescents wrestle the text away from the commercializers through their own vernacular construction of the books, their characters, plot lines and magical worlds. Indeed, while sometimes compliant with, or complementary to global industry management of the tradition, children are also

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[51] The term "fan fiction" (also known as "fan fic") was officially added to the Merriam-Webster's online dictionary in 2009 (Khellekson 2010).

frequently resistant to corporate domination. They illustrate this through their fan fiction, despite being discouraged by corporate groups representing writers such as Rowling and Anne Rice. Rice has even made pleas on her website to discourage fan fiction involving her characters (Borah 2002, 353). According to Jenkins (1992), fan fiction rebels against a culture owned by dispassionate corporations and attempts to restore a folk culture in which key stories and characters belong to everyone.

Fan fiction restores folk culture by opening up key stories and characters to everyone; everyone is able to play with, tell and re-tell, create and copy motifs from this fiction. This is a form of subversion in that it takes something that is owned and makes it available to all. This rebellion, says Amy Harmon, marks "a return to the folk tradition of participatory storytelling" (1997, 1). By writing fan fiction or creating fan art, children, in essence, become text producers and co-creators (Fiske 1989), taking part in a form of participatory literacy. Participatory literacy "describes the multiple ways readers take ownership of reading and writing to construct meaning situated within their own socio-cultural characteristics" (Bond and Michelson 2003, 119). In this case, children as active readers interpret and discuss texts together, develop literary aesthetics and produce texts inspired by the original product (Jenkins 1992). As Rebecca Sutherland Borah notes, "Rather than being passive receivers of consumable texts, fans are active participants who share their experiences and rework texts" (2002, 345). Moreover, "The text becomes something more than it was before, not something less" (Jenkins 1992, 52). It is this "something more" that some adults tend to fear for a variety of reasons. The fear of losing control worries some corporations and religious groups.

9.4.1   Fan Fiction Website Example: *HarryPotterFanfiction.Com*

While there are many fan sites with fiction devoted to Harry Potter such as FanFiction <www.fanfiction.net>, MuggleNet Fan Fiction <www.fanfiction.mugglenet.com>, and Fiction Alley <www.fictionalley.blogspot.com>, one of the most popular is Harry Potter Fanfiction <www.harrypotterfanfiction.com> founded in February 2001. As of August 19, 2014, this site boasts the largest collection of Harry Potter fan fiction – 82,568 archived stories (up from 33,000 fan fiction stories as of August 8, 2006). The fan fiction searchable database has been categorized by genres including drama, horror/dark, humour, mystery, action/adventure, angst and young adult. However, the category/genre that contains the highest number of archived stories is romance with 53,326 stories (up from 21,963 stories as of August 8, 2006). Not only does romance top the chart, but readers can further customize their reading experience by selecting the romantic pairing of their choice such as Harry/Ginny or Ron/Hermione.

In addition, the Harry Potter Fanfiction reports that it has on its website: 302,689 chapters, 2,142,800 reviews, 37,867 authors, and 118,174 members (as of August 19, 2014). The high number of reviews reveals the popularity of peer reviewing, critiquing and analyzing skills. New changes to <harrypotterfanfiction.com> include many more story selections and theme offerings. For example, readers may now refine their story search by: Characters (the reader can select who they want to be the first character and the second character), Ratings (age-appropriate stories for 12+, 15+ and Mature), Status (completed or works-in-progress), Format (one-shot, short story, novella, novel, short story collection, song fic [songs written about or for a character often to the tune of a popular song], NOT One-Shot, Era (Founders, Marauders, Pre-Hogwarts, Hogwarts,

Post-Hogwarts and Next Generation), Genres, and finally Pairings, otherwise known as "ship" stories (stories involving relationships between particular characters). This category includes characters paired by Rowling during the seven-book series such as Harry/Ginny, Ron/Hermione, James/Lily, Arthur/Molly, Bill/Fleur, Cho/Cedric, Harry/Cho, Ginny/Dean, Draco/Pansy, Hermione/Krum, Lucius/Narcissa, Remus/Tonk, and also pairings that Rowling did not make, such as Harry/Hermione, Draco/Ginny, Draco/Hermione, Draco/Luna, Hermione and Fred or George.

When it comes to Potter fan fiction, some kids write stories from the perspective of primary characters (such as Harry, Ron or Hermione), minor characters, or obscure characters. However, they may also write from the perspective of a new character (either someone related to an established character or someone brand new). These stories can be told in either first person or third person. These characters, places and events provide points of entry into the Harry Potter world. Some writers give themselves certain characteristics of their favourite character (gifted students or role-models) and/or have given themselves a much more active and central role than Rowling created (Jenkins 2006a, 174). According to Jenkins, the fact that kids imagine themselves as gifted students may be related to the fact that they are readers and writers and a portion of school population that may be teachers' pets (2006a, 174-5). Hermione becomes a role model for studious girls (Jenkins 2006a, 175), as was demonstrated with Amber and Lyndsay in 2005, and Molly and Madeline in 2011. All girls claimed to admire Hermione for her intelligence and studiousness, and dressed like her because of it.

Fan fiction stories often expand upon the book by providing a "backstory" or history of a character or event. There are many origin stories explaining how something

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came to be, such as how Quidditch originated, how Lily and James fell in love, or how Nargles came to be. There are even stories about Lily's childhood and James' cat Fluffy. The ending of the seventh book also gave fan fiction writers new possibilities to explore, and journey into the future with Harry Potter's children. Some fan fiction stories mix different fantasy movies and books; for example, in one fan fiction story called "The Cullens Come to Hogwarts," the author combines *Harry Potter* with *Twilight*, a series of popular young adult novels about vampires. This combination may have been inspired by the fact that one actor, Robert Pattinson, starred in both film blockbusters, who played Cedric Diggory in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* and Edward Cullen in the *Twilight* film series between 2008 and 2012.

While there is no indication as to the age of the fan fiction writers on the Harry Potter FanFiction website, the online stories (as of August 2014) are divided into age-appropriate reading categories: 12+ (23,200 stories), 15+ (32,670 stories) and mature (25,275 stories), which may indicate that children from the age of 12 years and up are writing and/or reading the fan fiction. A survey of the fan fiction for readers ages 12+ reveals topics that mostly have to do to with family, friends and internal struggles of adolescence. There are many family stories that deal with relationships with parents; for example, competing against a parent and winning, tensions between siblings and the "favourite" child, the divorce of parents, and the death of a parent. Adolescent concerns that students are often reluctant to write about in school assignments (Jenkins 2006a, 183), are also emphasized, such as being the new kid in school, the stress of giving presentations in school, coming of age, secret crushes, romances, sexual feelings, best friends, enemies and spies, feeling like an outcast, public embarrassments (magical

mishaps – learning magic but making mistakes doing so), youth empowerment, games

such as Spin the Bottle, Destiny and Star-Crossed Lovers.

Sexual exploration is also a popular fan fiction topic among youths. Some teens

write stories featuring same-sex pairings, called "slash." Slash is a genre of fan fiction

that is concerned with same-sex romance (Tosenberger 2008, 185). In her examination of

online Harry Potter slash fan fiction, Catherine Tosenberger argues that slash allows teens

to experiment with alternative modes of sexual discourse, particularly queer discourse

(2008, 186). She writes:

> Potter fandom, due in part to its sheer size, but also to the great diversity of ages
> and sexual orientations of its members, is ideal ground for exploring many
> varieties of non-heteronormative discourses in fandom. Slash is therefore one of
> the most popular genres of Potter fanfiction. (2008, 186)

Most importantly, argues Thosenberger, Harry Potter fandom "offers young people the

opportunity not simply to passively absorb queer-positive (and adult-approved) message,

but to actively engage with a supportive artistic community as readers, writers, and

critics" (2008, 190). Thousands of Potter slash stories, featuring popular pairings like

Harry and Draco, appear on websites like fanfiction.net accompanied by numerous online

communities devoted to the genre.

9.4.2   Fan Fiction and Shippers: *Isn't it Obvious! Jennifer's Ron & Hermione Fansite*

My informant Jennifer, who organized the Quidditch match discussed in Chapter

Eight, also created a fan website devoted to the developing love relationship between two

of the three main protagonists, Ron and Hermione, called "Isn't it Obvious!: A Ron &

Hermione Fansite" found at <www.shadowcry.net/rhobvious>. The name of the website

is a direct comment on what some fans think of Ron and Hermione's ongoing relationship

from Book One to Book Seven: "Isn't it obvious… that they are in love and will get

together?" Ron and Hermione do indeed have an ongoing and blossoming relationship in

the books and, at the time Jennifer wrote her story, the inevitability of their pairing was

still unknown. An ongoing or unfinished relationship that carries from book to book is

something a reader invests in, and is often the subject from which fan fiction writers take

their inspiration.

The "Isn't it Obvious!: A Ron & Hermione" website allows fans to discuss and

explore the many aspects of Ron and Hermione's relationship through a variety of

submitted fan materials including pictures, fan fiction, poems, fan art, songs, games and

puzzles. The website is divided into six sections including the following: (1) An

introduction to the site called "Isn't It Obvious!" where viewers can learn about the site,

the youth who operate it, and related links. (2) A "Ron & Hermione" section where

readers can learn about the couple, special moments, and read J.K. Rowling press quotes.

(3) The third section is devoted to "Fan Works" including fan fiction, fan art,

manipulations, rants, essays, and fan close-ups. (4) This section is devoted to "Fun Stuff"

where you can view images from the gallery, play games like word searches, read taglines

and captioning, as well as view fan pictures and t-shirt designs. (5) The "Downloads"

section consists of avatars and icons, Instant Messaging, wallpaper, and music videos. (6)

And finally an "Extras" section where fans can sign a guestbook and located contact

details. The website also enables online users to sign up for membership and log into the

site.

Jennifer, who began reading the Potter books at the age of twelve, launched her website on June 26, 2002 when she was fifteen years old. In the "About Us" tab of the website, on the Meet the Staff page, Jennifer writes that she created the site "in order to remedy the fact that there were very few Ron/Hermione sites on the Internet." Jennifer is a "shipper" – a fan who favours one particular "relationship" over other pairings in the Harry Potter universe, and writes about that relationship. On the main page of her website she writes, " I jumped on the shipping bandwagon after *Goblet of Fire*, and have been a Ron/Hermione shipper ever since and it was my only real ship within the Harry Potter Universe."

Located under the "Fan Works" section of the site, one can find Jennifer's fan fiction along with the links to the stories of 36 other fan fiction authors. Jennifer's story is called "Isn't it Obvious?" and is linked to the website FanFiction <www.fanfiction.net>, and is posted under the user name *bravo six*. The "Myself" section of the FanFiction profile encourages its users to write a short biography. Jennifer describes herself and her interests in fan fiction on her *bravo six* FanFiction main page:

> [I] just love reading and writing. I read all the time, and though I may not be able to write my own original stories (although that day may come!) I adore fan fiction. I also love to frequently visit Chapters, even if I don't buy books every time, I just love it there. I love 'ships. I can't help it. And I 'ship Ron/Hermione to the death.

Jennifer's interests are mostly with Harry Potter, but she explains that she occasionally delves into the Star Trek, JAG, and Jane Austen fan fiction. She writes "I've only ever written Harry Potter fics but I hope to write some Inheritance Trilogy fics, especially with the release of Eldest, the second book." Along with the Potter novels, her favourite books include contemporary, fantasy and classic literature, and include such

books as *Eragon* and *Eldest* (Inheritance Trilogy) (Christopher Paolini), *Pride and Prejudice* (Jane Austen), *Random Passage* and *Waiting for Time* (Bernice Morgan), and *Jane Eyre* (Charlotte Bronte). Jennifer has published three Harry Potter stories on the FanFiction website that she has also linked to her own website. These include: (1) "Soulless Lump" (categorized as Humour) published January 4, 2004 with 22 reviews; (2) "Isn't it Obvious?" (categorized as Romance/Humour) published August 26, 2002 with 75 reviews; and (3) "Harry Potter and the Overly Obsessive RHr Fans" (categorized as Romance/Humour) published Oct 4, 2002 with 62 reviews.[52]

"Soulless Lump" is Jennifer's shortest and most recent published story. The synopsis is as follows: "When Hermione is captured by dementors, only someone who likes her more than a friend can save her!" She describes this story as a "stupid little flash fic" that she wrote in response to a fan discussion surrounding a photo of Harry and Hermione in a *Prisoner of Azkaban* scene where "Harry is holding on to Hermione while it looks like something bad is going on." On her posting page Jennifer claims that fans, in particular Ron and Hermione (R/Hr) and Harry and Hermione (H/Hr) shippers, were getting "over excited" and "worked up" during debates over what this picture symbolized. Her solution is to write a fan fiction story that completely disregards the H/Hr relationship, focusing on Ron's secret emotions for Hermione. Jennifer's story forces Ron to confess and reveal his true romantic feelings for Hermione in order to save her. By writing this story, Jennifer attempts, in her own way, to silence the discussion that pairs and favours Hermione with Harry rather than with Ron.

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[52] Review totals as of August 26, 2014.

In "Harry Potter and the Overly Obsessive RHr Fans" Jennifer has placed herself in the story along with her with her B.O.B (Best Online Buddy) and fellow fan-mate Amanda. Jennifer merges together the Harry Potter literary fantasy world with real life Potter fans, and calls attention to it in her Author's Notes: "Oh, and there are two characters in there that I want to explain. [Jennifer] is me and Amanda is my B.O.B (Best Online Buddy) and we're both R/H obsessed! ;)." Jennifer later adds to the Author's Note in Chapter Two, "In case you're wondering about the characters [Jennifer] and Amanda, we're both real people, 16 years old, and majorly obsessed with HP and R/Hr! ;)." She also posts the synopsis of the story: "When the magical world learns that the muggle world knows all about them through the Harry Potter books, Hogwarts invites 20 students from a muggle school to visit Hogwarts, including two scheming obsessive R/Hr fans!" As an avid fan, Jennifer willingly mocks herself and her fan-mate referring to herself as "overly obsessive," but they also fantasize about their entrance into the world of Potter.

"Isn't it Obvious?" was her first publication, consisting of five chapters, and received the most online reviews. (Excerpts of this fan fiction are presented in this chapter; for full story see Appendix H.) Jennifer provides the following synopsis to her story on the FanFiction website, "When Hermione comes to the Burrow and brings her laptop, the trio discovers that Harry is on the web, and before it's too late, they find a Ron/Hermione site! But that could be good thing! Find out what happens!" What is most interesting is her combination of Harry Potter's magical world and her online created world. The plot revolves around Ron, Harry and Hermione who go online to discover the online world of human/muggle fans devoted to a book called Harry Potter. "Because we've found websites," said Harry, "You know what they are right?" Fred and George

nodded. "Well, we've found sites about me, well, about the Harry Potter books. They're

written as if someone was following my life at Hogwarts" (Chapter 3). The fictional

group reads on to discover the author's real website devoted to Ron and Hermione. This

is a very clever combination of the fantasy world and real world. Jennifer also combines

the real world reviewers of her work, in particular user ChimaeraGurl, into her fan fiction.

Jennifer invites herself into the lives of her favourite characters and writes herself and her

reviewer into the drama. Harry, Ron and Hermione begin communicating with her online

readers and reviewers:

> **ChimaeraGurl:** Oh, I'll tell you this much: The site is called "Isn't it Obvious?"
> "Isn't that the same site I was going to go into earlier, before we started talking to
> ChimaeraGurl?" said Harry.
> "Yeah, it was in that 'Featured Fan Sites' thing," replied Hermione.
> "Well, click on, would you?" said Fred. Him and George were still there because
> they were finding all of this stuff very interesting. Who wouldn't? Hermione
> clicked on it and a new browser window opened and she maximized it. When the
> site loaded, they could see a picture of the two actors from the Harry Potter movie
> who played Ron and Hermione and at the top of the picture there were white
> letters that said "Isn't it Obvious?" There was also a picture that said 'Ron and
> Hermione fans site ring,' one that said 'Ron Weasley Fan' and another that said
> 'Gryffindor.' Hermione put her face into her hands. (Chapter 4)

Jennifer also writes her fellow Harry Potter fans into her story, and makes herself the

website manager (protagonist) of the story. Writing oneself into a storyline can also be

perceived as a form of wish-fulfilment in her desire to be part of the Harry Potter world.

Her story consistently illustrates her desires and her current ambitions such as a website

creator. This story is also a great illustration of the ways in which kids write their

concerns, fantasies and wishes into their fan fiction.

Jennifer's "Isn't It Obvious" fan fiction is also rife with references to and

interactions with modern technology. Jennifer uses the Internet as the means in which

two worlds (fantasy and reality) come together in her fan fiction. Her humour also mostly

hinges on Ron's misunderstanding of muggle (non-magical human) technology; for

example, they call the telephone a fellytone and hang it up incorrectly. Jennifer is forced

to constantly explain muggle technology such as the laptop, computer, Internet, websites,

and instant messaging, devices critical to a young person's world today. In fact,

Jennifer's emphasis on the laptop also reflects her own desire, which was at the time, to

have a laptop of her very own. On the staff autobiography section of her "Isn't It

Obvious?" website, she writes: "I'm hoping to eventually get a laptop so I can still

contribute while away."

The Ron and Hermione plotline also makes a great opportunity for young people

to express their frustrations with the awkwardness of dating. This story explores several

aspects that teenagers typically experience, especially with love relationships. This story

explores Ron's developing romantic feelings for Hermione, his insecurity, nervousness,

frustration and confusion:

> "I'm going to bed," stated Ron. He left for his room. This was just turning out all
> wrong. He knew he liked Hermione, he liked her a lot. It was just...he didn't
> know. Maybe he'd just let things happen on their own...but then again, if he did
> that, he might lose her to someone else. This was so confusing for him. He
> decided to just sleep on it and went to bed. (Chapter 2)

However, despite Ron's anxiety and confusion, Jennifer prefers to expose Ron's love for

Hermione as she did in the story, "Soulless lump." Ron asks Hermione to be his girlfriend

which many teenagers fantasize and write about in their daily lives. She writes,

> "Alright, alright," he said, "Well, do you want to...be my girlfriend?" He
> promptly turned a bright shade of red.
> "Of course I do!" she said as she ran over to hug Ron. (Chapter 4)

Dating and romance fan fiction like Jennifer's dominate the HarryPotterFanfiction.Com website database. In one fan fiction story found on this site, a writer (a.k.a sweat_sizzler) writes about a romantic interlude between Draco Malfoy and Ginny Weasley. In this story, Harry and several other characters are punished by Dumbledore for fighting on the train with Draco Malfoy. Dumbledore locks the group up together to resolve their differences. Ginny discovers a magical game of Spin the Bottle (in the form of the traditional folk game but with magical elements), and they establish the rule that not only must they kiss, but the matching couples must date each other for a year. Ginny is then matched with Draco, and they sneak off into the bathroom where they make out:

> "Hey Ginny come here." Draco whispered in her ear.
> The two of them slipped into the bathroom while the bottle was still spinning. Draco locked the door.
> "What is it Draco, are you ok?" Ginny asked, sitting down on the bathtub ledge.
> "Yeah, it's just." He leaned in and kissed her, but instead of fighting him off she pulled him into the bathtub… She pulled his shirt off and he was undoing her top when they heard someone say "Hey guys where's Draco and Ginny?"
> "Oh crap, Harry and Ron are going to kill me." Ginny said.
> "It's ok." Draco said pulling his shirt on as they began to bang on the door. (sweat_sizzler 2005)

Upon returning to Hogwarts they later learn that Dumbledore has also made the group roommates, and must share a dorm together. Although the age of this writer is unknown, the innocent, yet sexually inquisitive nature of the story seems indicative of the interests of young, adolescent or teenage readers.

