THE BIRTH OF A PHENOMENON: UNDERSTANDING THE AMERICAN MEDIA REACTION TO *HARRY POTTER*

By

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PREFACE

The primary research source for this thesis comes from Auburn University's Ralph Brown Draughon Library's on-line databases: EBSCOhost, NewsBank, and ProQuest. The bibliographic citation is based on Modern Language Association's requirements to cite online material from a database that does not provide a URL. Although a URL may be provided, they are not included because the URLs associated with these databases are too long to record, often exceeding a half of page in length. For ease of reading, multiple citations are cited as footnotes rather than parenthetical references.

DEDICATION

For Bradley, whose patient assistance is invaluable, and for my mother, who read Tolkien to me long before I could ever appreciate his fantasy world.

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INTRODUCTION

Quietly, a child fantasy tale appeared in bookstores throughout Great Britain in June 1997. Three years later, extensive customer lines, well-publicized pre-release parties, and, in fact, a rushing mania to pre-order the novel long before it was published welcomed the release of the fourth novel in the same series. By the time *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* arrived in stores, J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* novels were a children's book publishing sales and media phenomenon.

The rise to American media fame began with the release of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* in Great Britain) in September 1998 in the United States, launching Rowling on her way to the *New York Times* best-seller list, soon making her a household name. Readers anticipated the adventures of Harry and his cronies in the second novel, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets,* released in the United States in June 1999. By the time book three, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban,* reached American store shelves in September 1999, Rowling's work, which describes a young boy's wizardry education, achieved banned book status, guaranteeing further publicity and sales. A cloud of mystery shrouded the July 2000 release of the fourth and most current novel in the series, as its title remained undisclosed to all but the publishers and the author until the novel's simultaneous appearance in Great Britain and the United States.

The success of the *Harry Potter* novels can, in part, be attributed to the common archetypes it shares with fairy tales: orphan escaping his nasty relatives to a world of fantasy; a tale of rags to riches; magical people, places, and animals; and the battle of good versus

evil. The primary plot of each novel takes the reader on an adventure of Harry's school year at Hogwarts School for Witchcraft and Wizardry. Beginning when the protagonist is eleven and unaware of his magical powers, the first novel introduces Harry and readers to the contemporary world of wizardry in England, and each subsequent novel builds on the fantasy element of the wizardry world. In each tale, Harry is forced to wage a battle with either his foe, Lord Voldemort, or, as in the third novel, the escaped prisoner of Azkaban, who is rumored to be heading to Hogwarts to kill Harry. Although the novels are characterized as children's literature, they captivate audiences of all ages as Rowling skillfully employs mythological creatures and names, which are perhaps missed by children, but are an example of how she strengthens the story for adults.

Like Harry, Rowling, too, found herself with new powers. Her own rags to riches story captivates the media, as they expound her personal tale of an impoverished single mother trying to survive in Edinburgh, Scotland, before the publication of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone.* Her personal story is so intertwined with the fairy tale of *Harry Potter* that the two are nearly inseparable in popular media.

According to Rowling, the idea of *Harry Potter* came into her mind nearly complete as she was riding on a train to London in 1990 (Lockerbie 2). Bloomsbury bought the publishing rights to *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* after she was first turned down by Penguin, Transworld, and HarperCollins ("Potter Phenomenon" par. 4). Shortly after, Scholastic Press purchased the rights and introduced *Harry Potter* to the United States. By December 1998, the first novel climbed to the top of the *New York Times* best-seller list. *Harry Potter* had arrived and was on the way to worldwide fame, reaching phenomenon status in the American media by the time of the release of book four. The fourth novel, at a print

run of 3.8 million first copies in the United States alone, was the largest ever children's first book run. The novel is now available in 47 languages and has sold over 116 million copies worldwide (Puig 2A). Rowling has won a number of awards and the term "muggle"— the word wizards use to describe nonmagical human beings— is part of common language.