According to Susan Murry, entertainment media and their "narrative trajectories" do not just provide entertainment, education or fantasy fulfillment, but are investments "in an individual and communal understanding" of teenage identity (1999, 222).

Identifying with a popular television, movie, or book hero is nothing new to fans. Just as young teenage female fans identified with the character Angela Chase from *My So Called Life* (Murry 1999), many child fans identify with Harry Potter characters as demonstrated in Chapter Four and Chapter Six. In many ways, the Internet provides adolescent and teenage fans a "play space for constructing and experimenting with their own sense of... identity" (Kinder 1999, 24). Murry suggests that fan websites provide "a rich and well-articulated collection of reading strategies and fan activities" that can increase our understanding of the ways in which youths generate meaning from popular culture (1999, 221). In addition, fans often emotionally express the importance of the text's proximity to their own lives (Murry 1999, 222). Many Potter fans feel that Rowling's story echoes their own lives.

According to Jenkins, kids who write fan fiction are "drawing on their own experiences to flesh out various aspects of Rowling's fiction" (Jenkins 2006a, 176). Fan fiction as fantasy, for example, can allow children to "escape from or reaffirm aspects of their real lives" (Jenkins 2006a, 174). Children's fan fiction also reflects real world problems that children deal with like divorce and cancer (Jenkins 2006a, 173). Jenkins says that he can't be sure if it comes from real life (personally faced it) "or if they are anxious possibilities they are exploring through their fantasies" (2006a, 173). Whether or not children and teens are writing about issues that they have personally dealt with, fan fiction, like narraforms, allows them to explore taboo topics and interests, while remaining children or teens. In Jennifer's case, she primarily explores issues of romance and technology in her fan fiction; and as for Nicholas, he opts to depict story images and use literary structures that empower him (such as winning duels, prizes, competitions and

defeating enemies). Like games on the playground that are said to be both empowering and reassuring (113), some fan fiction also allows children "to explore dangerous adult themes while remaining children" (Grugeon 2001, 113). This may be why some youths write about issues such as cancer, death and divorce in their fan fiction.

9.5   Cultural Literacy: Online Peer Reviews, Feedback and Criticism

By putting their writing online, child and teen fans become vulnerable to public criticism; but for some kids, this is exactly what they go looking for. In Jennifer's disclaimer, she exposes herself to the world and explains that this is her first attempt at writing humour. She gambles with her interest and is willing to take criticism and let the responses dictate a new direction in writing. In the author's note of her story, "Harry Potter and the Overly Obsessive RHr Fans" she writes:

> Ok, just to warn you, I have never written something this outrageous before so I don't know if it'll be funny or just stupid, and the first chapter isn't so 'outrageous' as I'm planning the rest to be. The characters will me mostly OOC but what can you do? It makes it funny! And the plot seems absolutely crazy and something that could never happen, but what the heck?! lol. I wasn't gonna write another humour story but I got such good feedback on my last fic that I decided to! =D Oh, and there are two characters in there that I want to explain. [Jennifer] is me and Amanda is my B.O.B (Best Online Buddy) and we're both R/H obsessed! ;)

Readers of fan fiction are encouraged to write and post their review of the stories they read on FanFiction <fanfiction.net>. A review box at the bottom of the FanFiction screen encourages a positive review, stating: "A well rounded critique is often the most rewarding gift a reader can give. Please use this golden opportunity to offer a well deserved praise and/or tips for improvement." Most importantly, Jennifer claims outright that it was the positive feedback that prompted her to make a second attempt at another

humorous story. It is therefore safe to assume that fan fiction peer reviews can be directly responsible for encouraging young writers to experiment with writing.

Jennifer also takes moments between posting her chapters to respond to her reviewers, thanking those for posting comments and also thanking the person who converted her story to Beta so it could be posted online.[53] But she primarily thanks the people for finding her story humorous as it reassures her. Overall, the majority of comments are positive and encouraging. While Jennifer's fan fiction contains some spelling errors, incorrect punctuation and grammar, not one of the 75 reviews mentions this. Instead the responses are overwhelmingly positive, complimentary and encouraging. Readers love the story and want to read more, and encourage her to do so. Jenkins point out that such peer support websites are usually more tolerant of linguistic errors than most classroom teachers, and are ultimately more helpful because they allow the writer and reviewer/mentor to share the same frame of reference and share deep emotional investment with the literature (Jenkins 2006a, 181).

Many literacy experts now recognize that fan fiction helps develop children's cultural literacy (Jenkins 2006a, 177). In addition, online fan sites have been referred to as "affinity spaces" which offers opportunities for learning in informal and recreational spaces (Jenkins 2006, 177). Affinity spaces are spaces "where informal learning takes place, characterized by, among other things, the sharing of knowledge and expertise based on voluntary affiliations" (Jenkins 2006a, 280 quoting James Gee). Many fan fiction websites offer online editing and mentoring to writers (including kids and unpaid

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[53] Beta reading is a peer-review process. "Beta reading takes its name from beta testing in computer programming: fans seek out advice on the rough drafts of their nearly completed stories so that they can smooth out 'bugs' and take them to the next level" (Jenkins 2006a, 179).

volunteers of all ages), such as FanFiction, where Jennifer published her stories, and

Harry Potter Fanfiction. According to Jenkins, this mentorship allows for an intertwining

of fantasies, which is a key element of bonding between mentor and novice writers

(2006a, 176). I believe Jennifer formed several bonding relationships with her online

friends and reviewers. For example, in "Harry Potter and the Overly Obsessive RHr

Fans" Jennifer includes in her story her B.O.B (Best Online Buddy) Amanda, and in

"Isn't It Obvious" she incorporates her reviewer, ChimaeraGurl, into her story.

ChimaeraGurl regularly posted online comments of encouragement for Jennifer; for

example, in response to Jennifer's first chapter posting on August 26, 2002,

ChimaeraGurl wrote: "Bravo! This story is going to be great! I can't say I'm surprised

though, I have yet to read something less than wonderful from you! :-)" On her own

website, Jennifer has also posted links to Chimaera's R/Hr fan fiction, including "The

Way You Are" (ChimaeraGurl 2002), further demonstrating their friendly connection and

bond over the Harry Potter universe. Most importantly, because kids are teaching kids

online, it helps inform children of what they need to know in order to become full

participants in their culture (Jenkins 2006a, 177).

9.6   Conclusion

Not only does fan fiction allow children and teens to express their identities,

explore topics of interest that reflect their everyday lives or anxieties they may have,

improve their writing and mentoring skills, subvert power and embody power, but it

allows them to explore their fandom in the face of adults and mass media, which is no

doubt the reason why they migrate to it. The Internet has become a space where children

can actively thwart adult regulation. "They are active participants in these new media landscapes, finding their own voice through their participation in fan communities, asserting their own rights even in the face of powerful entities, and sometimes sneaking behind their parents' back to do what feels right to them" (Jenkins 2006a, 205). As illustrated in this chapter, fan-play activities, such as Jennifer's fan fiction, reflect the identity and preoccupations of youths, and challenge the adult belief that children are passive receptors to commercial industry. Potter fan-play, which demonstrates children actively negotiating popular culture meanings and creating their own culture, also challenges Michel Foucault's theory on control and his argument that "disciplinary" methods (methods used to dominate people and control the operations of the body) create passive, non-responsive "docile" bodies (1975, 137-138).

As illustrated in this chapter, fan fiction is a form of participatory culture and storytelling that is said to mark a return to folk culture, where youths take something public and make it their own. Media narraforms in the form of online fan fiction, drawings, or YouTube Videos, in which fans try desperately to communicate their excitement and thrill, "are a kind of celebration of the media, an extension of the static and mass-produced images into the creative realm of storytelling" (Grider, 1981, 126). Fan sites offer opportunities to explore their fandom, and fan fiction encourages literary analysis, writing skills and mentorship, ultimately helping youth develop a critical vocabulary for thinking about storytelling.

Chapter 10 Conclusion

Kid Culture: Play, Popular Culture, Folklore and Narrative

10.1   Introduction

This concluding chapter summarizes research observations based on my case study of Harry Potter fans in an attempt to analyze the nature of youth culture and play, otherwise known as what Kathleen McDonnell defines as "kid culture" (1994). This chapter therefore summarizes my research on Potter fan-play, reading and participatory activities, and illustrates how those activities function for their participants. I attempt to answer the questions: What does Harry Potter youth fan-play reveal about the nature of children's culture, their play, narrative, folklore and popular culture traditions? And do children and teenagers fully participate in the creation of their own culture?

I therefore address the functions of play, popular culture, folklore and narrative for child and teenage fans that dispel some of the numerous adult myth-conceptions regarding children presented in Chapter Three. The ethnography presented illustrates that the misconceptions, generalizations and myth-conceptions widely held by adults, and reported in the media, are simply not accurate. My research, along with ample research before me, reveals that playlore is not in decline, that children are indeed playing, in both traditional and creative ways, and that they are benefiting from their play in valuable and innovative ways other than just by physical exercise. This thesis demonstrates that play and popular-culture-influenced play is anything but trivial nonsense and that adults, parents, educators, and advocates need to pay attention and not shy away from it. Nor

does popular culture destroy children's traditional and creative capacities and competencies (shared notions of skill and appropriateness) as adults commonly speculate; in fact, my research has revealed that popular culture actually encourages, fosters and activates children's traditional and creative competences. My research demonstrates how the Harry Potter phenomenon activates children's traditional understandings and abilities through fan-play, including: folk art, role-playing, imitation, costuming, gaming, parodying, and joking. It also activates new creative competences in the writing arena where children and teens began creating new fan-play traditions including: fan art, fan fiction, media narraforms, book launches, movie launches, Quidditch, Wizard Rock and Potter Parties.

Through various fan-play activities such as games, costuming, parodies and fan fiction, Harry Potter fan youths demonstrate that they are engaged, critical and responsive; they play for the sake of playing (pleasure); and have learned to express themselves and their positions in society. They are drawn to materials and content (traditional genres and popular culture genres) that they identify with and which provide them with an outlet for their frustrations. My ethnography discredits the major misconceptions regarding popular culture, play and narrative outlined in Chapter Three. Children and youth certainly don't accept what adults try to dictate; they are not "simply empty-headed" (Jenkins 1998, 18) nor are they passive receptors. They are active, engaged, responsive and creative in their interpretation of and playing with popular culture and folk traditions.

Most importantly, Potter fan-play activities provide excellent illustrations of the dialectic relationship youth have with folklore, popular culture and mass media. I then

argue that the conservative/dynamic nature of children (Newell's Paradox) helps children experiment with power, subversion and resistance. What we see is kid culture – children and youth united by their shared popular culture interests forming a subculture with outlets for pleasure, unity, resistance, subversion and experiences and expressions of power.

Due to easy access to mass media and entertainment, it is not surprising that childhood today is influenced and defined by popular culture. However, while kid culture is shaped by popular culture, it is also shaped by tradition. My research illustrates that contemporary childhood or "kid culture" is equally shaped by popular culture and folk culture – they do not work in isolation. Children are influenced by popular culture (ironically often based on traditional storytelling motifs) yielding activities that combine both popular elements with traditional play. I believe this is what is at the core of children's culture today, and the key to understanding the true nature and "power" of children's culture, as well as the reason why so many adults maintain so many simplified myth-conceptions. It is much too easy to break up children's culture into two neatly divided influences – pop and folk. It is also too simple to separate children's play into two neatly divided forms – conservative and creative. Children absorb, adapt, rework, co-create and transmit both popular and folklore traditions at the same time. Therefore, in this conclusion, I highlight the heart of contemporary children's culture – the conservative/creative nature of children and their tendency to activate their traditional competencies in the face of popular culture influences. Viewing children's culture from this perspective, rather than in black and white terms of good vs. bad, popular vs. folk, or conservative vs. creative, helps explain the true nature of children's play and culture.

This chapter concludes by arguing a new approach for adults, parents, educators and researchers – a child-centred, fan-play approach that advocates parental engagement, media literacy for children, and adult popular culture tolerance. Certainly, this thesis demonstrates that the incorrect action is to ignore popular culture. I suggest the correct way to approach children and popular culture is to readily engage with them, and also to educate youths in media and cultural literacy so that they perceive and understand hidden adult agendas and know how to deal with them.

10.2   Play, Narrative and Popular Culture as Modern-Day Equivalents of Folklore

Examples of child and teenage fandom presented in this thesis, varying from costuming to Muggle Quidditch, illustrate what children's culture is all about – play. As McDonnell writes, "play is the lifeblood of childhood" (1994, 28). In fact, Factor points out that the urge to play is so powerful that "children even in the most terrible circumstances insist on playing" (2001, 30). For example, scholars have documented children playing in terrible circumstances, such as in the ghettos and in concentration camps of Nazi-occupied Europe where children mimicked the sick and even played "Gas Chamber" (Factor 2001, 30).

While some adults and educators, from child psychologists to development experts, have studied the cognitive and social developmental functions of play for children, we cannot forget that for many children the main reason they play, is simply to have fun and pleasure in the present moment. As McDonnell writes, "Play is more than just making narrative – it's making narrative for no goal except pleasure. For fun" (1994, 29). In addition, the Opies write, "A true game is one that frees the spirit" (1969, 1).

For youth, popular culture provides entertainment – a way to have fun. "This is the major function that pop culture serves for kids: as entertainment, as storytelling – a seemingly inexhaustible supply of stories. It's also what so disturbs adults: the thought that kids are spending so much of their time passively 'consuming' all these stories" (McDonnell 1994, 30). Some adults perceive the act of watching popular culture programs as non-education, as though watching is not an activity. To counter this, McDonnell argues that humans and adults have spent a lot of time being entertained; that in the past storytellers were dominant and valued in a community; storytellers told stories that were familiar to their audience:

> It was accepted in traditional societies that both young and old would spend a good deal of their time in this way. Different as modern life is from these traditional ways, movies and television fulfill much the same function for those of us living in 'wired' consumer societies. Drawing on common motifs, mythologies and familiar characters (especially in TV), they feed our hunger for stories. They are, in a very real sense, the descendants of the old bards and storytellers. (1994, 31)

Popular culture (such as television, movies, video games, toys, etc.) has therefore replaced traditional storytelling events and community storytellers. Instead of getting their "narrative fix" from community storytellers, kids now get it from popular culture in a variety of forms including books, TV, film electronic games and toys.

According to Harold Schechter, popular art should not be viewed as a primitive form of 'real art,' "but as part of an age-old tradition of popular or communal storytelling, a form of fiction which, in spite of superficial similarities to serious art … actually bears a much closer resemblance to folklore" (2001, 7). For Schechter, popular art is a form of communal storytelling.

Schechter argues that American popular entertainment "is essentially a vehicle for the transmission of age-old motifs" (2001, ix). And although he is concerned with pop entertainment such as films, Schechter makes it very clear that he does not assume that movies, comics and books *are* folklore, but rather are our modern-day *equivalents* of folklore, "that is, technologically advanced modes of providing the folk – the mass audience – with the same archetypically entertaining stories that, in other times and places have been transmitted through oral means (anecdotes, ballads, märchen, etc.)" (2001, x). The ethnography presented in this thesis supports Schechter's argument that popular art, like films and books, is our modern-day equivalent of folklore. The popularity of contemporary versions of traditional figures (such as the numskull) "tells us less about the present state of American culture than about the unchanging needs of the human imagination" (Schechter 2001, xii).

The key to understanding kid culture and its deeper meaning is finding out why kids like popular culture, and how kids interact with the narratives of popular culture. "Kids crave the menu pop culture has to offer, and it's up to adults to try to discover why this is. Even addiction bespeaks a truer hunger. What looks like nothing but toxic junk food to us may be meeting some deeper need for them" (McDonnell 1994, 19). The goal of popular culture can therefore be perceived as a means of activating deep emotion in children and teens. Schechter argues that popular culture triggers a powerful and emotional response, and creates important meaning for the human imagination (2001, 12). This is the story of Harry Potter – it is a form of popular entertainment that reaches out to children, adolescents and teenagers, eliciting a powerful emotional response that then triggers a reaction in thought, word and action. I believe Harry Potter became popular

when its fans, whose emotions were triggered, began their own outward expression of fandom, and began reworking the material to their liking and displaying their co-creations from costumes to fan fiction. Popular culture can therefore function as meaning for the human imagination. Based on interviews with children and teenagers presented in this thesis, the story and phenomenon of Harry Potter illustrates many deep-seated emotional needs in children and youth. There are numerous examples of children attempting to experience a variety of emotions from empowerment, sometimes by chasing their sibling with their wand, like Scott (2005), or using the killing curse, like Lyndsay (2005), to a desire to relive a past experience with a deceased loved one like Jacob (2008). And for many girls and young women like Jennifer (2008), budding romantic relationships or "ship" stories provide a way to explore powerful emotions of love, lust and courtship.

It can be argued that children and teens respond to popular culture in such emotional ways because they are responding to the narrative. Popular culture provides a place of narrative. This is exactly the case with Rowling's Harry Potter books. As McDonnell writes, "Kids' popular culture has a particularly strong grounding in narrative because kids themselves demand it. They have an endless appetite for stories: It's their main way of interacting with and making sense of the world" (1994, 15). By playing with popular culture, children are organizing the world around them, engaging in new ways of thinking and seeing. It is evident that from my research, and the research of others, that "children are highly articulate and utilize narratives in making sense of the cultural worlds around them" (Brady 1980, 20).

10.3   Play and Power

As demonstrated in Chapter Four, it is not surprising that the largest children's literary phenomenon in the contemporary world is a hero quest tale. Harry Potter is the story of an unwanted orphan who, at the start of the story, has no power. He is small and weak, and is bullied. This all changes the day he learns he is a secretly a boy wizard. The boy wizard then goes to school to be trained, to become knowledgeable, to become powerful. As he progresses through his years, he repeatedly encounters the evil Lord Voldemort, learning more knowledge to defeat him in the end. Each year is marked with a celebration, in this case, school graduations. The story of Harry is a story of a powerless boy made powerful – defeating the villain who tries to kill him. Harry saves the Wizarding World from evil take-over, and defeats his enemy – an evil adult wizard. Just as games that allow children to "act heroically without being in danger" (Opie and Opie 1969, 4), Potter stories also allow children to act and feel heroic. According to Baruch, a child can achieve satisfaction by imagining him or herself in the shoes of their favourite hero or heroine: "The comics and such appeal to him for one strong reason above all else: The people in them could be cruel and vindictive for him. They did what he had no way of doing. He got his satisfaction from them by imagining himself in their boots" (1998, 493). Child readers of Harry Potter literature also find pleasure doing what children are not permitted to do, and feeling what children are not permitted to feel: power and control.