The growing popularity of the *Harry Potter* series also leads to issues of controversy concerning the reading of *Harry Potter* in public classrooms, the content of the *New York Times* best-seller list, and an issue of plagiarism. Both in 1999 and 2000 the *Harry Potter* novels topped the American Library Association's (ALA) list of most challenged books, stemming from a fear that the novels teach Wicca— a recognized religion in the United States— to children, and that it defiles the separation of church and state. The *New York Times*, too, was facing pressures regarding the novels, as they were selfishly claiming the top spots on the best-seller list. In fact, one or more of Rowling's novels occupied the top of the list beginning in 1998 and continuing until the list's revision ("No Adults"). Just in time to prevent the fourth novel from moving to the number one spot, the *New York Times* created a children's best-seller list to prohibit the novel from claiming the place typically reserved for adult books. In addition, Rowling is facing accusations of plagiarism, preventing the wildly popular novels from leaving the headlines.

This thesis examines when and how the *Harry Potter* novels became a phenomenon by analyzing the response to the novels in the American print media in three print media outlets: book reviews, professional assessments, and popular. The analysis stems from a compilation of sources and also from the expertise in marketing that I gained in my education— I have two Bachelor of Science degrees, one in advertising and the other in public relations— as well as five years experience as a marketing professional. The paper

begins by analyzing the response of the three media outlets to Rowling's personal history and then considers the response to the first novel, *Sorcerer's Stone*. It continues with an analysis of the next three novels in book reviews, professional assessment articles, and the popular media. Further, it contains two case studies, the first on the controversy of the novel's appropriateness in schools and the second on the marketing of the novels. The focus of the media attention began with *Sorcerer's Stone* and *Chamber of Secrets* primarily in the form of book reviews and personal narratives about Rowling's struggling past. The media attention for *Prisoner of Azkaban* began to focus on the censorship disputes. Pre-sales of both book three and especially book four, *Goblet of Fire*, erupted before publication. By the release of book four, the number of *Harry Potter* articles grew to sensational amounts, and soon his name became associated with articles relating to movies, children's literature, book publishing, and even video games. The thesis concludes with a projection of the response to book five, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. Nearly a year remains before this novel will reach readers' hands, but despite the novel's publication date, *Harry Potter* fans came face to face with their hero as *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* reached movie theatres on November 16, 2001. Media attention continues to grow, and due to the burgeoning *Harry Potter* phenomenon, this thesis cannot cover all of the print reactions. With the available time and mechanisms it is impossible to incorporate every article written about *Harry Potter* or Rowling. Instead, a careful representation of articles is used, validated by its inclusion of newspaper articles at both the local and national level, as well as articles from major scholarly, trade, and popular publications.

CHAPTER I.

ROWLING'S PAST AS DEFINED BY THE PRINT MEDIA

"In the meantime, life became even worse for Harry within the confines of the castle, for Rita Skeeter had published her piece about the Triwizard Tournament, and it had turned out to be not so much a report on the tournament as a highly colored life story of Harry" (Rowling, *Goblet of Fire* 314). Articles about Harry's creator Joanne Kathleen Rowling (better known by her initials J.K.), too, often turn out to be a story of her "highly colored" past, rather than articles about her novels. The tale Rowling created about a struggling orphan boy realizing his true identity as something much more than his abusive guardians would ever allow him to believe— a wizard, rich, brave, and loyal— makes Harry's story addictive because it allows readers to find in him qualities they are looking for in themselves. Rowling herself has a fairy tale parallel to that of Harry. She went from writing in obscurity to becoming one of the most popular authors for children and adults throughout the world. As media attention on the *Harry Potter* novels has increased, so too has the attention placed on Rowling's past. Collectively, each area of the American print media— book reviews, professional media, and the popular press— have all held steadfast to three stories about her past: first, Rowling's struggle with poverty; second, how the idea of *Harry Potter* came to her while riding on a train; and third, her struggle to have her first novel published. This chapter focuses on the facts and the media-generated fiction of Rowling's biography, specifically the three areas that contribute to the phenomenon status of the novels, and how the media treated the information and exaggerated it as the novels' popularity increased.

The attention placed on Rowling in the American print media indicates two things about the media and their audiences. First, Rowling's past grew from a few facts to a vivid fairy tale, fulfilling America's need to have and if necessary to create fairy tales. Second, the media created the fairy tale only by manipulating the facts and creating "new" information for their readers. Although Rowling's personal tale captivated the media immediately, her story continues to grow and change. Years before the media craze created by the *Harry Potter* novels and Rowling's personal tale, Michael Crichton said: "Its information is not reliable, it has too much chrome and glitz, its doors rattle, it breaks down almost immediately, and it is sold without warranty. It's flashy, but it's basically junk" (Scanlan ix). His prediction of the downfall of mass media was for the very reason of its unreliable content, yet this information continues to sell regarding the *Harry Potter* media craze. Rowling's own tale is an example of the same type of media "glitz" and "junk" Crichton was addressing. With so much varied press from book reviews, professional media, and popular media, each tale about Rowling is in a state of constant flux.