Play, in this case, has a deep side because it helps provide a balancing function for children (Singer and Singer 1990). It helps them balance the powerlessness they feel in the adult world, as an oppressed minority. Children often resort to parody, mockery or

other forms of subversive humour as an outlet for their frustrations with being oppressed by adults. Chapter Six and Chapter Eight both presented kid parodies. In Chapter Six, for example, child fans were shown to be parodying Harry Potter book titles and, in Chapter Eight, teens were shown to be co-creating their own parody versions of the books and posting them online. So why are kids attracted to popular culture parody? It is because parody play allows children to experiment with and assert the domain of their personal power. Most importantly, McDonnell argues that children experience "exquisite satisfaction" when they make fun of those who oppress them: "Like little guerrillas, they seize power and free space wherever they can. And each generation discovered early on what oppressed peoples have always known: that there is exquisite satisfaction to be derived from making fun of their oppressors and imagining themselves in charge" (1994, 32).

Much like singing anti-teacher songs or using toilet humour, through parodies kids "dare to speak the forbidden and imagine the unimaginable – that the power relations in their world could, for a time, be completely reversed" (McDonnell 1994, 33). Themes of speaking the forbidden and power relations are distinctive in children's sense of humour (McDonnell 33). In fact, Martha Wolfenstein in her book, *Children's Humor* (1954), illustrated how the underlying meaning of the joke is to transform painful experiences and extract pleasure from them. This function has given rise to the extreme popularity and fascination with moron jokes or stupid adult jokes, "It's also the root of kids' bathroom humour, their fascination with sexuality and the bodily functions that are not to be spoken of in polite company" (McDonnell 1994, 33). This also explains the attraction children have to "low words" and bathroom humour as illustrated in Chapter Six.

Youth are particularly drawn to folklore genres and forms of play that empower them, and allow them the experience of power (genres like riddles, parodies, jokes, games, nonsense, secrecy, taunts, and play fighting). For example, the overwhelming popularity of parody, jokes and riddles in particular, demonstrates children's love of power (Knapp and Knapp 1976). In their play and games, children can compete as equals, but can also feel a sense of accomplishment when they defeat an adult, or a peer in competition, with their knowledge.

10.4   Play, Resistance and Subversion

My ethnography illustrates a well-known fact about children's culture, that it is an antithetical, anti-authoritarian culture of resistance and subversion. According to Mechling, "…children as a group are perpetually in the one-down relation to adults. To be antithetical is to be posed against an official order of meanings, uses, and processes" (1986, 97). He therefore defines children's folk cultures in terms of oppositional aesthetics (1986, 96). Children like to gain power over adults. One of their most enjoyable activities is expressing their insubordinate position in their neighborhoods, schools, playgrounds and homes. They need a forum and an outlet, to express and vent their frustrations and concerns. When they are able to freely express themselves, they gain feelings of power that enable them to gain mastery and self-confidence, and experience being in control.

Throughout my thesis, I have documented acts of resistance and insubordination, examples of children and youth expressing their frustrations with the adult world. Interviews with youths and event ethnography revealed numerous examples of

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subversion. In Chapter Four, children and teens spoke of how they are drawn to stories that represent their positions in society and empower them. They envision themselves as heroes, overthrowing their adult ("evil") rule. They are drawn to the characters as well as the motifs (such as wands and spells) that allow them to imaginatively and vicariously act out their desire for power, fairness and equality. In Chapter Five, kids demonstrated the power of grassroots and organic movements through the popularization of literature by word-of-mouth recommendations. In Chapter Five there are also examples of rebellious behaviour – chanting at a movie launch and banging on walls at a book launch.

In Chapter Six, kids were shown to use everyday objects in non-prescribed ways, seeking empowerment through knowledge, creating parodies, homemade costumes and games, and casting secret spells against unsuspecting friends, siblings or parents. They were also united to defend against censorship and book banning through groups like KidSPEAK. In Chapter Seven, teens were creating a new genre of music (Wizard Rock), meeting and organizing themselves, taking on leadership roles, condemning media conglomeration, and advocating literacy, free speech and physical activity through such groups as the Harry Potter Alliance. Local youth were also demonstrating leadership skills in organizing community groups such as the St. John's Quidditch League, the MUN Quidditch League and the St. John's Quidditch Scrimmage League. These fan-play examples ultimately dismiss the misconception that children today are incapable of self-organization and "will languish if left to rely on their own resources" (Opie and Opie 1969, v).

In Chapter Eight, kids were shown to have posted online parodies and jokes, and gravitated toward aspects of popular culture and the Internet that allowed them to express

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their feelings of frustration. In Chapter Nine, I showed kids who were liberally dismissing copywriting laws, taking ownership and writing fan fiction, and creating fan art. As June Factor reminds us, "Children do not merely take in adult culture. They are not passive sponges" (2001, 29). Most importantly, it is through their subversive play and acts of resistance, subversion and parody that they learn to establish their cultural independence. This was demonstrated particularly well by youths who engaged in such public movements as KidSPEAK (Chapter Six), The Harry Potter Alliance and the Rock Out Against Voldemedia project (Chapter Seven), and The Defense Against the Dark Arts Project (DADA) as initiated by the online community in their domain name battle against Warner Brothers (Chapter Eight).

According to Factor, play can help integrate the child's inner and outer worlds, as insiders (Potter fans) versus outsiders (non-fans). The group's shared knowledge, customs and traditions provide "a form of collaborative discourse which distinguishes 'us' from 'them' through a shared aesthetic of performance" (2001, 29-30). It is also through play that children can safely explore and experiment with the world, and feel a sense of control (Factor 2001, 29-30). Searching for power and control, through fan-play activities, has been characteristic of youth fans discussed in this thesis.

Finding unification online and within groups is critical for children who wish to pursue their political protests against censorship, media conglomeration, and their interests in preserving literacy, education, justice, liberty and freedom. Popular culture unites youth fan folk groups, and strengthens bonds between them. This was demonstrated on a public level when fans came together to celebrate events, and on a private level between friends, as illustrated by best friends Molly and Madeline in

Chapter Six, and online friends Jennifer and Amanda in Chapter Nine. "The body of children's folklore, shared so enthusiastically among children and unknown to adults, certainly strengthens the bonds between children and sets off a safe-territory, free from adult restraints" (Zumwalt 1995, 41). Shared knowledge of the Harry Potter world acts much like a traditional body of children's folklore, in that it strengthens the bonds between children, or in this case, between fans of all ages. It is not surprising that kids are co-creating new forms of play, like media narraforms and fan fiction, processes that level the field and allow boys and girls of all skill sets to participate together.

10.5 The Conservative and Creative Nature of Children's Culture: Resolving Newell's Paradox with Hybrid Play and the Double Helix Analogy

The examples of fan-play presented in this thesis have demonstrated the conservative and creative nature of children's play. Children's play traditions are said to unify conventional opposites. As Factor writes, "[Children] are at once conservative and innovative, inherited and improvised, rule-bound and adaptive, collaborative and competitive, ritualistic and creative, universal and minutely local..." (2001, 25). And while W.W. Newell devoted back-to-back chapters of his book *Games and Songs of American Children* (1963; 1883) to the inventiveness (Chapter Four) and conservativeness of children (Chapter Five), scholars agree that "Newell does not provide an explanation of this seeming paradox" (Fine 1980, 179). The problem is that Newell emphasized and favoured tradition, therefore suggesting that kids prefer traditional games to new ones involving fantasy play. Zumwalt reminds us to be cautious over this "arbitrary division" between inventiveness and conservatism. She writes: "Just as

children share in traditional games, so they share in fantasy play. In this sense, innovation has the same depth in children's folklore as tradition" (1995, 44). In other words, innovation is traditional. In order to encompass the complexity of children's folklore, Zumwalt suggests that we broaden our grasp "to reach for the text and the context, the ideal and the real, the tradition and the creativity" (1995, 44-45). I suggest that expanding our understanding and awareness of such concepts as tradition and creativity is the only way we can fully understand the complexity of kid culture.

Sutton-Smith also questions Newell's paradox, "how is it that children can have such a reputation as creatures of tradition, as conservers of child culture, and at the same time be known for their innovative fantasies and novel behaviours" (1995b, 21). The problem is that all too often researchers have opted to focus on one or the other – the traditional, original, universal and constant (such as the continuity of historical materials) or the specific, inventive, local, creative and emergent. I believe that this has been detrimental to the study of children's culture because it separates a process into two separate strands or braids that are in reality intricately woven together. In fact, much research has pointed to the fact that in child's play there really is no distinguishable line between the traditional (folk) and the emergent (popular). For example, research conducted by folklorist Elizabeth Grugeon provides "evidence that new traditions of media-inspired play activities may be performed side by side with older game forms, with no sense of incongruity for the children" (Bishop and Curtis 2001, 60). As well, Sutton-Smith cites the play studies conducted by Alice Meckley (1994) who, having studied pre-school children playing for six months, discovered that the traditional and the emergent phases were virtually indistinguishable. Sutton-Smith writes: "[Meckley] discovered that

while some children were more innovative than others, whatever they invented immediately became a tradition for all of the children in the group – not just the ones that had initiated the play" (1995b, 22). In other words, children are both traditional and inventive. Even their inventive/bizarre silliness can be considered a form of ritualized nonsense – a tradition in itself. In addition, children create new games that become traditionally upheld, practiced, and played in the same way it was before.

Much of children's play is, in fact, hybrid play such as seen in this thesis in the fantasy fan-play in Chapter Six, physical fan-play in Chapter Eight, and narrative/literary fan-play in Chapter Eight and Chapter Nine). Because hybrid play cannot be traditionally classified or categorized, it tends to be ignored by scholars. As June Factor points out, children's culture, with its hybrid play forms, is analogous to a double helix; one strand representing the universal/traditional, and the other representing the local/immediate context of the situation (2001, 29). Factor explains the double helix:

> [Y]oungsters are masters of an array of cultural forms and modes of social interaction overlapping but often quite distinct from the adult culture. These subcultures create what I have called a double helix, 'one strand representing the universal, ubiquitous features of childlore, the other the particular manifestations of children's play lives which result from specific circumstances (Factor 1988:xiv). (2001, 29)

This double helix structure is demonstrated time and time again in children's play. Every fan-play activity is made up of a combination of the universal (traditional acts, behaviours, practices or motifs) with the immediate and emergent (localized creative responses) often creating new or hybridized expressive forms, such as fan fiction, costuming events, parodies, movie and book launches, and fan customs like Quidditch. The analogy of the double helix to children's culture and fan-play offers a new

perspective and approach to studying children. I argue that rethinking our views as well as our definition of children's culture and transmission is critical to future childlore research.

10.6   Rethinking the Definition of Children's Folklore, Play and Transmission

Because the conservative and creative nature of children's play guarantees the reworking of traditional materials (often in new technological ways such as on the Internet), McDowell argues that scholars need a definition of children's folklore and theory of folklore transmission that allows for both the preservation of traditional models and the creation of new models out of traditional materials (1995, 57). Although children demonstrate conservative tendencies, they also create new play forms based on traditional materials, new forms that are local, unique, known only to a few people, and only in existence for a short time. According to McDowell, in regards to children's folklore, the notion of tradition must be reconsidered (1995, 59-60).

McDowell explains that while some folklorists may not think of mass-media-generated folklore as traditional (as such material is often considered to disappear quickly), it is certainly traditional to those who create and utilize it (1995, 60). He writes: "The world of children's folklore draws attention to the inherent relativity of the concept denoted by the words 'persistence through time and space'" (1995, 60). Therefore to allow for this paradox and the creation of folklore influenced by mass media, McDowell offers a theory of traditional competencies. He explains that if we are to change the construction of tradition in the definition of folklore (which centers on the notion of repeatability), we may think of traditional competency rather than a set of particular

traditional items. McDowell explains, "What persists through time and space, in these instances, is the capacity to formulate appropriate folkloric items, as much as the traditional items themselves. (1995, 60)

McDowell therefore suggests the theory of "activation" as an alternative to transmission. He writes:

> These considerations lead to the suggestion of a neutral term, perhaps *activation* of children's folklore, to refer to the processes set in motion as traditional competencies enter into finite communicative settings among children. Within this constellation, transmission intact or in recognizable variants would remain as one possible outcome, but the folklorist would be alert to the creative, transformative potential of all such encounters. (1995, 62; emphasis in original)

This theory is critical to my research as it places the child in a more active, less passive, light and provides a better approach to understanding how children take control of and feel powerful over adults and adult institutions such as mass media. Rather than being viewed as passive transmitters of traditional materials over time and space, children are viewed as active receivers of information with the ability to respond to current, immediate, emergent, localized environments in traditional capacities. McDowell explains that in a theory of the activation of children's folklore, the child "emerges as the genius of composition," and, when viewed from this paradigm, is "a much more interesting figure, one immersed in real-life contingencies, and not a mere cipher in a superorganic device" (1995, 62).

Factor's double helix analogy and McDowell's theory of traditional competencies and activation allow for the fact that children often respond to popular culture with conventional patterns and behaviours. McDowell's theory also helps in understanding the dialectic relationship children have with the media, how they resist some cultural content,

welcome some cultural innovations, and also create and introduce new cultural practices. Kids select, reject and adapt cultural content and vary their play traditions to suit their needs and desires. This process allows children to "'update' their culture in ways they see as relevant to their contemporary lives" (Bishop and Curtis 2001, 60).

In addition, when fans find opportunities to acknowledge the Potter Universe and the source of their fan-play activities, it fosters a sense of shared culture (Bishop and Curtis 2001, 60). This unites them as a folk group. And, as they create new activities (based on their immediate needs and desires), they develop a strong sense of power, ownership, creativity, pride and mastery of knowledge, thus providing them with critical social, cultural, developmental and psychological experiences. The very nature or process of children's culture and play guarantees a response (play activity) that suits their immediate needs and desires in meaningful ways.

Children, when playing, mix and match different genres and motifs, and co-create new forms based on the ones provided in popular culture and tradition. Kids are not playing with their toys as prescribed. This was made particularly obvious by the kids who engaged in fantasy play, and the kids who told media narraforms, like Sophia, who combined the story of Phantom of the Opera with Harry Potter dolls and Barbie dolls (Chapter Eight). My research demonstrates that kids do not simply copy popular culture, they use it in their own ways.

In addition, the youths in this thesis demonstrate the complexity of their play culture by using traditional games with popular culture references (games like Snape Tag), and using popular culture in traditional ways (media narraforms and fan fiction). The result is a combination of new elements with old patterns like Rowling's books. This

is exactly what fans do when they write fan fiction; they take the elements from Rowling – some folklore patterns, some innovation – and combine them in new ways which interest them. In many regards, the process comes full circle. Rowling uses folklore to write popular culture (with new elements), and the books become a source from which children can take either new styles or old conventions and create anew.

I suggest this dynamic process of participatory culture (creation and co-creation) resembles the dynamic energy flow of the torus. A torus is a donut-shaped vortex that appears in nature and is a fundamental energy process and pattern. "A torus is a ring-shaped surface generated by rotating a circle around an axis that does not interest the circle. Alternatively, we can obtain a torus by gluing the opposite edges of a rectangle" (Murdzek 2007, 682). Toroidal energy systems can be in seen in nature in hurricanes, tornadoes, and the magnetic fields around planets, stars and galaxies (Cosmometry 2012). In addition, Jay Kappraff notes, "The human heart is also toroidal, wound with microscopic tubular muscles" (2002, 288). The three-dimensional torus has been suggested to be the shape of the universe, a theory informally known as the "doughnut theory of the universe" (*Wikipedia* 2014b). Physicist R. Murdzek suggests that cyclic universe models naturally emerge from torus geometry (2007, 681).

The torus is described as a "self-referential system" that evolves by continually feeding back information about itself (Kappraff 2002, 261). As the torus turns inside out, its energy continuously flows back into itself. Because the torus is continually refreshing and influencing itself, it is a useful metaphor for understanding the participatory process of cultural creation and co-creation (tradition and innovation), exemplified in children's culture. Rowling was influenced by traditional folktales; she created a story with both

traditional and new, creative elements that entered the mainstream media; child readers then learned traditional folktale structure, characters and motifs, along with Rowling's unique Potter universe and characters, then re-interpreted the text to create new stories and art. Some of these new art forms, such as fan fiction, also enter mainstream culture, and the cycle begins once again.[54] As Kappraff writes, "New meanings take the place of the old, yet remnants of the original meaning become part of the philological roots" (2002, 262). I therefore encourage those studying fan-play to take this self-referential process into consideration when exploring issues of identity and the interweaving of original and new meanings. Paying attention to the toroidal process of children's participatory cultural creation and co-creation is valuable for understanding the operational process of children's culture and fan-play.

10.7   Children's Relationship with Popular Culture and Mass Media: Appropriation And Dialectic

One of the reasons why children are not totally overwhelmed by or fully manipulated by the media is their power to appropriate. They can reshape and transform popular culture items for their own purposes. Children appropriate, deviate from and co-opt popular culture and mass media. The nature of children's play, their appetite for constant change and creative release, and their ability to use, manipulate and appropriate makes popular culture and youth complementary companions. "It is this 'formidable ability' to transform reality through play which is the reason the onslaught of

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[54] Kappraff explains that the surface of a torus divides itself naturally into seven regions, which may explain why the mythic and sacred number seven and the torus was used by ancient civilizations (2002, 261-269). It is also interesting to note that Rowling crafted seven novels around Harry's search for seven horcruxes.

manufactured playthings is not catastrophic: children recast and transfigure the new material for their own purposes" (Factor 2001, 31). The ability to recast and transfigure to suit one's purposes is a form of empowerment and completely dispels the myth-conceptions that popular culture is a solely destructive force and that children are incapable of evading the intent of corporations, manufacturers and parents. Factor writes, "It is misguided to assume that the intent of manufacturers, or parents, will entirely determine children's play. Cultural imperialism, the endless onslaught of American commercial culture, is resisted, even undermined, through the imagination, innovation and traditional play practices of the young" (2001, 31).

This ability to mix and match, as well as recreate art, is one of the reasons why children's relationship with mass media is not one-directional, as many adults believe. Mechling writes, "Children's folk cultures turn out to be very resilient, according to this perspective, entering into a dialectic with mass media and appropriating for their own uses its materials and forms" (1986, 110). Children therefore use popular culture to suit their own needs through appropriation. "In their 'dialectic with the media' children have learned to reappropriate their own material from adult-produced written and audio-visual sources" (Marsh 2001, 91). If adults were to remember this dialectic relationship between youth and the media, many myth-conceptions could be tamed.

Kids appropriate mass media materials and forms for their own uses. In fact, "the relationship between children and the media operates in two directions, with children making choices about what to receive and what to reject" (Marsh 2001, 82). My research also proves that youths are not passive to the media, but rather use the literature and popular culture disseminated by the media to create new play forms that they can control.