Moving back through the media coverage of Rowling's past, a beginning for the fairy tales can be linked to her publishers. Clearly, Rowling's American publisher, Scholastic, understood from the beginning how important Rowling's tale of rags to riches would be to the success of the *Harry Potter* novels, and the overall media magic is reflected in their opening of the "About the Author" in book one: "J.K. Rowling was a struggling single mother when she wrote the beginnings of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* on scraps of paper at a local café" (Rowling, *Sorcerer's Stone* 312). In addition, they report the same information on their web site (*Harry Potter*). Depicting Rowling as someone struggling with familiar issues before succeeding beyond all expectations gave Scholastic the opportunity to

make her personify the American dream. Not so with her British publisher, Bloomsbury, where there is no mention of the supposed struggling life led by Rowling on their website. It does, however, mention that the idea for *Harry Potter* came to her while she was riding on a train (*Harry Potter Books from Bloomsbury*). As Scholastic set the stage for the media precedent in the United States, so too did Bloomsbury in Great Britain, as the story of Harry's creation is visible throughout British print media. The *Scotsman* reports the following, which can be read in various British media reports:

> 'Harry Potter was conceived on a train,' says Rowling. 'It was six months before my mum died and I'd been flat-hunting in Manchester with my then boyfriend. On the way back to London, Harry just popped into my head. It was the most incredible, amazing feeling.' (Lockerbie S2)

Although this story runs throughout much of the American print media, it is overshadowed by the poverty tale.

Collaboratively the American print media and Rowling biographies do suggest the following story about her life: she was born in Bristol, England, in 1966, attended Exeter University, and has been married and divorced (J(oanne) K. Rowling). Struggling with her mother's death, losing a job, and having been robbed, Rowling is said to have reevaluated her life. The story begins when the idea for Harry came to her fully formed while she was riding on a train to London in 1990. For the next five years she created extensive notes for all seven novels and began writing *Sorcerer's Stone* (Schafer 26-27). In the meantime, she moved to Portugal to teach English, where she married a journalist in 1991 and had a baby girl, Jessica. She then divorced and moved to Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1993, where she currently lives. She began to struggle financially as she faced the high cost of childcare.

Caught in the trap of staying home with her daughter and foregoing the cost of childcare necessary if she worked, she became dependent on welfare. It is this time in her life that is now so famous in the print media. As the story is told, Rowling left her cold apartment to take her child to cafés, sip coffee, and write her now famed novels as Jessica napped. In 1995, she met her agent, Christopher Little, and with his assistance, found a publisher in Bloomsbury in 1996 after first being turned down by three other publishers. In 1996 Rowling received a grant from The Scottish Arts Council for $8,000 to write the first novel (reportedly the largest ever paid to a children's author). Bloomsbury offered her a $3,300 advance to publish the novel under non-gender specific initials (Schafer 29). A year later, Scholastic purchased the novel at a fair in Italy for an astounding $105,000.

It is the tale of Rowling's financial struggle as well as her role as a single mother that captivates the American print media in book reviews, professional assessment pieces, and the popular media. The realization of a character's true identity is the magic in fairy tales. Rather than being a wish, the frog, for example, has always been a prince and the magic occurs when his true identity is revealed (Opie 14). Throughout the print media, not just Harry's character is realized for who he really is, but also the author's personal tale portrayed in the media turns her from a poor single mother into the second wealthiest woman in Great Britain. Rowling is portrayed as an "overnight" success story. The *New York Times Book Review* article for *Sorcerer's Stone* provides a clear example of seeing the true magic in her fairy tale, as Michael Winerip compares her to Harry: "like Harry Potter, she had wizardry inside, and has soared beyond her modest Muggle surroundings to achieve something quite special" (26). Both the popular and professional media printed similar stories regarding Rowling's past; for example, in the December 21, 1998 issue of *Newsweek*, and the December 21, 1998

issue of *Publishers Weekly,* her struggle with poverty appears in articles about the first novel.[1] Local newspapers, too, covered Rowling's tale of poverty during the release of *Sorcerer's Stone.* A book review for the *Orlando Sentinel* reports that it took Rowling six years to write her first novel while she was unemployed and on welfare (Pate, "Harry Potter" par. 9). Clearly, the facts regarding Rowling's struggle with poverty and how she wrote book one under impoverished conditions are clouded with ever increasing media coverage.