It is argued that one of the reasons why children mix and match from different parts of culture is because "they haven't yet learned to make the distinction – so important to adults – between high and low culture: they embrace it all, equally" (McDonnell 1994, 18). This was demonstrated particularly well with the costume and fantasy fan-play ethnography. Fan costumes varied from child to child; no two costumes were alike. Kids were using the popular culture (Harry Potter characters) as templates for their costumes, but they were also incorporating their own creativity in the process. Kids mixed the homemade with the manufactured, the unofficial with the official, and the traditional with the emergent. Some costume components were "found" objects, and excellent examples of this were exhibited by children who picked up sticks from the yard and played with them as magic wands. When it came time to play, it didn't really matter what they were playing with, just as long as they were able to participate. According to McDonnell, "these kids were not merely passive receptacles of pop culture, but active spectators and participants in creating their own version of it" (1994, 18).

Many child scholars agree that recognizing this paradox/conservative-creative dynamic/double helix is critical to understanding the true nature of children and their lore: "That I now recognize text *and* context, the ideal *and* the real, the conservative *and* the innovation, adds to my wonder of the child's world of folklore" (Zumwalt 1995, 24). Recognizing the true nature or operational process of kids' culture and play, and redefining children's folklore and transmission, dispels the myth-conception that play lore is dying. Given children's dialectic with folklore, popular culture and the media, children's play is one which self-replicates, ensuring its continuance even in times of great cultural change and transition. Its very nature responds to the immediate context in

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traditional ways, ensuring a continuous, ongoing practice of tradition as well as creativity. "This ability to accommodate and create change enables children to ensure that their play traditions will continue to flourish, despite the dire predictions of adults to the contrary" (Marsh 2001, 94). Others like Mechling argue that children's adaptability better suits our current ever-changing society. "A last, startling implication of the dynamism/conservatism opposition in children's lore is that, far from being the conservator of tradition, it is often avant-garde. There is a sense in which the creative flexibility and adaptability of children gives them an advantage in rapidly changing, post-industrial society" (1986, 112). In other words, their nature enables them to be better suited to a society that is constantly changing.

10.8   Conclusion

I suggest that the ethnography presented in this thesis illustrates that children are capable of fully participating in the creation of their culture, as long as they are given the freedoms and rights to pursue their play activities and political activism. Therefore, the only question that should remain is – what can adults and researchers do to improve our understanding of children's culture, fan-play, folklore, popular culture and narrative, as well as support children's participation with their culture? In what direction should our future research go? Based on the fan-play examples and analysis presented, I therefore suggest several particular calls to action and approaches that will help better our understanding and support children's full participation in the creation of their culture.

10.8.1 Recognize and Debunk the Myth-Conceptions

The first and most obvious action is to attempt to fully understand the myth-conceptions that exist about children, popular culture, folklore, play and mass media. It is only when we fully understand the ideological climate of triviality and misinformation surrounding children's culture, that we can recognize the myth-conceptions, begin to perceive the truth, and do something about it. We must not fall prey to adult "protectionist" agendas that only further attempt to censor and control children, limit their co-creative freedoms and access, and keep them in line, such as book-banning and media consolidation.

10.8.2 Investigate Intergenerational Research and the Role of Kids in Adults' Enjoyment of Entertainment

We must also examine our own personal and academic perspectives, along with the adult agendas of others. I therefore suggest that we be conscious of how adults often subconsciously rely on children to achieve their own ends and needs such as through romantic, nostalgic, or vicarious experiences. As Clark notes, adults often use children to "reenter the 'wonder years' of the developmental past" (1995, 103-4). Santa Claus, for example, "represents a 'cargo cult' of idealized gifts for children – and in turn provides experience (at root, vicarious) of wonder and repose for adults" (Clark 1995, 104). Most importantly, Clark observes that by relying on children's beliefs as a source of adult vicarious experience, it "gives children a powerful role within the ritual as a whole" (Clark, 104). Therefore, children's actions and participation in culture are often "instrumental to the success of the ritual" (Clark 1995, 104).

This logic and advice also applies to the situation with parents and children who are Potter fans and engage in fan activity together. Children are often critical to adult enjoyment of rituals like Christmas and popular culture like Harry Potter. As Clark argues, if kids did not get excited about Santa, adults would "be let down in their attempts to idealize Christmas (since adults identify with children)" (1995, 104). From this perspective, children are powerful, despite the fact that adults fail to recognize how critical they are to their own enjoyment of popular culture, folklore, play customs and rituals. The dependency adults have on the children for their own enjoyment raises the important issue of cross-generational culture. I therefore suggest that future scholars pay close attention to this newly emerging cross-generational culture prompted by popular culture as illustrated in Chapter Six with Molly and her mother Christine. As discussed in Chapter Six, by investigating the space where conversations occur across generations, we can also observe new patterns of child-to-parent teaching and learning (Jenkins 2006, 205). Obviously, in order to fully understand the child's impact on adult rituals, folklore and popular culture, as well as these new forms of intergenerational teaching and learning, "the child's active voice in the cultural process had best be heard and taken into account" (Clark 105-106). I therefore suggest the same child-centred (childist) approach that I have taken in this thesis, as the best route for hearing the child's voice.

10.8.3 Don't Ignore Kid Culture – Attempt to Find Its Meaning

I suggest that scholars who wish to study children's culture learn how to address kids' popular culture, folklore, narrative, play and protest. McDonnell suggests that we don't ignore it, turn a blind eye to it, throw up our hands, or give kids carte blanche, "But

it does mean engaging in genuine dialogue with kids and making an effort to find some kind of *modus vivendi* with Kid Culture. In truth, we don't really have much choice: popular culture is a fact of contemporary life that isn't going to go away" (1994, 18-19). This is when adults need to investigate the deeper meaning revealed in kids' play and popular culture interactions. Popular culture as narrative sparks a strong emotional response in youths of all ages, and it can't be ignored. In addition, McDowell explains that "When adult folklore or popular culture is assimilated into the realm of children's folklore, changes take place that are most revealing of childish attitudes and concerns (1995, 53). By investigating the changes, adaptions and co-creations of popular culture and tradition made by children we might then begin to better understand the child-adult divide.

10.8.4 Promote Media Literacy and Education

The availability of the Internet and children's use of it demonstrates the very obvious need for media literacy and education in the lives of children. Harry Potter on the Internet illustrates the need for media literacy in schools so that children can understand what is available to them, how they are targeted and how to best use and navigate mass media and the Internet without exploitation. This education is especially important considering the fact that marketing researchers conduct psychological research to learn ways to manipulate children. Children must be given the information they need in order to understand the adult agendas and mechanisms in place that attempt to control their lives, especially corporate agendas. McDonnell argues that because a child watching a TV cartoon might not recognize it as "a product produced for profit by a

multi-billion-dollar industry" (1994, 19), there is a need for media literacy so that kids are made aware of "popular culture's economic clout and help them develop a critical sense about the values that go along with it…" (1994, 20). By providing education and awareness, children are empowered by knowledge, so that they can make their own decisions and choices that shape their culture how they see fit.

Kinder argues that it is critical to position children as active producers of media images rather than merely passive receivers, "both by teaching media literacy in the schools and designing media products with this capability" (1999, 11). Instead of trying to censor and stop the media, adults should offer alternatives. Harry Potter books are highly contested books for many reasons. Children must therefore be given the tools they need to navigate their way in the digital world as well as on the playground. Organizations and programs such as KidSPEAK and The Harry Potter Alliance can help children become political advocates to stand up against censorship and infringements on their rights and freedoms. In addition, peer-to-peer mentoring as demonstrated on such Harry Potter fan fiction websites (Chapter Nine), and intergenerational culture developing out of the entertainment industry as demonstrated by the Collins family (Chapter Six) point to new possible learning applications and research directions.

The fan-play research presented in this thesis proves that children's popular culture is not solely a destructive force (destroying their traditional play and creative competencies), as long as children are given the liberties and rights to play, protest, appropriate and recreate freely and without censorship. This is where parents and teachers need to pay attention, and never allow their child's rights to play and protest be endangered by hidden agendas or political and educational policies. Media literacy should

be taught and play participation supported and rights protected. Children and teens must always be permitted to freely co-create, express their opinions, protest and respond to mass media, popular culture, and adult agendas. Our "adult" role in this case is to protect the rights and freedoms of children, so that they may form their social relationships, fully participate in their culture, and respond to mass media, popular culture and the adult world around them. Most importantly, as researchers, we must always advocate a child-centred approach, and listen to what youths are saying and observe what they are accepting, rejecting, appropriating, maintaining, modifying and co-creating.

10.8.5 Support Free Play

While many adults misunderstand children's culture and fear the presence of mass media, the greatest injustice and threat to children's culture is happening in front of their very eyes – the failure to allow children unsupervised, free time and play and yet an even larger failure is to not understand the importance of unsupervised, free time and play. Harwood writes, "[Children's] folk culture needs time and privacy to flourish; the safety of a community away from adult ears is necessary to explore the boundaries and rules of childhood" (Harwood 1994, 193). As discussed in Chapter Three, scholars have argued that adults are taking away children's free time. According to Carpenter, two of the most contemporary cultural trends threatening traditional play today are the commercialization of sport and adult control over children's free time (2001, 178). She also states that adults are responsible for providing their children with the opportunity to exercise their cultural rights to participate in their culture:

To make a significant difference in children's lives, though, average adults must reshape their agenda for childhood by withdrawing pressures on the young to grow up, thereby allowing them to grow. Adults owe children the opportunity to exercise their cultural rights as children and ought to be enabling their freedom and safely to pursue their own games and other traditions in their own manner. (2001, 178)

I agree with Carpenter that children's own interests should play a larger role in their lives. Supporting their free play is critical to supporting children's folklife and social relationships in which they learn from one another. Through play, children develop, socialize and experience childhood.

Despite the numerous benefits and critical nature of play, there is a current crisis involving the structuring, supervising and often removal of children's free time for play. In the "fear-driven" mainstream media, the world is constantly portrayed as a dangerous place to live, a world full of pedophiles and kidnappers. Due to fear and misinformation, many parents tend to overprotect their child by preventing them from playing with other children alone, and unsupervised. Many parents do not allow their children to go to the playground or to school unaccompanied, and many opt to equip their child with a GPS device so that they can track their every move. Some schools have even implemented policy which prevents children under the age of twelve from walking to school alone (Harper 2009); and some parents will only permit their children to play with other children on supervised "play-dates." Emphasis is now placed on sports and competition, despite the fact that statistics suggest a majority of those enrolled in sports are not engaged (Harper 2009). Adults have therefore changed the shape of play.

Because adults are constantly being reminded of fears through the mass media, adults monitor, supervise, intervene, and also end up fearing the very technologies and

popular culture that their children are attracted to. "Today, unstructured play has all but

vanished thanks to a steady stream of terrifying news reports on abductions, school

shootings, law suits and sliding academic performance" (*Sunday Night Entertainment*

2010). Adults must therefore come to understand the full consequences of their

assumptions and actions especially when it comes to such liberal dismissal, trivialization

and undervaluing of children's play.

In addition, when we consider the fact that childhood experiences "are central to

the development of our personalities" (Carpenter 1994, 19), and have a "formative

influence on each person as a cultural being" (20), then we must acknowledge that

popular culture and play are critical to childhood experience. The problem occurs when

adults attempt to shape, control and fix children's identities. As Jenkins writes, "Parents,

schoolteachers, church leaders, social reformers, the adults world in general, are

powerfully invested in 'fixing' children's identities" (1998, 26). How then can a child be

expected to form her own cultural identity, sense of self, and personality if she is denied

the very ingredients and freedoms necessary for such development? Adults, especially

parents, must therefore also be educated, especially regarding the true value of children's

folklore and popular culture and play.

10.8.6 Understand the Value of Children's Folklore, Participatory Culture and Play

If there is one penultimate thought I would like to impart upon readers of this

thesis and future childlore scholars, it is this – learn to understand what you do not yet

value. In many ways I think Rowling's explanation for Voldemort's ultimate demise – his

failure to comprehend that which he does not value ("house-elves and children's tales") –

is analogous to how adults fail to understand that which they do not value (children's culture and play). Dumbledore explains Voldemort's failure to Harry,

> And his knowledge remains woefully incomplete, Harry! That which Voldemort does not value, he takes no trouble to comprehend. Of house-elves and children's tales, of love, loyalty and innocence, Voldemort knows and understands nothing. *Nothing*. That they all have a power beyond his own, a power beyond the reach of any magic, is a truth he has never grasped. (Rowling 2007, 568)

However, if we as scholars pay full attention to and learn to comprehend that which is trivialized, then children's culture and the field of children's folklore, participatory culture and play will no longer be misunderstood. Adults must be reminded that many of their commonly held beliefs regarding children and their play and narrative activities are false. Because play has such a critical role in the lives of children, adults must also question the motives and agendas of anyone who is attempting to infringe upon children's fundamental rights and freedoms especially those involving censorship, free speech, free time and free play. Most importantly, adults must come to understand the value of play (with its conservative and creative components) or it will lead to serious consequences affecting the development of the child's sense of self, her or his cultural being, personality and identity.

10.8.7 Final Thoughts

There is no denying the fact that children are often targeted and manipulated by adults from parents and teachers to religious groups and corporations who seek to control the creation of their culture. However, the evidence presented in this thesis proves that children are navigating their way through adult agendas and the corporate mire, with or without adult help or interference, at least the best they can. Kids communicate with each

other over a level playing field, that which is composed of folklore and popular culture. They find each other in classrooms and neighbourhoods, among fan groups and on the Internet; they create political alliances, attend social gatherings, network and take on leadership responsibilities, mentor and support each other, stand up for their rights and freedoms and politically protest. They often adapt their play from the playground to the Internet because much of their free play and freedoms have, in fact, been dissolved by mass media fear-mongering, misinformation, adult ignorance and interference. And, because many children have been driven out of their traditional circles of shared knowledge and free play, popular culture has become even more significant to the lives of children; supplying the narrative, emotion, group support and shared knowledge kids' crave. In addition, through their play, kids critique the world with popular culture and folk culture; they decide for themselves what to accept and reject; and they mimic what they like and mock what they don't. My research proves just how well kids adapt, and adaption is essential to the human experience and growth, especially as we emerge from childhood into adulthood. By accepting children's play as something of value that can empower, educate and balance children, by rethinking the definitions of children's culture and transmission, and by understanding how popular culture can trigger emotion and activate children's traditional competencies, we can as adults better position ourselves for supporting children's full participation in the creation of their own culture.

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rules/#.UaDLQeChDzI>. [Also <tinyurl.com/Pottermania77>.]

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Appendix A

Informant List

Personal Interviews (*in chronology*)

PSEUDONYM	Scott
AGE	8
FROM	St. John's, NL
DATE	October 31, 2005
PLACE	Mary Queen of Peace Elementary School

PSEUDONYM	Amber
AGE	8
FROM	St. John's, NL
DATE	October 31, 2005
PLACE	Mary Queen of Peace Elementary School

PSEUDONYM	Lyndsay
AGE	8
FROM	St. John's, NL
DATE	October 31, 2005
PLACE	Mary Queen of Peace Elementary School

PSEUDONYM	Lucas
AGE	8
FROM	St. John's, NL
DATE	October 31, 2005
PLACE	Mary Queen of Peace Elementary School

PSEUDONYM	Britney
AGE	8
FROM	St. John's, NL
DATE	October 31, 2005
PLACE	Mary Queen of Peace Elementary School

PSEUDONYM	Nicholas
AGE	7
FROM	St. John's, NL
DATE	November 1, 2005
PLACE	Family Home, St. John's, NL

PSEUDONYM	Annie
AGE	7
FROM	St. John's, NL

DATE   November 1, 2005
PLACE   Family Home, St. John's, NL

PSEUDONYM   Mrs. Sherry Turner
ADULT STATUS   Mother to Nicholas and Annie
FROM   St. John's, NL
DATE   November 1, 2005
PLACE   Family Home, St. John's, NL

PSEUDONYM   Mr. Jim Turner
ADULT STATUS   Father to Nicholas and Annie
FROM   St. John's, NL
DATE   November 1, 2005
PLACE   Family Home, St. John's, NL

NAME   Ms. Lisa Piercey
PSEUDONYM   None given
ADULT STATUS   Teacher
FROM   St. John's, NL
DATE   October 31, 2005
PLACE   Mary Queen of Peace Elementary School

PSEUDONYM   Theodore
AGE   12
FROM   Corner Brook, NL
DATE   Aug 25, 2006
PLACE   Phone interview

PSEUDONYM   Angie
AGE   18
FROM   Cape St. George, NL
DATE   July 21, 2007
PLACE   Walmart, Stephenville, NL.

PSEUDONYM   Zack
AGE   19
FROM   Stephenville, NL
DATE   July 21, 2007
PLACE   Walmart, Stephenville, NL

PSEUDONYM   Madison
AGE   20
FROM   Mary's Town, NL
DATE   July 21, 2007
PLACE   Walmart, Stephenville, NL

```
NAME            Ms. Lynn Gillam
PSEUDONYM       None given
ADULT STATUS    Store Manager of Coles
FROM            Corner Brook, NL
DATE            July 21, 2007
PLACE           Coles, Corner Brook Plaza, NL


PSEUDONYM       Connor
AGE             16
FROM            Corner Book, NL
DATE            July 21, 2007
PLACE           Corner Book Plaza, Coles, Corner Brook, NL


PSEUDONYM       Benjamin
AGE             17
FROM            Corner Book, NL
DATE            July 21, 2007
PLACE           Corner Book Plaza, Coles, Corner Brook, NL


PSEUDONYM       Violet
AGE             16
FROM            Howley, NL
DATE            July 21, 2007
PLACE           Corner Book Plaza, Coles, Corner Brook, NL


PSEUDONYM       Noah
AGE             19
FROM            Steady Brook, NL
DATE            July 21, 2007
PLACE           Corner Book Plaza, Coles, Corner Brook, NL


PSEUDONYM       Rosalie
AGE             18
FROM            Pasadena, NL
DATE            July 21, 2007
PLACE           Corner Brook Plaza, Coles, Corner Brook, NL


PSEUDONYM       Gabriel
AGE             13
FROM            Port Saunders, NL
DATE            July 21, 2007
PLACE           Corner Brook Plaza, Coles, Corner Brook, NL
```

PSEUDONYM   Ellie
AGE   12
FROM   Pasadena, NL
DATE   July 21, 2007
PLACE   Corner Brook Plaza, Coles, Corner Brook, NL

PSEUDONYM   Josie
AGE   13
FROM   Pasadena
DATE   July 21, 2007
PLACE   Corner Brook Plaza, Coles, Corner Brook, NL

PSEUDONYM   Danica
AGE   20
FROM   St. John's, NL
DATE   April 19, 2008
PLACE   *Sci-Fi On The Rock* Convention, Holiday Inn, St. John's, NL

PSEUDONYM   Ryley
AGE   21
FROM   St. John's, NL
DATE   April 19, 2008
PLACE   *Sci-Fi On The Rock* Convention, Holiday Inn, St. John's, NL

PSEUDONYM   Jennifer
FROM   St. John's, NL
DATE   April 19, 2008
PLACE   *Sci-Fi On The Rock* Convention, Holiday Inn, St. John's, NL

PSEUDONYM   Chad
AGE   18
FROM   St. John's, NL
DATE   April 20, 2008
PLACE   *Sci-Fi On The Rock* Convention, Holiday Inn, St. John's, NL

PSEUDONYM   Jacob
AGE   17
FROM   St. John's, NL
DATE   April 20, 2008
PLACE   *Sci-Fi On The Rock* Convention, Holiday Inn, St. John's, NL

PSEUDONYM   Gregory
AGE   9
FROM   St. John's, NL
DATE   April 20, 2008

PLACE	*Sci-Fi On The Rock* Convention, Holiday Inn, St. John's, NL
PSEUDONYM	Mrs. Phyllis Skanes
ADULT STATUS	Mother to Gregory
FROM	St. John's, NL
DATE	April 20, 2008
PLACE	*Sci-Fi On The Rock* Convention, Holiday Inn, St. John's, NL
PSEUDONYM	Stephen
AGE	18
FROM	St. John's, NL
DATE	April 20, 2008
PLACE	*Sci-Fi On The Rock* Convention, Holiday Inn, St. John's, NL
PSEUDONYM	Janey
AGE	16
FROM	Torbay, NL
DATE	April 20, 2008 (interview); September 17, 2008 (email correspondence)
PLACE	*Sci-Fi On The Rock* Convention, Holiday Inn, St. John's, NL
PSEUDONYM	William
AGE	9
FROM	Middle Cove-Outer Cove, NL
DATE	November 18, 2010
PLACE	Torbay, NL
PSEUDONYM	Molly
AGE	12
FROM	St. John's, NL
DATE	July 15, 2011
PLACE	Empire Studios, Avalon Mall, St. John's, NL
PSEUDONYM	Madeline
AGE	12
FROM	St. John's, NL
DATE	July 15, 2011
PLACE	Empire Studios, Avalon Mall, St. John's, NL
PSEUDONYM	Mrs. Christine Collins
ADULT STATUS	Mother to Molly
FROM	St. John's, NL
DATE	July 15, 2011
PLACE	Empire Studios, Avalon Mall, St. John's, NL

```
PSEUDONYM          Naomi
AGE                13
FROM               St. John's, NL
DATE               July 15, 2011
PLACE              Empire Studios, Avalon Mall, St. John's, NL


PSEUDONYM          Mr. Evan Kent
ADULT STATUS       Father to Naomi
FROM               St. John's, NL
DATE               July 15, 2011
PLACE              Empire Studios, Avalon Mall, St. John's, NL


PSEUDONYM          Mrs. Melody Harte
ADULT STATUS       Mother to Randy
FROM               Corner Brook, NL
DATE               May 20, 2013
PLACE              Email Correspondence
```

Questionnaires

```
PSEUDONYM          Sabrina
AGE                18
FROM               Tilton, NL
DATE               November 27, 2008
PLACE              St. John's, NL

PSEUDONYM          Jacky
AGE                Holyrood, NL
FROM               20
DATE               November 27, 2008
PLACE              St. John's, NL

PSEUDONYM          Lucy
AGE                18
FROM               Holyrood, NL
DATE               November 27, 2008
PLACE              St. John's, NL

PSEUDONYM          Rachel
AGE                22
FROM               Mt. Pearl, NL
DATE               November 27, 2008
PLACE              St. John's, NL
```

```
PSEUDONYM      Robyn
AGE            23
FROM           Inuvik, NT
DATE           November 27, 2008
PLACE          St. John's, NL

PSEUDONYM      Bethany
AGE            19
FROM           Bay d'Espoir, NL
DATE           November 27, 2008
PLACE          St. John's, NL

PSEUDONYM      Adele
AGE            21
FROM           Newman's Cove, NL
DATE           November 27, 2008
PLACE          St. John's, NL

PSEUDONYM      Pauline
AGE            19
FROM           Hong Kong
DATE           November 27, 2008
PLACE          St. John's, NL

PSEUDONYM      Roary
AGE            19
FROM           Victoria, NL
DATE           November 27, 2008
PLACE          St. John's, NL

PSEUDONYM      Samuel
AGE            18
FROM           St. John's, NL
DATE           November 27, 2008
PLACE          St. John's, NL

PSEUDONYM      Nancy
AGE            19
FROM           Avondale, CBS, NL

PSEUDONYM      Sophia
AGE            19
FROM           St. Johns, NL
DATE           November 27, 2008
PLACE          St. John's, NL
```

PSEUDONYM   Amelia
AGE   19
FROM   Grand Bank, NL
DATE   November 27, 2008
PLACE   St. John's, NL

PSEUDONYM   Shara
AGE   19
FROM   Iraq
DATE   November 27, 2008
PLACE   St. John's, NL

PSEUDONYM   Sienna
AGE   20
FROM   Corner Brook, NL
DATE   November 27, 2008
PLACE   St. John's, NL

PSEUDONYM   Austin
AGE   18
FROM   Appleton, NL
DATE   November 27, 2008
PLACE   St. John's, NL

PSEUDONYM   Declan
AGE   19
FROM   Logy Bay, NL
DATE   November 27, 2008
PLACE   St. John's, NL

PSEUDONYM   Cathy
AGE   18
FROM   Marysvale, NL
DATE   November 27, 2008
PLACE   St. John's, NL

PSEUDONYM   Keasha
AGE   18
FROM   Gander, NL
DATE   November 27, 2008
PLACE   St. John's, NL

PSEUDONYM   Anastasia
AGE   18

FROM	Churchill Falls, NL
DATE	November 27, 2008
PLACE	St. John's, NL
PSEUDONYM	Alexis
AGE	20
FROM	Blaketown, NL
DATE	November 27, 2008
PLACE	St. John's, NL
PSEUDONYM	Marion
AGE	18
FROM	St. Johns, NL
DATE	November 27, 2008
PLACE	St. John's, NL
PSEUDONYM	Wade
AGE	20
FROM	Bay d'Espoir, NL
DATE	November 27, 2008
PLACE	St. John's, NL
PSEUDONYM	Adrianna
AGE	18
FROM	Salmon's Cove, NL
DATE	November 27, 2008
PLACE	St. John's, NL
PSEUDONYM	Ariel
AGE	19
FROM	Sweet Bay, NL
DATE	November 27, 2008
PLACE	St. John's, NL
PSEUDONYM	Tammy
AGE	19
FROM	Grande Bay, NL
DATE	November 27, 2008
PLACE	St. John's, NL
PSEUDONYM	Fanny
AGE	20
FROM	Random Island, NL
DATE	November 27, 2008
PLACE	St. John's, NL

```
PSEUDONYM       Carey
AGE             18
FROM            Thornlea, NL
DATE            November 27, 2008
PLACE           St. John's, NL

PSEUDONYM       Jasmin
AGE             18
FROM            Halifax, NS
DATE            November 27, 2008
PLACE           St. John's, NL

PSEUDONYM       Nicky
AGE             19
FROM            Halifax, NS
DATE            November 27, 2008
PLACE           St. John's, NL

PSEUDONYM       Daphne
AGE             19
FROM            Harbour Breton, NL
DATE            November 27, 2008
PLACE           St. John's, NL

PSEUDONYM       Shauna
AGE             20
FROM            Harbour Breton, NL
DATE            November 27, 2008
PLACE           St. John's, NL
```

Potter Word Game Example
(Provincial Information and Library Resources Board, Page 2)

HOGWARTS HOUSES: HUFFLEPUFF

11 letters remaining: _____

```
J H Y B T I H W Y H C
U R A I R F A E U M A
S O W E N G L F C A U
T H A N L H F M K Y D
I C N E C L I P E R E
N N H T E L A R V O L
H I E P L A N O I G L
B L U I B I O F N G F
F F A C E D R I C I A
F N T T U O R P S D T
```

OWEN CAUDELL
CEDRIC DIGGORY
JUSTIN FLINCH-FLETCHLY
FAT FRIAR
HELGA HUFFLEPUFF
ERNIE MCMILLIAN
PROF SPROUT
KEVIN WHITBY

HOGWARTS HOUSES: SLYTHERIN

22 letters left: _____

& ___ _____

```
T H V I N C E N T A S
N S E C N E R R E T A
E T L H I G G S E G L
C D Y Y S M U U D R A
I G O G T C L R R A Z
L G G R R H A E A H A
L R S A T H E H C A R
I E M A C S L R O M E
M G F T N I L F I B P
L O I F O R P L O N A
O R C R A B B E U D N
P Y M A L F O Y S B S
```

MILLICENT BULLSTRODE
VINCENT CRABBE
MARCUS FLINT
GREGORY GOYLE
TERRENCE HIGGS
DRACO MALFOY
GRAHAM PRITCHARD
SALAZAR SLYTHERIN
PROF. SNAPE

Appendix C

MUN Quidditch Information - Handout

MUN Quidditch

Who are we?

University and college Quidditch teams are popping up everywhere and a few of us thought that MUN should get in on the action! We hope to get a full-fledged team going and by this time next year, be able to play against other universities and colleges!

How can I join?

If you're a MUN student, sign up here at the MUN Quidditch table at Sci-Fi on the Rock. Otherwise, send an e-mail to munquidditch@gmail.com with your name, age, phone number and e-mail address. We'll add your name to the list and you'll be hearing about any updates we make, including tryouts for the team!

Where else can I get more information?

You can get more information from the following places:
E-mail: munquidditch@gmail.com
Facebook Group: Search MUN Quidditch League

How do you play Muggle Quidditch?

You can learn the rules of Muggle Quidditch by coming to the workshop at 11am on Saturday the 19th happening in the Roddenberry room. Other than that, we'll be getting a copy of the rules up on the Facebook group as soon as possible.

What if I'm not a MUN student?

If you're not a MUN student, you are always welcome to sign up for the St. John's Quidditch league. However, if you're a student at another school, we'd definitely encourage you to start up a team at your own school. Feel free to contact us for tips on doing this! The more teams around the province, the more chances we all have to play!

Appendix D

St. John's Quidditch League Information - Handout

St. John's Quidditch League

Who are we?

The St. John's Quidditch league was started in the fall of 2007 following in the lead of countless other groups of enthusiastic Harry Potter fans that wanted to play the game of Quidditch!

How can I join?

If you're 13 or older, sign up at the Quidditch League table at Sci-Fi on the Rock, or send an e-mail with your name, age, phone number and e-mail address to sjquidditch@gmail.com. The age limit is in place due to the rough nature of Muggle Quidditch.

Where else can I get more information?

You can get more information from the following places:
E-mail: sjquidditch@gmail.com
Facebook Group: Search St. John's Quidditch League

How do you play Muggle Quidditch?

You can learn the rules of Muggle Quidditch by coming to the workshop at 11am on Saturday the 19th happening in the Roddenberry room. Other than that, we'll be getting a copy of the rules up on the facebook group as soon as possible.

Appendix E

SONG TITLE: Ravenclaw Seeker
BAND: The Remus Lupins
WEBSITE: <www.lyricstime.com/the-remus-lupins-ravenclaw-seeker-lyrics.html>
ACCESSED: Nov 14, 2012

Cho Chang,
I talked a lot of shit
That was before I'd heard you speak
See I've got this thing for girls
Whose voices don't match their appearances
An asian girl from Glasgow
Sorry that I judged you before
I'd heard you ask for sweets
I know you're a seeker
I'd say you're a keeper
Though you've traded red hair for a blue scarf

Cho Chang
You know the way to get under my skin
Don't say a thing
Just keep talking
Cho Chang
You know the way to get under my skin
Don't say a thing
Just keep talking

Cedric got in over his head
With a girl who could drink him under the table
I know you've this affinity for tea
So now I nearly lost my mind
Trying to find a way to replicate
Your Ravenclaw charm and magic lilt
I'd crash your Divination class
Just to hear you answer
And make some response to Trelawney's rubbish

Cho Chang
You know the way to get under my skin
Don't say a thing
Just keep talking
Cho Chang
You know the way to get under my skin
Don't say a thing

Just keep talking
Cho Chang
Cho Chang

Appendix E

I got the best present for Christmas
But I don't want to gloat
All the kids at school are gonna be jealous
I got the Firebolt

The best broom in the world I could have ridden
Conveniently after my Nimbus 2000 was smitten
But McGonagall took it away from me
Why'd you have to tell her,
Hermione?

I got the best present for Christmas
But I don't want to gloat
All the kids at school are gonna be jealous
I got the Firebolt

Riding that broom
Would be so fun
Putting dust upon Malfoy's 2001
But McGonagall took it away from me
Why'd you have to tell her,
Hermione?

I got the best present for Christmas
But I dont want to gloat
All the kids at school are gonna be jealous
I got the Firebolt

Appendix E

SONG TITLE: Gryffindor Rocks
BAND: Harry and the Potters
LYRICS FOUND AT: <www.lyricstime.com/harry-and-the-potters-gryffindor-rocks-lyrics.html>
ACCESSED ON: Nov 14, 2012

Take off on my broom
I'm gonna fly circles around you
And there's no way that you're gonna get that snitch
No you're not gonna get that snitch from me
You're not gonna get that snitch

You don't stand a chance against Gryffindor
We got the best Quiditch team that the school has seen
You don't stand a chance against Gryffindor

Take off on my broom   I'm gonna fly circles around you
And there's no way that you're gonna get that snitch
No you're not gonna get that snitch from me
You're not gonna get that snitch
You don't stand a chance against Gryffindor
We got the best Quiditch team that the school has seen
You don't stand a chance against Gryffindor

You don't stand a chance against Gryffindor
You don't stand a chance against Gryffindor
You don't stand a chance against Gryffindor

Appendix E

I don't care about baseball
And soccer makes me snore
I find golf to be dreary
And football is a bore

I'd rather go do girl things
'Cause I think sports are lame
But I never ever miss a Quidditch game

But what the heck is a Quaffle?
And where on Earth's the Snitch?
And why does this all have to take place
On the freezing pitch?
Don't ask me what the score is
'Cause I just do not know
These things are minor details
And it's just not why I go

I don't care if it's raining
I don't mind if it's cold
Because boys in Quidditch outfits
Are a sight just to behold

I know that it's rude to stare
But I just have no shame
So I never ever miss a Quidditch game

But what the heck is a Quaffle?
And where on Earth's the Snitch?
And why does this all have to take place
On the freezing pitch?
Don't ask me what the score is
'Cause I just do not know
These things are minor details
And it's just not why I go

Appendix F

"Harry Potter" Storybook by Nicholas (2001)
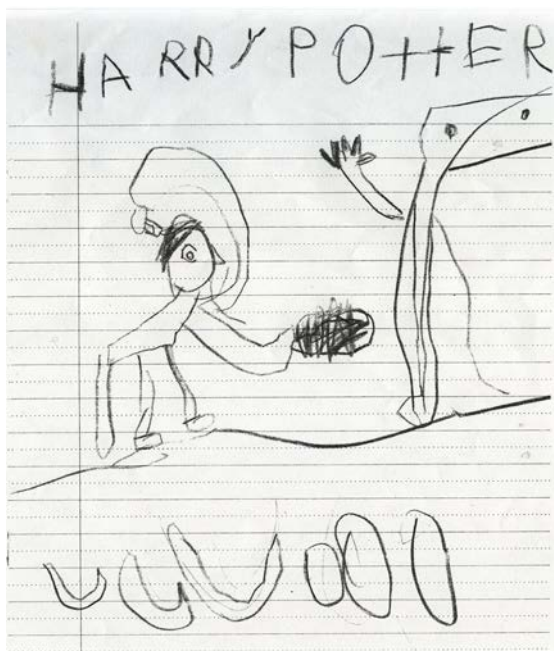
Storybook 1 - Page 1 (front cover).

The Snake cha d Harry a
fast as he can
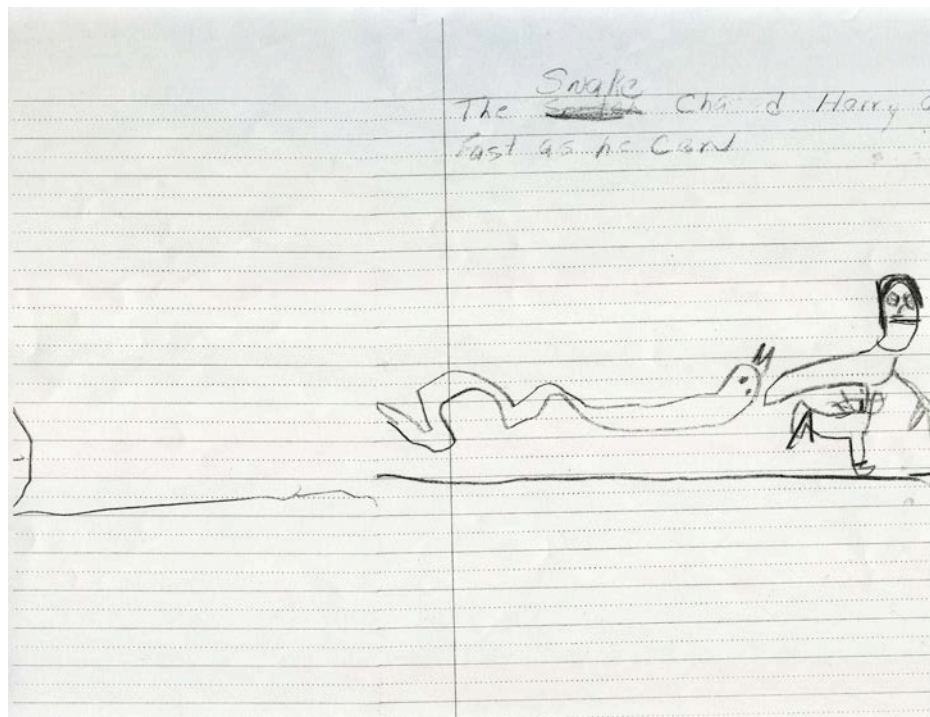
Storybook 2 - Page 2 (partial image only due to photocopy quality) and Page 3.

HARRY WAS Flying ON
ThE NIMBUS 2000 AND
HE WAS GAINING ON
THE SNITCH

Storybook 3 - Page 4.