Soon, stories began to shift their focus to how Rowling was able to afford the time to write with a young daughter by her side. The Raleigh *News & Observer* on March 21, 1999 reports the following in a review of *Sorcerer's Stone*:

> The author, J.K. Rowling, was a single mother living in a cold, tiny apartment in Edinburgh, Scotland, when she started writing the [first] book on whatever scraps of paper came to hand. Struggling to make ends meet— by some accounts, living on welfare— she found the cafés that would let her sit for hours over a single cup of coffee while her baby napped and she scribbled away. (Heyes par. 2)

Similar stories began to appear in book reviews for *Chamber of Secrets.* In the summer of 1999 the *Seattle Times, Dallas Morning News,* and the *Washington Post* all describe Rowling's beginnings as the author of *Harry Potter* sitting in cafes, sipping a single cup of coffee while her daughter napped.[2] Struggling single mothers are a subgroup of society Americans can identify with, especially as the costs of childcare continue to increase. Rowling's own

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[1] Devereaux 28-29; Power 77.

[2] Dirda, "Rev. of *Chamber*" X15; Shindler par. 8; Wergeland par. 10.

struggle, portrayed by the media, began to be emphasized by such words as "tiny" and "cold" to describe her flat. She now epitomizes the weary single mother.

Nearly a year after this type of media report began to take shape, Rowling dismissed much of the legend surrounding her life in a September 1999 interview with the *School Library Journal.* She says of her past: "When I had the idea for Harry and when I started writing the [first] book, I was working full time, as I was for my entire adult life, and I was not a single parent. I finished the book under those conditions" (Feldman par. 6). Regardless of Rowling' s blatant denial that she wrote *Sorcerer's Stone* while on public assistance and unemployed, the story had already emerged as a media legend and did not disappear during the release of the next two novels. Valerie Takahama, in an article for the *Orange County Register*, weaves Rowling's personal past into her story: "an unemployed single mother living in Edinburgh, reportedly wrote much of the book in longhand in a café while her young daughter napped" (par. 21). Two weeks later, the *Washington Post* quotes Rowling as saying the media exaggerates her poverty (Weeks, "Charmed" C2). By the release of *Goblet of Fire*, much of the media attention fell on the secrecy of the novel's content rather than Rowling's past, yet her past did remain as much a part of the overall story as it had formerly. In a book review for *Commercial Appeal*, Fredric Koeppel says, "Rowling began making notes about Harry Potter on café napkins during her infant daughter's naps" (par.11). *Entertainment Weekly*, too, encouraging the tale of Rowling's past, opens an article about book four with "Once she was a struggling single mom" (Jensen, "Hocus Focus" par. 1).

Even now after the eager fans all have their copy of *Goblet of Fire*, Rowling's past struggle with poverty continues to fascinate the media. *Time* magazine, reporting on the

Potter phenomenon, continues the poverty tale by adding a new detail that she was forced to listen to "mice skittering behind the walls" (Gray, Brahim, and Cullinan par. 13). In a late review for *Sorcerer's Stone*, appearing nearly three years after its release, Shaun Johnson recounts Rowling's poverty in the *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literature*, describing Rowling as "a single mother grappling with life's infinite conflicts" (Johnson par. 5). Book reviews, professional media, and the popular press all aid in the distortion of Rowling's past. Her struggle with her surroundings soon began to equal Harry's when he was forced to live in the cupboard under the stairs on Privet Drive.

There is something almost magical about the second story that initially received so much attention in both the American and British print media: reportedly the idea for Harry came to Rowling fully formed while riding on a train from Manchester to London in 1990. This story erupted in the British press, just as the tale of poverty has in the American press, as the media took their cue from Bloomsbury. Although its popularity does not rival that of Rowling's past poverty as a single mother in the American print media, it is now an important part of her biography, enhancing the overall story. According to the *Washington Post*, Rowling began the first novel to fill time while on a stalled train (Reid A21). In an interview for the *School Library Journal* a year after the release of *Sorcerer's Stone*, they ask Rowling how she came up with the idea for her novels, and quote her saying, "[The idea] just came. I cannot tell you why or what triggered it— if indeed anything triggered it. I saw Harry incredibly clearly. The idea basically at that point was wizard school and I saw Harry very, very plainly" (Feldman par. 14). In a profile of Rowling for *People*, they quote her saying nearly the same thing ("J.K. Rowling" 87). Even a year later, the media's version of Harry's conception changed very little, unlike the tale of Rowling's poverty. After the release

of *Goblet of Fire* in July 2000 the *Los Angles Times*, *Entertainment Weekly*, and *Biography* all wrote nearly the same thing about how Harry appeared to Rowling fully formed on a train.[3] Consequently, by this point in the media's coverage, Rowling's struggling past has been picked over and changed so much that the truth of it is hidden amongst all the new details. In contrast, the story of how Harry entered her imagination barely changed in three years.

The third story that contributes to the phenomenal media craze is Rowling's road to the publishing of *Sorcerer's Stone*. *Time* magazine depicts it as:

> Three and a half years ago, no one on earth had heard of Harry Potter except J.K. Rowling, the writer who dreamed him up, and the publishers' readers who had rejected the manuscript of her first book featuring the bespectacled boy wizard. And now? Four Harry Potter novels later, translations into 42 languages later, 76 million copies sold worldwide later? Strange, strange things are happening wherever on Earth the young fictional hero and his friends can be found. (Gray, Brahim, and Cullinan par. 1)

As with the story regarding how Rowling developed her novels, this story, too, did not receive as much attention as her tale of poverty in the American print media, yet it helped build that tale, as it has been stressed that she was turned down by three publishers—Penguin, Transworld, and HarperCollins— the year before Bloomsbury accepted *Philosopher's Stone* for publication. This story did become an exaggeration of the truth, usually depicting Rowling's struggle as a new author. According to *Publishers Weekly*, when she met her agent, Little, he told her, "'Now, you do realize, you will never make a fortune out of a children's book?'" (Devereaux 28). How wrong this statement turned out to be, yet much of the media

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[3] Cawley par. 1; Fierman par. 8; Mehren par. 3.

depicts Rowling's search for a publisher in the same struggling manner as they did her poverty. *Time* magazine's story about *Sorcerer's Stone* includes the following: "In 1995, after she found an agent in a writers' directory, a British publisher offered her a tiny advance of around $4,000" (Gleick, "Wizard" 86). This statement is reminiscent of how the media described her apartment.

However, not all of the stories about the publishing of *Philosopher's Stone* depict a forlorn Rowling who struggled to get her first novel published. She is quoted saying that she was grateful to receive $4,000 for *Philosopher's Stone*, so grateful "that she didn't protest the decision to use genderless initials instead of an identifiably female first name. More boy-friendly, they told her" (Mehren par. 5). Some of the media conveys that Rowling was writing out of desperation; her life was so full of sadness from the loss of her mother, her divorce, and her financial situation that she turned to writing. The *Los Angeles Times*, however, reports her saying, "I just really believed in it. [...] I had this strong feeling that this was the one" (Mehren par 13). Several publications even went so far as to gloss over the publishing of book one. For example, in a review for *Chamber of Secrets*, the *Seattle Times* reports of the first novel, "it was eventually snapped up by Bloomsbury, the first publisher that looked at it" (Wergeland par 11). In the *Commercial Appeal*, Koepple writes, "She received a grant from the Scottish Arts Council to finish the novel, it was accepted for publication, it won prizes in Great Britain, and the rest is record-breaking publishing history" (par.11). Reporters must have been using the same Quick-Quotes Quills used by the obnoxiously scheming reporter, Rita Skeeter, in *Goblet of Fire*, the pen that scrolls itself across the paper creating a far-fetched story when they reported how she struggled to have *Sorcerer's Stone* published (Rowling, *Goblet of Fire* 304).