436
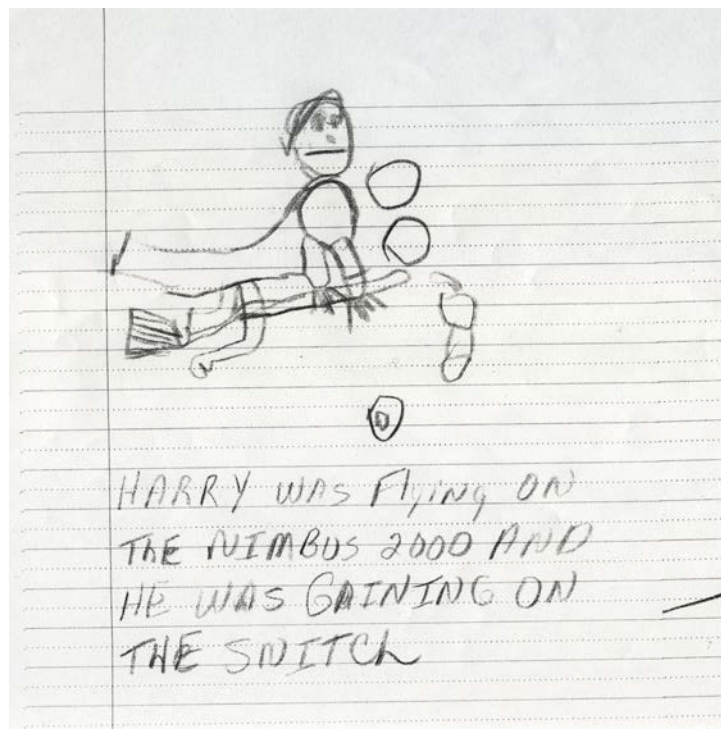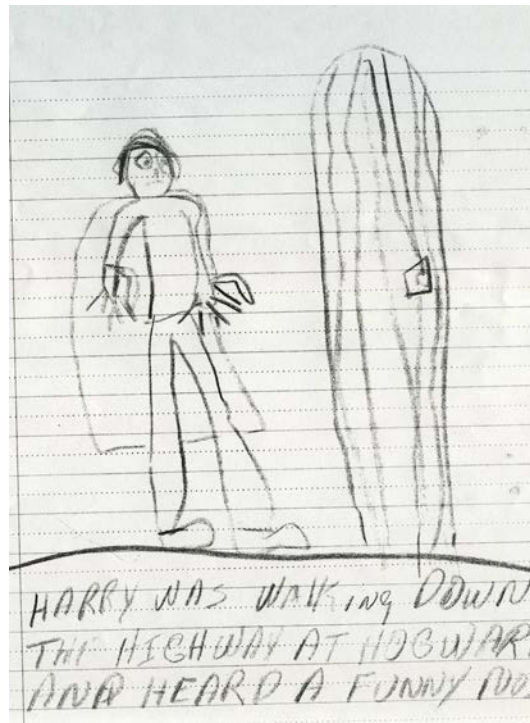
Storybook 4 - Page 5.

Storybook 5 - Page 6.
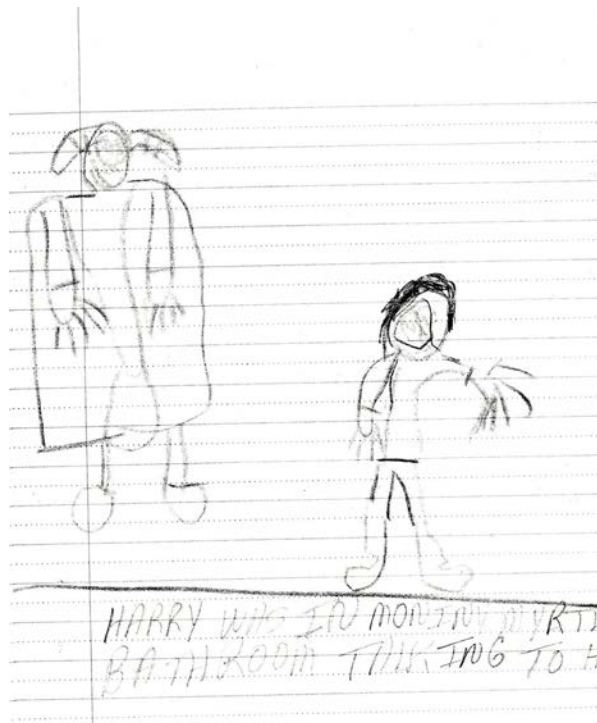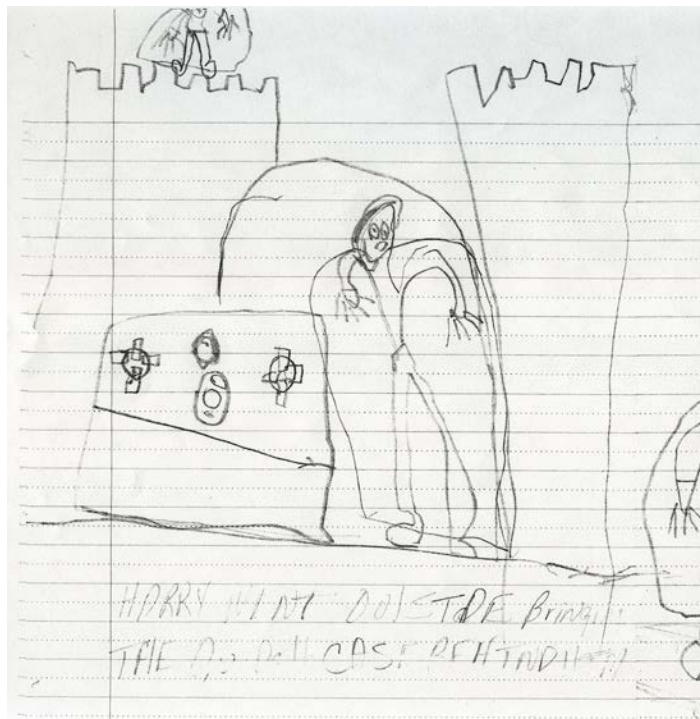
HARRY WAS IN MOANING MYRTLE'S
BATHROOM THINKING TO H

Storybook 6 - Page 7.

HARRY WENT OUTSIDE BRINGING
THE DOLL CASE REHTADII

Storybook 7 - Page 8.

IT WAS ALMOST TIME FOR THE QUILTING MATCH! HARRY AND MILFID WERE EXCITED TO BEAT EACH OTHER

Storybook 8 - Page 9.

This is the magic box in Hogwarts.

If you use the right spell on this magic box

Storybook 9 - Page 10.

439

The flying Ford   with fred
and Kon inside go into thier
bedroom window   then
Harry's cousin Dudley and his
Aunt and   were gone out

Storybook 10 - Page 11.

Hagrids house.

Harry   went over For Hagr
For Tea.
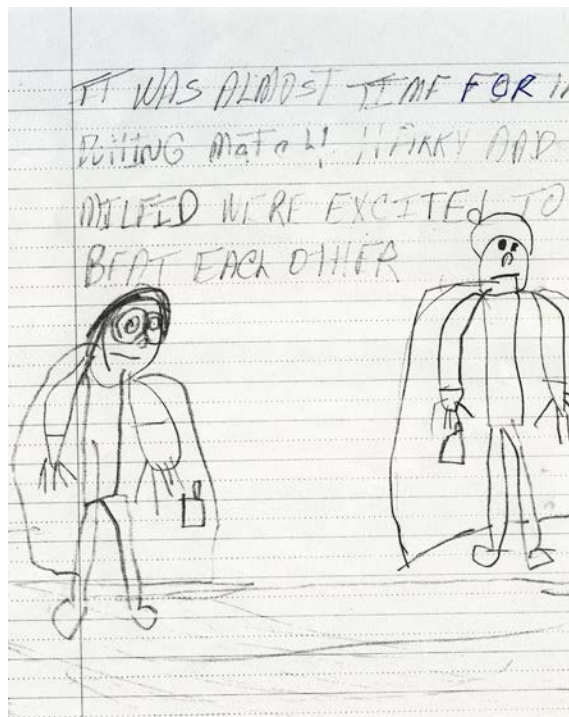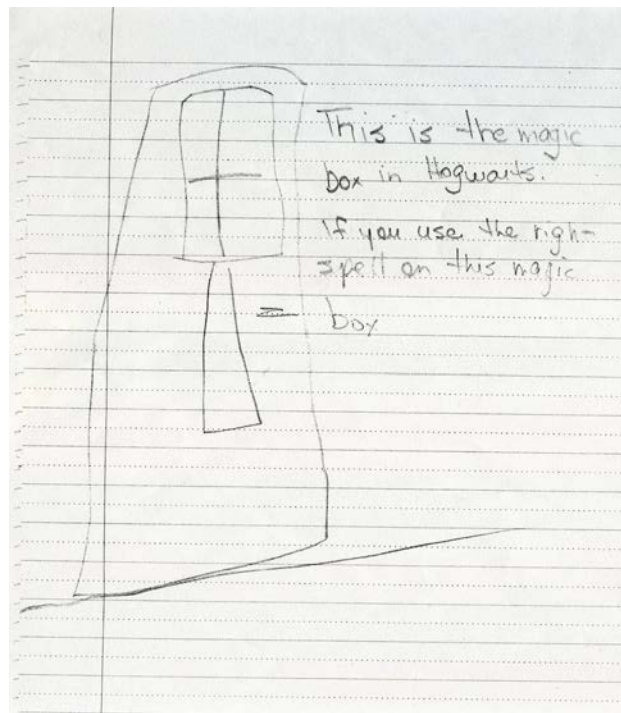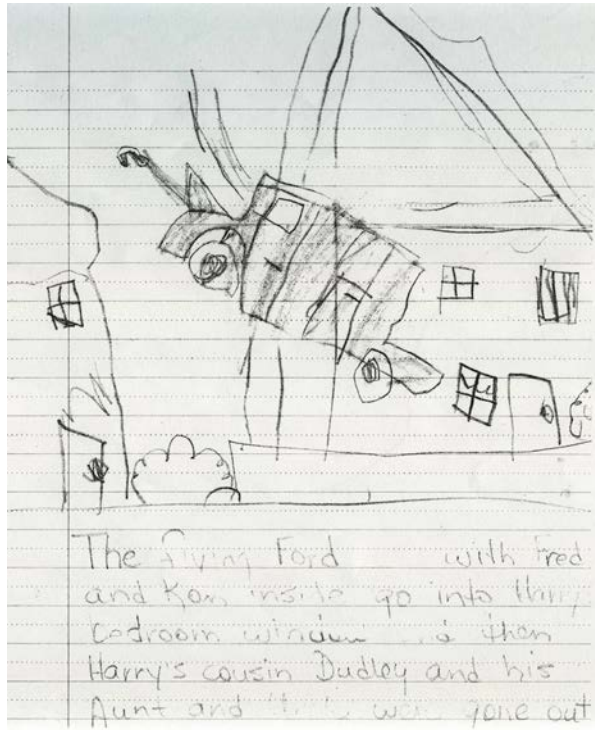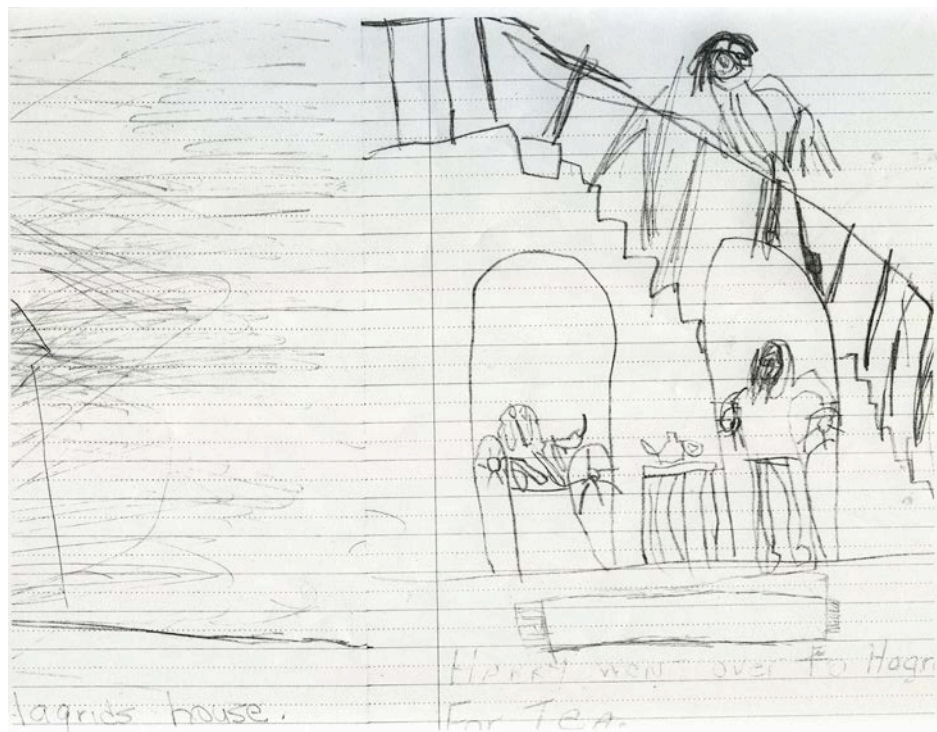
Storybook 11 - Page 12 and Page 13.

IT is Almost Pet

Storybook 12 - Page 14.

This is the magic
bow and arrow at
Hogwarts

Storybook 13 - Page 15.

441

This is the magic neckla[ce] aT Hogwarts. IT shoots magic powers out of the Locket.

Storybook 14 - Page 16.

This is Rons House He lives on A farm

Storybook 15 - Page 17.

This is Rons kitchen
Table

Storybook 16 - Page 18.

These's goblins Tane
your birdie bots every
Flavoorbeans

Storybook 17 - Page 19.

443

IT is time
for the dooling
match of magic

Storybook 18 - Page 20.

IT is Time for
Pet Day at
Hogwarts.

Storybook 19 - Page 21.

I'm so excited
That scabers is
doing his best Tricks
every year

Storybook 20 - Page 22.

This is my PeT owl
Her name is Hedge wig

Storybook 21 - Page 23.

This is my PeT meem mo
He is doing the tricks
that I TAUGHT
Him.

Storybook 22 - Page 24.

my PeT owL is the besT ow
oF the year

Storybook 23 - Page 25.

Harry Went on
To defeat The Troll.

Storybook 24 - Page 26.

Harry on snowboard

Storybook 25 - Page 27.

Harry bought the Nimbus 2,000 out of the money that Hagrid got Harry.

Storybook 26 - Page 28.

Harry funnaly got the Nimbus 2000

Storybook 27 - Page 29.
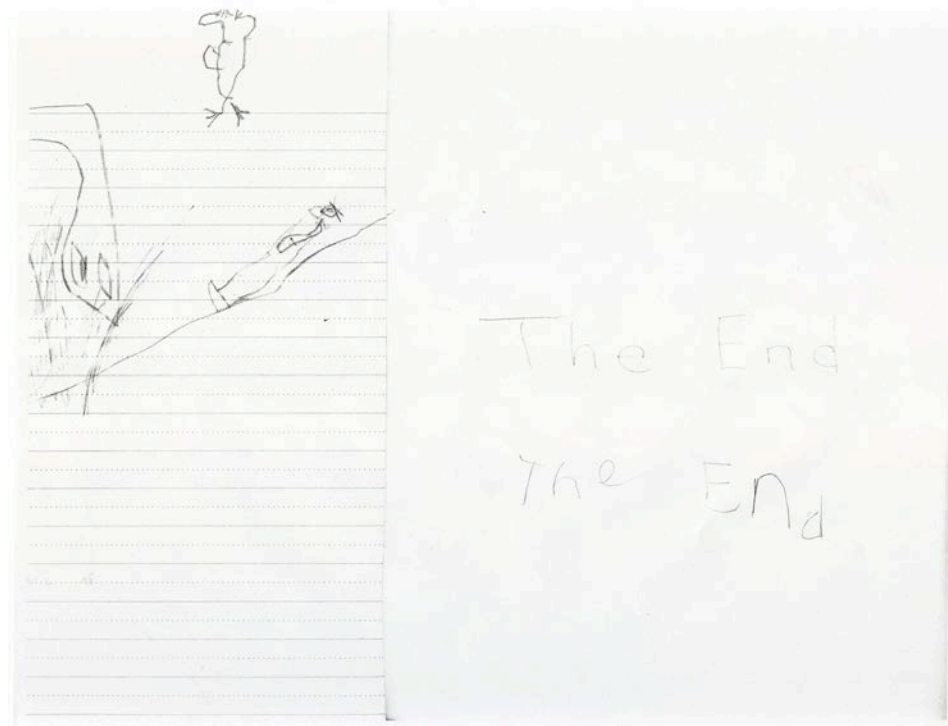
Storybook 28 - Page 30 (partial image only) and Page 31 (back cover).

Appendix G

Child Fan Art by Nicholas (2005)
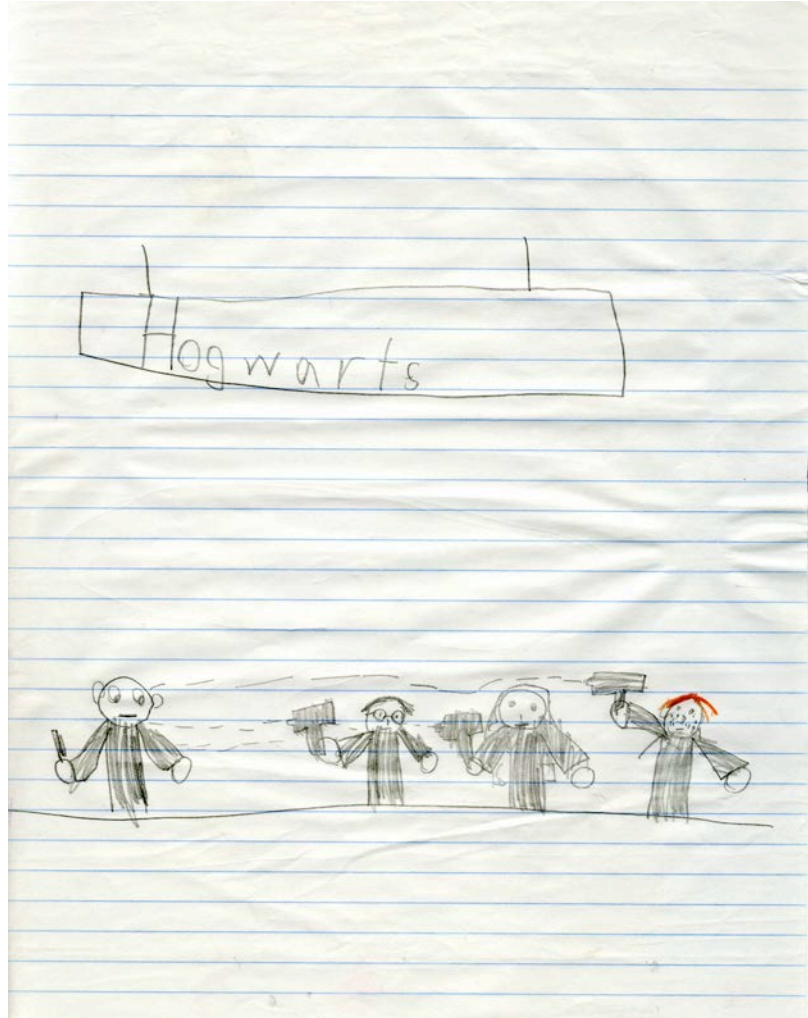
Child Fan Art "Hogwarts."

Child Fan Art "Potter Puppet Pals Bothering Snape."

Child Fan Art "Hermione, Harry and Ron."

Fan Fiction:	Jennifer's Online Fan Fiction Chapters 1 to 5
Located at:	**<www.fanfiction.net>, under BOOKS, HARRY POTTER, Isn't It Obvious?**
Posted by:	**bravo six**
Web address:	**<www.fanfiction.net/s/934810/1/>**
Accessed:	**April 1, 2012**
Notes:	**The story begins with a disclaimer as well as an authors note. I have also included the readers' online responses to and reviews of Jennifer's story.**

Isn't it Obvious?