Rowling's rise to fame is the media's ticket to expound her story. She is credited with the change in the *New York Times* best seller list, the rise in enrollment at British boarding schools, and the surge in the use of the name Harry— which is reported as the current most popular name chosen for baby boys born in Britain ("Ten People" 39). This, along with other declarations regarding her life, is collectively part of the media's sensational telling of her story. The media feeds the continuing popularity of Rowling, and one cannot deny the impact she is having on readers of all ages. Rowling's perceived tale of struggle receives so much media attention because, according to Iona and Peter Opie, the real magic in fairy tales occurs when the characters are shown for what they really are, such as the beast in 'Beauty and the Beast' (14). Harry is finally exposed as a wizard and Rowling as writer, and more specifically in so much of the popular press, as Harry's mom. The magic is brought to life, and the audience is hoping, too, that one day their true identities will be exposed and their fantasies will come true. Harry epitomizes the modern fictional fairy tale character in his leap from obscurity to hero, while Rowling went from a perceived struggling lifestyle, full of poverty, to literary fame and fortune.

A combination of the media's need for "chrome and glitz," the attractiveness of fairy tales by the media for exposing a person for who she really is, and a need to continue to report new (or seemingly new) information is why Rowling's personal tale receives such widespread attention in the print media. The focus of the media is to take the truth of Rowling's past and extend or transform it, making it a story parallel to Harry's own tale. However, by shifting the focus— with exaggerated and inaccurate information— the media attention on the author's own tale may downplay the seriousness of the literature itself. Jack Zipes, in his book *Sticks and Stones, The Troublesome Success of Children's Literature from Slovenly*

Peter to Harry Potter, suggests that all the media attention placed on the *Harry Potter* novels may blur the purpose of children's literature (171). Clearly, this can be seen as a problem for the *Harry Potter* novels, as reporters create tales based on facts and then change, distort, and even invent new information as they have done in telling the life of Rowling. Examining the reporting of Rowling's life provides an example of how misleading the media is as they seek to create headlines that will sell stories; this includes not only the popular media, but book reviews and the professional media as well.

CHAPTER II.

ANALYSIS OF THE MEDIA'S REACTION TO *HARRY POTTER AND THE SORCERER'S STONE*

"Harry, instead of feeling pleased and proud, felt quite sure there had been a horrible mistake. A wizard? Him? How could he possibly be?" (Rowling, *Sorcerer's Stone* 57). This feeling of surprise and shock Harry experienced after finding out he was a wizard is comparable to the media's surprise at the ultimate success of the *Harry Potter* series. Initially, *Harry Potter* entered America quietly; the media could not have been prepared for the imminent popularity of the series. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, although a success in Great Britain, was not at first taken seriously by the American media. Before providing an analysis of the American print media response to *Sorcerer's Stone* in book reviews, professional assessments, and popular media, this chapter first reviews the history of the fantasy genre in both Great Britain and the United States, and then examines the British media reaction to book one.

Sorcerer's Stone is the tale of an orphaned boy, Harry Potter, left to live with his relatives who barely acknowledge his existence and force him to sleep in the cabinet under their stairs. The murder of his parents and his own heritage are not revealed to him until his eleventh birthday, when he is told that not only were his parents wizards, but he is as well, and perhaps one of the most famous wizards in the world. The tale takes the readers into the wizard side of London and then to the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

The typical boarding school tale becomes intertwined with the fate of the wizardry world as readers watch Harry and his cronies experience their first year of school.

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone is acclaimed as great escapism. Harry is called a good friend, someone with whom to spend long afternoons. The world he lives in is not always viewed as so different from our own because the rules of life are the same. The positive criticism is a result of the established foundation the fantasy genre has in the United States and Great Britain, with roots reaching as far back as the original fairy tales. Before analyzing the response to the *Harry Potter* novels in the American print media, it is necessary, first, to look at the impact of fantasy writing on our culture and how it weaves itself into our everyday existence. The unconscious is the foundation for fairy tales; revealing the true vision of the nature of our lives. The fantasy genre's roots lie in the traditional fairy tale (Manlove 1). The foundation for fairy tales explains the relationship readers find with Harry in his world. They can relate to his struggles and to his victories as if they were their own. According to Rowling's American publisher, Arthur Levine:

> Harry represents the fierce desire we all have to be recognized for the magical, famous, heroic person we are underneath our anonymity, stuck as we all are in places where we're unappreciated. That's Harry, and that's who we all are. (Heyes par. 14)

Furthermore, fantasy places particular importance on the uniqueness of things. Both Great Britain and the United States have a history of touting the individual; thus, they share a fondness for the fantasy genre and, today, a shared adoration for *Harry Potter* (Manlove ix). Rowling's tale brings to readers an entire world of unique beings, plants, and even food. As

she does this she creates an appreciation for individuality that American audiences can relate to in our own society.

Not only is fantasy a vision of the truth and a home to the unique qualities of things and individuals, but it also provides an escape from the world surrounding readers. As modern society speeds ahead we are lost in a world that is fragmented or too rational and too dark, and much of modern fiction shares these qualities. The fantasy genre provides an escape from contemporary literature (Petzold 88). For children to grow intellectually and to develop clarity in their emotions, Bruno Bettelheim says literature must stimulate the imagination (4). *Harry Potter* follows in a great tradition of children's literature where "real" children participate in the fantasy stories. Like Harry, they mingle with bizarre creatures and move through strange places, just as Peter, Edmund, Susan, and Lucy did in the *Narnia* tales. They each walked through a passage and entered a world where things were not as they seemed and not like the world they were familiar with. Within this new world, the characters take on quests that typically prove the power of good over evil. For Harry, all he has to do is walk through the Leaky Caldron or walk into the barrier to platform nine and three quarters and he enters the wizardry world. As Lesley Nye suggests in the *Harvard Educational Review*, Rowling shares the same knowledge and respect for children as Lewis Carroll and C.S. Lewis, while at the same time setting up moral challenges that readers can then apply to their everyday lives (par. 11).

The book jacket blurbs for *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, released in Great Britain on June 30, 1997, compare Rowling to Roald Dahl, talk of the novel as a classic, and praise Rowling's inventive wit. Immediately, the novel became a success as it sold 30,000 copies in the United Kingdom by November and won the Smarties Book Award, a top

British children's book award (it is now a triple winner of this award) ("Potter Phenomenon" par. 6). The novel gained so much popularity with adult audiences, who were embarrassed to be seen with it while commuting on the train, that Bloomsbury developed a plain covered edition. By June 1999, the adult edition sold an impressive 25,000 copies (Cleave 48). Before the publication of book three, books one and two could boast sales figures of one million in Britain alone (N. Jones 1). Early on, the story of Rowling's single parenthood gathered a widespread following; according to the *Telegraph Magazine,* her story is "almost too good to be true" (Cleave 48). As the subsequent novels were released, stories began to appear throughout the British media following the growing success of the novels and their creator. One critic went as far as disclaiming any notion that the novels were a mere product of marketing; rather he claimed that their instant success was a result of the quality of the story (N. Jones 1). Further stories appeared about Rowling, her inspiration, the publicity of book four, and even the investment issues surrounding Harry Potter.[4] Similar articles appeared throughout the American print media in their response to book one and beyond. Immediately both media groups favored the novels and Rowling's personal tale, and especially all the attention the novels received by the release of book four.

Most of the American media attention for *Sorcerer's Stone* appears in the form of book reviews. Johnson reviewed *Sorcerer's Stone* for the *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literature* in April of 2001, by which time the *Harry Potter* novels had reached phenomenon status in the American print media. The late review of *Sorcerer's Stone* is interesting because Johnson immediately opens with her hesitation at reviewing the novel. Her experience told her "that most things therein could only be trusted for false sensationalism, and not true inspiration"

[4] Treneman 3-7; Demetriou 3; Lockerbie S2; "Harry Potter Books Emerge."

(Johnson par. 1). Zipes criticizes the novels for the same reason, insisting that once a series of phenomena add to the craze surrounding *Harry Potter*, such as Rowling's tale of rags to riches, that reason no longer applies in the judgment of the work as a piece of literature (173). Earlier, Johnson's contemporaries wrote of the novel as "a real pager-turner!" (Dolgos). From this point forward, as each new novel in the series comes out, the sensation of their release obscures the work itself. Early reviews could not know how wildly the American media would react to *Harry Potter*, even though the response to book one was overwhelmingly positive. These first reviewers knew of the popularity in Great Britain, but it is impossible to say that they were ready for the novels' future reception. Although early reviews were extremely positive, they did not take the novel seriously, for the reviews were written without depth of criticism or analysis. Eventually, Johnson's skepticism about reviewing *Sorcerer's Stone* quickly became a *Harry Potter* addiction: "When I forgot to take the book with me wherever I went, I started suffering from withdrawal and could not think of anything else besides what was going to happen next" (Johnson par. 2). Reviews for book one follow similar patterns. The reviewers either compare Harry to Cinderella, acclaim the novels as good fantasy or escapism without going into detail as to why, or compare Rowling to other fantasy authors.