Author: bravo six PM
When Hermione comes to the Burrow and brings her laptop, the trio discovers that Harry is on the web, and before it's too late, they find a Ron/Hermione site! But that could be good thing! Find out what happens!
Rated: Fiction K - English - Romance/Humor - Ron W. & Hermione G. - Chapters: 5 - Words: 4,940 – Reviews: 75 - Favs: 21 - Follows: 2 - Updated: 04-01-03 - Published: 08-26-02 - id: 934810

www.fanfiction.net/s/934810/1/Isn-t-it-Obvious

75 reviews

Disclaimer:

I only own the story idea, that's it! ;)

Authors Note:

This story is meant to be a tad funny but I've never written a humour fic before and I don't know if I'm funny or not so if it's not funny, please don't flame me because this is just an attempt so if it doesn't turn out funny, then I won't write humour fics anymore, that's all. I just wanted to try it. Oh and the first chapter's not gonna be as funny as the rest, if it's funny at all!

Thanks to my B.O.B for BETAing my fic for me! You should definitely read her fic, Never Alone, it's awesome! Her author name is ChimaeraGurl.

Isn't it Obvious?

Chapter 1

Tap, tap, tap. Tap, tap, tap.
"Ugh, go away," mumbled Ron, who was still half asleep as it was only 8:00am on Saturday, August 8th.

"Ron, it's Pig at the window," said Harry, sleepily. He had gotten permission from Dumbledore to stay with the Weasley's.

"Ruddy owl," said Ron as he crawled out of bed.

"What's he got?" asked Harry as he sat up and put on his glasses.

"It's a letter from Hermione."

"What did she say?" asked Harry, "Mind if I take a look?"

"No, go ahead," said Ron as Harry looked over his shoulder at the letter.

Dear Ron,

How are you? I've just arrived home from my trip to Australia. It was very enjoyable! Is Harry at your house? If he is tell him I said hi and I hope he's doing good. Well, I have to go but make sure you write back to me.

Love,

Hermione

"Well, now you can rest in peace Ron! She never went to Bulgaria!" Said Harry, grinning. Ron gave him a punch on the arm. "What was that for? Isn't it a good thing?"

"Well-" began Ron.

"Of course it is!" said Fred who had just came into the room accompanied by George.

"Yeah, no more competition for you!" said George, "Unless you're still going to act like a dunderhead and just ignore it."

"I don't know what you're talking about!" said Ron angrily, "What are you two doing up so early anyway?"

"That's for us to know and you to find out!" said Fred.

"Did you see what he just did Fred," asked George.

"What could it be?" asked Fred with a sarcastic tone.

"He changed the subject!" they said in unison.

"Go away," said Ron.

"It's obvious, isn't it Harry?" said George.

"Very," replied Harry.

"What *exactly* is so obvious?" said Ron. Harry, George and Fred all sighed.

"That you like Hermione, of course!" said George, sounding exasperated.

"What?" said Ron, turning red.

"Ron, stop it. You know it's true," said Harry, finally speaking up, "I found that arm of that miniature Krum you had. That really said something there Ron!"

"But-that-I," stammered Ron.

"Aw, poor Ronniekins is all speechless!," said Fred. Ron just glared at him.

"Well, we're off," said George, "Good luck!" They left the room.

"I'd better write back to her," said Ron.

"What are you going to say?" asked Harry.

"I don't know, mum said I should ask her to come stay when she got back from her trip but I dunno..."

"Why not?" asked Harry, "Come on Ron, I know you like her so stop pretending you don't."

"Oh, alright, I'll ask her to stay," replied Ron, turning the reddest Harry had ever seen him turn before as he turned to start the letter. After he finished it, he re-read it to himself.

Hi Hermione,

I'm good. And you? I'm glad you liked your trip. Harry's here with me, he's doing fine and I told him you said hi. Would you like to come and stay here for the rest of the summer. It's okay with my parents. Well, write back as soon as possible.

Ron

"There, that should do it," said Ron, taking hold of Pig to tie the letter to his leg, "How about some breakfast, Harry?"

"Yeah, sure," he replied.

The day passed without anything really significant happening. Ron beat Harry a few times at chess, they played Quidditch in the yard, and helped Fred any George degnome the garden. It was now suppertime and they were all seated at the table in the backyard since it was such a nice evening. About midway through supper, Pig was back with a reply from Hermione. Ron read through the letter.

Dear Ron,

Yes, I'll come stay but I'm working on something on my laptop (a computer) for a friend of my parents. Can you use muggle things in your house? Because if you do I need to take the laptop with me to finish it. Listen, do you think you could get Harry to show you how to use a telephone because it would be much easier right now. My telephone number is on the back of the letter.
Love,
Hermione
"That was fast," said Harry.
"Yeah, she said she can come over but she wants to know if you can show me how to use a fellytone or whatever. Oh, and she wanted to know if we're able to use muggle things here, which we can."
"I'll show you but I guess we're going to have to find a payphone," said Harry, "We can go after supper if you want."
"Yeah, ok," said Ron, "There's a muggle post office not far from here that has one."
After they finished supper and helped clean up, they headed to the post office. It was about a 10 minute walk from the Burrow. Harry explained to Ron that when he called he just had to talk in a normal voice just as if he was talking to her face to face. He told her that someone will say hello and he would just have to ask if Hermione was there. Harry had some muggle money and had brought enough for the phone. He put the money in the phone, dialled Hermione's phone number, and handed the receiver to Ron. It rang and someone on the other end must have answered because Ron said "Is Hermione there?" A minute later Ron started speaking again.
"Hi Hermione. It's me, Ron. Yeah, you can use muggle things at my house. 1:00pm tomorrow? Ok, I'll see you then. Ok, bye." He hung up the phone. (He hung it upside down so Harry had to fix it.)
"She'll be here 1:00pm tomorrow," said Ron as they turned to head back to the Burrow.

End Chapter 1

A/N: Hope you liked it, this chapter wasn't really supposed to be funny but the next chapters will. =D

Reviews for: Isn't it Obvious? - Page 1 of 5

HarryPotter1001
11/11/06 . chapter 5
I LOVED the story! When are you going to continue? Well let me know if you do ttyl bye

Shuffleway
2/2/06 . chapter 5
I loved it! I thought it was brilliant and funny. You have an awesome tallent of writing!

hannah
9/20/05 . chapter 5
thats brilliant please write more soon you are very talented i want to no what fred and george were up to.

Goddess of Idun
3/16/05 . chapter 5
it was very funny!

Jack Robinson
10/19/04 . chapter 5
heehee very funny! I like it. :)

perfectwriter
7/28/04 . chapter 1

AH! I just LOVE your story, it's so funny! My cousin and I found it and lost it once, and I spent all the next day looking for it. If you'd just email me something saying where to find the R/HR archives, please do. Anyway, your fic's great, see ya!

lily
6/28/04 . chapter 5

I love that story. I have read it about ten times, an I`am til not sick of it. Keep on writing.

DrownYour-Kiss
6/23/04 . chapter 2

I think I have read this story before... Hmm...

DrownYour-Kiss
6/23/04 . chapter 1

Gillian? Is that you?

squee I love you story so far..

runs off to read more

luckyducky8200
6/10/04 . chapter 4

this is so cool! i really like your idea about the books in their lives! did i say that right? but anyway it totally rocked! hope you write another one! :)

RHr 4absolute eva
6/6/04 . chapter 5

The story was really good, and I love the idea of Ron and Hermione finding all this strange stuff out about Pottermania and R/Hr obsessers. Please continue to write more stories, because you have a knack for this stuff!

Ron and Hermione=incredible perfection!

jyppie
6/3/04 . chapter 5

greate story. write so more, its is hard to understand that thats your first story. well done

Donna Irene Mohr
2/3/04 . chapter 5

listed

ProWriter121
1/26/04 . chapter 5

Your story was well-written and funny. An excellent story. The only suggestion I have is to write another

chapter! I can't wait!

flash-rules
1/2/04 . chapter 2
Very cute so far. I love how your story melds right into the real world, with all the Harry Potter sites. A very unique idea. I love it!

flash-rules
1/2/04 . chapter 1
Your story has started out wonderfully. I really got into it the moment I read the first few lines. You're doing wonderfully. I think you'll be able to pull of the humor.

J. S. Writer
12/7/03 . chapter 5
Oh my gosh! This story is not like any other fanfiction I've ever read before! This is really cool. I've never seen a story that morphed the actual characters onto Harry Potter websites. That provokes some thought, doesn't it? Oh, by the way, I love the "Isn't It Obvious?" site.

starstrucked
10/26/03 . chapter 5
That was very cute... Fred and George amused me and Ron was very Ronnish about the whole Ron/Hermione fiasco =D

R/HrShipper!Harry is very fun as well.

Nice work. hee. And it's nice to see another HP/Trek fan around here =D

line-a girl form denamrk
9/16/03 . chapter 5
I Loved your fanfiction :)

It was great and sweet and so.. funny...;)

please email me when/if you update

R/Hr forever :)

(I like your homepage really much too)

Hermione4eva1
8/25/03 . chapter 3
I would be so freaked out if I were them.. This is great! Ah ha ron and hermione like each other... I wonder what Hermione has to say! This is going to be so good! I wish they were really real.. I hope.. You never know..

ppgsurferartist
7/22/03 . chapter 1
very nice :)

christen
6/16/03 . chapter 5
aww to bad you didnt put more to it! it was really good i hope you can keep writing!~~christen

dark star17
5/29/03 . chapter 5
oh this was such a great fic to read! If was so funny and well original. WELL DONE!

heather
5/4/03 . chapter 5
well i must say that i luv ur site its one of my faves and i luved this fanfic it so cute and sweet!

EmbattledCurve
4/20/03 . chapter 5
i luved ur story it was really cute.

SNdReAmer
4/10/03 . chapter 5
Haha.. this is all crap.. dont take me wrong.. it was meant to be a good thing.

pissedoffmuffin
4/2/03 . chapter 5
omg! this is so hilarious! guess what! my wallpaper on my computer is that pic of Ron and Hemione where it says "isn't it obvious?" haha!

-pom

Straycat1
4/2/03 . chapter 3
this is so funny, the way the responds to the site

HILARIEUS !

Generic Gen
4/1/03 . chapter 3
LOL! OMG! This is funny! In a weird way...

tryin2BeGood
4/1/03 . chapter 5
oh!

Alexandra5

4/1/03 . chapter 5

Wow! Great story, I really liked it. Let me know when you write the pilogue or another one!

Alex.

Carie

3/26/03 . chapter 4

Wow!This is hilarious!I cannot

believe this is your first

humourous fanfic?It is

also very creative.

Most of the fanfics I ever read

are about the same,but yours is

really unique!So far you have

done a spectacular job!

You have to hurry and

write more!I love it!

Cant wait to read more,

Carie

PS if you want to email me my email is

!

lil

2/1/03 . chapter 4

this fic is good! And quite funny too;)

Amber Magic

1/27/03 . chapter 4

Very good! It was funny, don;y worry ;-) I'm looking forward to an epilouge... And what are Fred and George planning? ahhhhh, you must write more!

pottyforpotter

12/1/02 . chapter 4

This was good! At first I thought the story sounded a bit ... ya know ... but then I read it and I actually liked

it! It's funny how they go online and find sites about themselves! Its a really original idea for a story!

Bye-bye

Umi Katsuya
11/23/02 . chapter 4
that wuz so cute! i love these two..they ARE so obvious..^.^ hope u write more

Lost Dove
11/22/02 . chapter 4
Awww! That's so cute! And it's such a brilliant way for them to figure out that they like each other! I couldn't even believe it when they found the site, no one has ever used that before but its so obvious! Anyway, I love this fic! Great job, keep writing!

julyeighth
10/8/02 . chapter 3
oops.. i'm stupid... i sended da review to the wrong story! hehe.. well ok bai e- mail me!

julyeighth
10/8/02 . chapter 4
hi it's Allie again...hehe well yay i finally got to register! ok...well it's still a great story!...ok i gave u my e-mail rite cuz its in my profile and uh... i'm runnin out of things to say... Bai!

Bil
9/12/02 . chapter 4
It would be really freaky to find your life plastered across the internet like that! I enjoyed this, it's pretty funny.

Adnap Nottap
9/9/02 . chapter 4
grins and stiffles a fairly girly giggle AWWW! I swear that was one of the sweetest thing's I've ever read in my entire life! Now, as I promised, I'm going to make this nice and long! Muahahaha...see, the only promblem with long reviews from me, is that I tend to get off the subject, um, much like I am right now. Right, so, back to the fic. This is simply adorable! I can feel the fluff in the air :p. And omg, I just, I just love this line so much. It's so, aww, it's so cute!

"Well, you know, now that we both know and everything...are going to, you know?" said Ron.

"What?" asked Hermione sarcastically.

"Hermione...stop it!" said Ron.

"Stop what?" she asked, smiling broadly, "Say it, Ron."

"Alright, alright," he said, "Well, do you want to...be my girlfriend?" He promptly turned a bright shade of red.

459

All right...it was supposed to be ONE quote, but the whole thing had to be said, hehe. Anyway, that's my favorite quote, besides the little part where Hermione comes over to make sure Ron's ok and...*melts into fluff* that was SO cute! Yeah, so, you'd better write another chapter or something because, I'll, I'll, do something evil! *rubbs the back of her neck* ok, I can't really do anything evil, but you just wait, I'll think of something, um, not nice! Ha! How's that sound? lol.

Anyway, um, how long am I right now? hummm...I hope you aren't completely bored by this. I tend to write really strange reviews :p, but only the good stories deserve them, so, you should be um, honored, I guess, haha.

Right, you'll probably want to be reading the thousands of other reviews you got, so get on with it! And then write more! Yeah! Ok, I'm going now...

Sincerely,

~Addy

Aphrodite2
9/8/02 . chapter 4
That was rather funny. How weird would it be to find yourself on the internet like that. Please keep writing. ~Aphrodite

malfoyslova15
9/8/02 . chapter 4
you better have me in there, or else!

Mikki13
9/7/02 . chapter 4
Awww! That was sooo cute! Hey, does this site actually exist? If so, what's the URL?

Horse-Girl21
9/7/02 . chapter 3
Cool!

malfoyslova15
9/7/02 . chapter 3
can I get on? ... please?

RachelOnACloud
9/7/02 . chapter 3
Oh I like this story lot's

Ali Simmons
9/7/02 . chapter 4

460

This is sooo good and hilarious!

ChimaeraGurl.too lazy to sign in
9/7/02 . chapter 4
LOL! I love the title, I totally relate! Poor Hermione and Ron, subjected to the terror of the Weasley twins minds at work! This chapter was great, and had a definite "awwww" factor, lol. Can't wait for the next chapter!

Umi Katsuya
9/6/02 . chapter 3
^_^ that wuz so cute! write more write more! that internet thing was very good idea..lol

Ali Simmons
9/4/02 . chapter 3
hahahahahahaha this is soooooo funny!

Allie
9/4/02 . chapter 3
i absolutely love it! plz e-mail me when the next ch is up.

edencrsh
9/3/02 . chapter 3
I love it! it's so good! can't wait till the next part :) hehee! it's too hysterical!

coolone007
9/3/02 . chapter 3
I love it placing our trio in the real world! Please update soon!

AngelicFairy
9/3/02 . chapter 3
HAHA! This is GOOOD! Hurry with more please! *laughs* I'm loving it! *Maura*

Mikki13
9/3/02 . chapter 3
You are evil! Ugh! Another cliff hanger! On a positive note, I loved this chapter. Especially how Hermione kept trying to tell Ron that they needed to talk. And how ChimaeraGurl asked Hermione if she was a huge fan of the books because of her IM. How funny was that? Keep up the great work!

Adnap Nottap.can't log in
9/3/02 . chapter 3
Aww, this is so sweet! I can't wait to read the next chapter! Go you!

~Addy

Ps. I promise the next review will be longer. I just don't have much time right now :(

461

Suspended
9/3/02 . chapter 3

OMG! suspense! puh-lease write more! i wanna know! this is such a good story! *bites her nails* oh man... this is really good! what kind of sight is it? meeeeeep! i wanna know!

Lilian Portia
9/2/02 . chapter 3

Hehe . . . Uh-oh! :D

little-princess
9/2/02 . chapter 3

Hahaha... That was great, awesome job!

ChimaeraGurl
9/2/02 . chapter 3

Yay! I love this chapter, it's funny. Great title by the way, haha. I can't wait to read your next chapter! It'll be so funny to Hermione and Ron's reaction to your site! I wonder what they'll think about the pics of themselves?

Mikki13
9/1/02 . chapter 2

AAAHHHH! NOOOOOOO! YOU CANNOT END IT THERE! Okay, breathe deeply. In and out. In and out. In and . . . Whew. Okay, a bit better now.

I'm loving your story. Keep up the great work, and please, please, please, for the love of Dumbledore, do it fast!;)

Ali Simmons
9/1/02 . chapter 1

I've read some of your other stuff and i think you can probably do the funny bit so please write more!

anon
9/1/02 . chapter 1

It is a grat story. Please finish the next chapter soon.

ChimaeraGurl
9/1/02 . chapter 2

This fic is turning out so great! I think that even if you don't try the next chapter is probably gonna end up being a little funny. Can't wait for the other chapter!

fetch
8/29/02 . chapter 1

Hehe, sounds nice. Keep going.

hmm, wonder what'll happen if they surf the 'net? Annoying pop-up ads? Wrong links leading to porn sites? And of course, Ron/Hermione fansites?

Supermaniac9
8/28/02 . chapter 1
plz write more soon!

this is really good writing...n a great story line!:-D

Kiyomisa
8/27/02 . chapter 1
Sounds cute so far. Can't wait for more ^-^ Oh and don't worry about the comedy part. If you're in a humerous mood while writting it, it'll be funny. Keep 'em comin!

Madison
8/26/02 . chapter 1
hey! i just wanna say that ur story sounds interesting...keep up the great work and post soon!

Who wants to know
8/26/02 . chapter 1
Hmm..I like! It is very good. Some of the characters might be a lil OOC but I can't tell! :) Plz continue!

Lisa.F
8/26/02 . chapter 1
Great But I think Ron should confess his love

name what name
8/26/02 . chapter 1
huh yea

i hope the next chapter is funny...

name what name
8/26/02 . chapter 1
huh yea

i hope the next chapter is funny...

Rebbie
8/26/02 . chapter 1
Write more. I'm intersted to see what happens. This should be kinda funny.

ChimaeraGurl

463

8/26/02 . chapter 1
Bravo! This story is going to be great! I can't say I'm surprised though, I have yet to read something less than wonderful from you! :-)

CHAPTER 2

bravo six
Author of 3 Stories

2. Anxiety and a Discovery

Rated: K - English - Romance/Humor - Ron W. & Hermione G. - Reviews: 75 - Updated: 04-01-03 - Published: 08-26-02 - id:934810

A/N: The P.O.V is gonna be 3rd person like in the books except that it's gonna be stuff that happens around Ron instead of Harry. Oh, and I'm dropping the humour part because I'm just not funny!

To my reviewers:

ChimaeraGurl: Thanks for doing beta!
Rebbie: I hoped it would be funny, but it's just not turning out that way! ;)
name what name: I hoped it would to but nope
Lisa.F: I'm getting there! I'm getting there! lol =D
Who wants to know?: I never noticed the OOC bit but oh well! =D
Madison: =D =D =D
little-princess: Glad you like the idea! I was hoping it wouldn't be too much like other fics!
Kiyomisa: Humorous moods don't come often, lol! oh well!
Supermaniac9: Thanks! ;)
fetch: haha the pop up ads would be funny! I can't wait to write when they find the R/H site (which happens to be mine) because I'm such an obsessed R/H Fan!
Oh, and since you're all R/H fans, you might like to take a look at my site which is called "Isn't it Obvious?" the address is .com/rhobvious
Disclaimer: HP doesn't belong to me!
Now on with the show, er fic, whatever!

Isn't it Obvious?

Chapter 2

Ever since he had called Hermione, the rest if the evening has seemed to just zoom past for Ron. No matter how hard he tried, that's all he could think about; that Hermione was going to be at the Burrow the very next day. Even Fred and George's teasing couldn't interrupt his thoughts. He had spent much of the evening contemplating when he had actually started to like Hermione. He hadn't come to much of a conclusion except that maybe his liking for her had always been there except that when he was 11 and 12 he didn't bother with that stuff and when he was 13 and 14, he was just to daft to realize it until he almost lost her to som-
"You in there Ron?" yelled Ginny, waving her hand in front of his face.
"Sorry," he mumbled, turning pink around the ears.
"Something wrong?" she asked suspiciously.

"Don't mind Ron," said George, entering the room, "He's just too busy thinking about Hermione! Am I right little brother?"

"What?" asked Ginny, obviously confused. Ron was turning as red as the Hogwarts Express.

"You mean you don't know?" said George.

"Shut up George," said Ron

"Know wha-oh! Yes! Now I know what you mean!" Ginny just grinned at Ron.

"I'm going to bed," stated Ron. He left for his room. This was just turning out all wrong. He knew he liked Hermione, he liked her a lot. It was just...he didn't know. Maybe he'd just let things happen on their own...but then again, if he did that, he might lose her to someone else. This was so confusing for him. He decided to just sleep on it and went to bed.

The next day came very quickly, considering himself and Harry had slept half the day. They never woke up till around 12:00pm. Ron had become very angry when he discovered this. He had wanted to get up earlier to, well, kind of *prepare* for the fact that Hermione was coming that very day. After they had something to eat, they just went back upstairs and sat on their beds. Ron was so nervous that he was actually shaking. He wasn't any less confused about the situation than he was last night. He decided to talk to Harry about it, even though he didn't really find the prospect of that very appealing.

"Harry, I really need to talk to you about something," said Ron.

"Sure, what?" he replied.

"Well, you know this thing about Hermione and that-that I-you know...like her? Well, I'm really nervous about her coming over. I feel like I need to act different around her now, but I'm not really sure but I just so confused!" he buried his head in his hands.

"Ron, there's no need for you to act different around her," replied Harry, "She liked you before so acting any different would do a thing for you. You just have to tell her, that's all."

"Easier said than done," said Ron.

"RON! HARRY!" came Mrs. Weasley's voice, "HERMIONE'S HERE!"

"Here we go," said Ron. They went downstairs and Ron almost fell over them from being so nervous. When Hermione saw them she broke into a huge smile.

"It's so great to see you two!" she said happily. When they came to the bottom of the stairs, she gave them each a hug.

"Harry and I'll take your trunk upstairs, if you want," offered Ron.

"Yes, thank you," she said smiling at him. Ron turning quickly because he was blushing a lot. They brought the trunk upstairs and then went into Ron's bedroom.

"I know I just got here and everything, but I really have to finish this thing I'm working on," said Hermione hauling out her laptop.

"You'll have to make sure dad doesn't see that thing," said Ron, "You'll never get your project thing done!" Hermione open the laptop and began to start it up. "My dad told me about some thing that muggles use on computers, antrinet or something?"

"Oh, the internet? Yeah, I have that on this but I've never used it before," replied Hermione.

"I know you have to finish whatever you're doing, but can we try it? I've always wanted to see it!"

"Yeah, okay," said Hermione, "We can try it right now." She clicked on the Internet Explorer icon and a window popped up with .uk as the homepage.

"What's that?" asked Ron.

"It's a search engine," said Harry, "I learned about them in my last year of muggle school. If you write something in that little box there, it'll search the internet for it."

"Cool!" said Ron who was very excited about the internet, "What would happen if you put in one of our names in there?"

"Probably nothing," said Hermione.

"Can we try anyway?" asked Ron, "Please?"

"Well..." Hermione said.

"Go on, put Harry's name in!" said Ron.

"What? Why mine!" exclaimed Harry.

"I dunno," said Ron. Hermione typed in 'Harry Potter' and pressed the search button. Suprisingly, (to them, not us muggles haha) a list of websites came up. The first one said 'Harry Potter homepage. **Harry Potter**: The Official Site of the Warner Bros. Movie. Welcome to , Warner Bros. and WB Online's source for all **...** '

"Huh?" said Harry, "What's that?"

"I...don't know," said Hermione shrugging.

"Well, go see what it is then!," said Ron. Hermione clicked it and an flash screen came up of the Weasley car. (a/n: of course, *they* don't know that's what it is!) After it ended, Ron laughed and said it looked like the time him and Harry flew the car to Hogwarts.

"Look at this," said Hermione, reading the links on the side, "Hogwarts, Fun and Games, Beyond Hogwarts, Daily Prophet, Platform 9 3/4, Wizard's Shop, Live the Magic...this is weird, very weird." The trio surfed the site trying to find out what it was until they discovered that all this 'Harry Potter' stuff was actually based on a book by a muggle woman named J.K Rowling. And the weird thing was that when they read the book summaries it was all similar like Harry's life. (A/N: I know stuff about the book isn't on the website but for this story's purpose there is!)

"Looks like there's other sites about me," said Harry referring to a link that said 'Look at Featured Fan Sites'"

"Let's look at them," said Ron. Hermione clicked it and saw that there was a list of five websites. The first one there was called 'Isn't it Obvious?'

"Why would someone name their site that?" said Hermione, bewildered.

"Beats me," said Ron, "Check it out." Hermione went to click it but a little window popped up that said: "ChimaeraGurl has sent you a message. Would you like to accept it?" And it had a button for yes and a button for no.

"Click yes, click yes!" said Ron. Hermione clicked yes.

ChimaeraGurl: *Hello!*

End Chapter 2

A/N: I know that wasn't the greatest place to end it but I was thinking ahead and I couldn't think of a good place to end it. So if you wanna see what the think of Isn't it Obvious and find out what happens when Hermione talks to ChimaeraGurl, check back tomorrow, because I'm gonna start chapter 3 as soon as I get this chapter uploaded! =D

CHAPTER 3

bravo six
Author of 3 Stories

| 3. I couldn't think of a good title... | ▼ |

Rated: K - English - Romance/Humor - Ron W. & Hermione G. - Reviews: 75 - Updated: 04-01-03 - Published: 08-26-02 - id:934810
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To my reviewers:

ChimaeraGurl: Thanks for doing beta and for letting me use you in my fic!
Mikki: Keep breathing cause there's more!
little-princess: I know, R/Hr is sooo great!
A/N: I was thinking about this chapter when I finished it and I think some of the characters may be a little OOC but oh well, I think it helps the story a bit. ;)

Isn't it Obvious?

Chapter 3

"Wow!" How does it work?" said Ron, referring to instant messaging.

"I don't know! It just does!" said Hermione, frustrated and saying it a little more harsh than she intended.

"Someone's a little moody today," said Ron, who looked a little put-out by Hermione's comment.

"I am *not* moody!" said Hermione, turning to face Ron, "You're just getting on my nerves!"

"Well-" began Ron.

"Are you going answer her or not?" asked Harry.

"Oh, right," said Hermione, turning back to the computer. ChimaeraGurl's window was flashing again because she had just sent another message.

ChimaeraGurl: *Are you there?*

"Think I should answer?" asked Hermione.

"Yes!" said Ron and Harry in unison.

Hermi0ne 1141x: *Hello*

ChimaeraGurl: *a/s/l?*

Hermi0ne 1141x: *what does a/s/l mean?*

ChimaeraGurl: *age/sex/location, like my a/s/l is 16/f/SC, USA*

Hermi0ne 1141x: *oh, ok. I'm 15/f/UK but I'll be 16 in September.*

ChimaeraGurl: *I'm guess you like the Harry Potter books, judging by your s/n*

"Uh oh, what do I say now?" said Hermione.

"Well, you could just say yes, I suppose." said Ron.

"But I never read the books!" said Hermione.

"They're based on me though," said Harry, "I'm sure you can pull it off."

"Alright," she replied.

Hermi0ne 1141x: *Yes.*

ChimaeraGurl: *Me too! They're the best books ever! What's your favourite one?*

"How many were there again?" asked Hermione.

"Four, I think," said Harry.

"Yeah, there was one for each year at Hogwarts so far," said Ron.

"So, which one will I say?" asked Hermione.

"The first?" said Harry, shrugging.

Hermi0ne 1141x: *The first one.*

ChimaeraGurl: *Really? Most people say the 3rd or 4th. Mine's the 4th cause there's lots of R/Hr! ;)*

Hermi0ne 1141x: *What's R/Hr mean?*

ChimaeraGurl: *Ron/Hermione*

Hermi0ne 1141x: *I still don't get it...*

ChimaeraGurl: *Ron/Hermione means that they like each other*

Hermione's jaw dropped, Ron turned so red he thought he was going to catch fire any second now. Harry just stared in disbelief. Hermione turned to face Ron which made him turn even redder if that was actually possible.

"Is it true?" she asked him.

"Is what...true?" replied Ron. Why did he just say that? Why? Of course it's true! Why couldn't he just say it?

"Ron, you know what I'm-" started Hermione.

"Look, she's sending another message!" said Harry, who could see another big fight coming on.

ChimaeraGurl: *What's your favourite part of the 4th book? Mine's that part where Harry thinks about finding the arm of Ron's Krum figurine under his bed on Boxing day! It was so funny! And the part after the Yule Ball when Ron and Hermione have that big fight! Ron was so clueless! haha*

Ron thought he was going to be permanently red in the face. He had never been so embarrassed in his life. Hermione was just staring in disbelief at the computer. Harry was fighting back a laugh.

"Don't tell me you actually tore apart that thing, Ron?" said Hermione, turning, again, to face Ron.

"Well, ye-yes I did, okay? I was mad. Leave me alone!" said Ron.

"You know what, Ron?" said Hermione, "I really think we-" She was interrupted by Fred and George who had just came in.

"What are you three up to?" asked Fred.

"Go away. Please," pleaded Ron.

"Why?" said George.

"Because we've found websites," said Harry, "You know what they are right?" Fred and George nodded. "Well, we've found sites about me, well, about the Harry Potter books. They're written as if someone was following my life at Hogwarts."

"Weird," said Fred, "But why doesn't Ron want us to see?"

"Harry, don't tell him!" said Ron.

"We're talking to a girl who'd read the books and she keeps taking about Ron and Hermione and all the evidence in the book that they like each other." Fred and George broke into identical grins.

"Told you so," said George.

"Ron," said Hermione, "We ne-"

"Look! She's saying something else!" said Fred.

ChimaeraGurl: ?

"What am I going to say?" asked Hermione.

"I don't know!" said Harry.

"Say 'me too,' said George who had read what ChimaeraGurl had said earlier.

"But-" said Hermione.

"Just say it! Who cares?" said Fred.

"Ooooh, alright," said Hermione.

Hermi0ne 1141x: Yeah, that's mine too

ChimaeraGurl: =)

ChimaeraGurl: My friend's got this site you should visit, she'd really like it if you did!

Hermi0ne 1141x: Um, alright

ChimaeraGurl: Click Here (A/N: This isn't actually something you can click on)

Hermi0ne 1141x: Ok, I'll take a look. What kind of site is it?

ChimaeraGurl: You'll see! ;)

End Chapter 3

CHAPTER FOUR

bravo six
Author of 3 Stories

4. My brain stops working on the weekends s...

Rated: K - English - Romance/Humor - Ron W. & Hermione G. - Reviews: 75 - Updated: 04-01-03 - Published: 08-26-02 - id:934810
 Share

To my reviewers:
ChimaeraGurl: Thanks for doing beta! Great title for chapter 3, wasn't it? lol
little-princess: Thank you!
Snow White: =D
Suspended: You'll find out about the site in this chapter! =D
Adnap Nottap: Ooooh! Long review! yay! =D
Mikki: *MWAHAHA* lol! Ah, cliff-hangers! I'm glad you think it's funny!
AngelicFairy: I'm writing as fast as I can! lol! :)
coolone007: Yeah, that's fun! =D
edencrsh: I'm so glad you thought it was funny! I seriously didn't think it was! yay!
Allie: Thanks! I'll e-mail you!
Ali Simmons: Glad you think so!
Umi Katsuya: Thanks!
A/N: I'm loving this story so much! It's so fun to write! And I love the positive reviews! I didn't think it was very funny writing it myself! I was even gonna change the genre to just romance with no humour! =D I'm so glad you all think it's funny! Oh and Allie asked me to e-mail her when the next chapter is up and if

anyone else wants me to e-mail them, just say so in the reviews and I would be glad to! I'm not sure on how many chapters there'll though.

Isn't it Obvious?

Chapter 4

ChimaeraGurl: Oh, I'll tell you this much: The site is called "Isn't it Obvious?"
"Isn't that the same site I was going to go into earlier, before we started talking to ChimaeraGurl?" said Harry.
"Yeah, it was in that 'Featured Fan Sites' thing," replied Hermione.
"Well, click on, would you?" said Fred. Him and George were still there because they were finding all of this stuff very interesting. Who wouldn't? Hermione clicked on it and a new browser window opened and she maximized it. When the site loaded, they could see a picture of the two actors from the Harry Potter movie who played Ron and Hermione and at the top of the picture there were white letters that said 'Isn't it Obvious?' There was also a picture that said 'Ron and Hermione fans site ring,' one that said 'Ron Weasley Fan' and another that said 'Gryffindor.' Hermione put her face into her hands.
"Oh my goodness," she mumbled, turning pink. Ron didn't turn red because he was still red from all the other times. "I'm not going in there," she said, shaking her head.
"Fine then," said George, "We are though."
"Not without me you aren't," said Hermione.
"Oh, come on, Hermione, you're spoiling the fun!" said Fred.
"Does it look like I'm having fun?" said Hermione, angrily, "And it doesn't look like Ron is having much fun with this either!"
"You want to see what it is, Hermione. And I bet you do too Ron," said George, "But if you really don't then you and Ron know where the door is."
"Oh, alright," said Hermione, "Are you okay, Ron?" Ron was sitting on his bed with his face in his hands, rocking back and forth. Hermione got up and went over to him and pulled his hands away from his face. Ron jumped.
"Are you okay?" she asked. Ron just looked down with a frightened look on his face. "Ron, I know this is a bit weird, but we'll get this all figured out, okay?" Ron looked up and nodded at her.
"Aw!" said George, "How sweet!"
"Shut it, George," snapped Hermione. George looked taken back, as he wasn't expecting that from Hermione. Hermione sat back down at the computer and clicked on the picture. This took them into a new page. It had a banner across the top with Ron and Hermione on it with the words "Isn't it Obvious?" Underneath the banner were the words "I cannot, for the life of me, understand the rather unusual people who have a thing for H/Hr.-dutchtulips on "
"Neither can I," said Hermione underneath her breath.
The site had eighteen links down the left side that led to various sections of the site. In the middle, there was a text area where the owner of the site had updates and just talked in general. On the right side, there was a place for e-mail login.
"Oooh! Look at that! Evidence!" said George.
"Oh, do we have to go in there?" said Ron, finally speaking again.
"Yes!" said George. They went in and found various sections of the books typed of that had evidence of R/H. They found all the 4th book evidence very amusing, well, all except for Ron and Hermione.
"I'm getting out of here!" said Hermione, clicking the 'back' button. She refused to go into anything else but Fred and George convinced her to go into one last page, the fan fiction page. (A/N: Mwahahaha!)
"Fan fiction?" said Harry, "What's that?"
"It's stories written based on something else," said Hermione, "I'm guessing this is based on those books, but wait, these are more specific. Oh goodness, they're R/H stories."
"Oooh! Let's read one!" said Fred.

"No way!" said Ron and Hermione in unison. They had expected them to look disappointed but Fred and George didn't look disappointed at all. In fact, you could almost see the cogs working beneath both of their skulls.

"What are you two planning?" asked Harry suspiciously.

"What makes you think we're planning anything?" asked Fred with the most innocent look he could muster.

Harry, Ron and Hermione looked very suspiciously at the twins but never said anything else. (A/N: They *are* actually planning something, but you'll find that out it an upcoming chapter!)

"FRED! GEORGE!" cam a call from Mrs. Weasley from downstairs.

"Got to run!" said George, leaving the room. Fred followed.

"I, uh, have to go downstairs for a second," lied Harry, running out of the room.

Ron was still sitting on his bed and Hermione had just finished putting away her laptop. They sat in a very awkward silence.

"Well," said Hermione.

"Well," said Ron.

"Ron, this is ridiculous!" said Hermione, "It's all out there now, I know how you feel. What I want to know is why you didn't tell me sooner."

Ron sighed. "It's really hard! I as so scared! Besides, I didn't see you telling me!"

"Well, I, uh, well, that's not the point!" said Hermione. Ron grinned.

"So," he said.

"So, what?" said Hermione.

"Well, you know, now that we both *know* and everything...are going to, you know?" said Ron.

"What?" asked Hermione sarcastically.

"Hermione...stop it!" said Ron.

"Stop what?" she asked, smiling broadly, "Say it, Ron."

"Alright, alright," he said, "Well, do you want to...be my girlfriend?" He promptly turned a bright shade of red.

"Of course I do!" she said as she ran over to hug Ron.

"It's about time!" said Harry, who was leaning against the door frame with his arms crossed. He grinned.

"Harry!" said Ron and Hermione in unison. They grinned.

"Anyway, supper is ready," said Harry, turning to go downstairs. Ron and Hermione followed, hand in hand. (A/N: Aw!)

End Chapter 4

This isn't the end of the fic! I'm gonna write an epilogue or maybe it'll just be another chapter for the finishing touch!

CHAPTER FIVE -

It's about time I did something with this fic! I said in the end of last chapter I would write another chapter or put up an epilogue. I actually did have a great idea for it, ya know, with Fred and George's idea, but it kinda got ruined when I finished off that chapter. And I haven't been able to think of anything since. But if I do, I'll make sure to post it! I noticed I haven't wrote in a while so I'm gonna try to finish off a fic I have sitting on my computer and I also had a new one in mind! =D Cya then!