The first approach of early reviewers is to compare Harry's tale to that of Cinderella, which is not surprising since Cinderella is one of the oldest and most popular fairy tales. The earliest recorded version appears in Chinese written about 850— 860 A.D. According to the Opies, the similarities of this tale to more recent renditions are remarkable (157). Today there are more than 1,500 versions of Cinderella (R. Martin 2). For Harry, his life is taken for granted as he is forced to live under the stairs and forgotten or ignored in the home he

shares with his cruel relatives. His fairy godmother comes to him in the form of a disheveled giant, Rubeus Hagrid, informing Harry who he really is and introducing him to the world in which he belongs. In November 1998, the review in the *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* describes Harry's life as a "Cinderella life" (Stevenson). This continues as the *Orlando Sentinel* book reviewer describes the appeal of Harry as "our common childhood yearning to be Cinderella" (Pate, "Harry Potter" par. 8). In the *Reading Teacher*, Kimberly Young conveys the story as a good introduction to fantasy and compares it to Cinderella, writing, "Turn the typical Cinderella story inside out, upside down, shake it hard, and you get Harry Potter's story" (par. 1). Without shaking it too hard, Harry's tale is comparable to Cinderella's tale. Rowling uses many of the same motifs— yet *Sorcerer's Stone* is more ambiguous in its portrayal of good versus evil than fairy tales where there are no gray areas, only right and wrong. Harry represents good. Because Severus Snape, the potions master, does not like Harry, one could assume that Snape is bad; however, we learn as the series continues that this is not the case.

Harry's relatives, the Dursleys, fascinated reviewers as they viewed his existence as similar to Cinderella's. Nearly every early review of *Sorcerer's Stone* includes some negative descriptor for Harry's relatives. The *New York Times Book Review* compares Harry's relatives to other fictional relatives who were "too stupid to see what we the readers know" (Winerip 26). We know that Harry is the victim of abuse as we see the Durleys treat Harry as something less than human. According to the Opies, this disenchantment or "breaking of the spell" is the result of becoming aware of what is already known (17). Harry is already a wizard as well as a good person struggling in a difficult situation, and readers can see this within the first few pages. The *Boston Globe* depicts his aunt and uncle as "dreadful" and his

cousin Dudley as "ultra dreadful" (Rosenburg L2). The *Orlando Sentinel* describes the Dursleys as "dastardly" (Pate, "Harry Potter" par. 3). "Repugnant reluctant guardians" is how the *Denver Post* sees Harry's relatives (C. Martin par. 1). *Raleigh News and Observer* finds the Dursleys "uptight and unimaginative" (Heyes par. 6). *Reading Teacher's* review includes the following description: "Orphaned Harry Potter sleeps in the cupboard under the stairs, enduring the abuse of his wicked aunt and uncle and his detestable cousin, Dudley" (Giorgis and Johnson par. 6). In each review, the writer's love for Harry shows through as much as Rowling's own love for the boy. She describes the Dursleys' living room ten years after Harry's arrival as being exactly the same as when they found him on their doorstep. The only difference is in the pictures of Dudley that changed from "what looked like a large pink beach ball wearing different-colored bonnets" to a growing boy. In fact, "The room held no sign at all that another boy lived in the house, too" (Rowling, *Sorcerer's Stone* 18). Reviewers latched on to this cruelty by following Rowling's cue in their own descriptions.

The second trend in book one reviews is found in reviewers' excitement about reading good escapist literature. This excitement is evident because many of the early reviews are not necessarily in-depth studies; instead they rejoice in the fantasy world Rowling creates in *Sorcerer's Stone*. In a review for the *Boston Globe* in November of 1998, Liz Rosenburg says the novel "includes everything fantasy-loving children care for" (L2). A *Washington Post* reviewer writes that the novel is "completely unoriginal," and for this reason he praises the novel because Rowling is able to tie together all the traditional elements of good fantasy and make it work (Dirda, "Orphan" X11). *Christian Science Monitor* and *Booklist*

praise the novel for the same reason. Many reviewers praise Rowling's inventive qualities that fill a well-written novel.[5]

The fantasy quality that so many reviewers rave about is her ability to intertwine reality with magic without distracting readers from the plot. J.R.R. Tolkien, who is credited with perfecting the modern fantasy story, writes that good fantasy happens when a

> [...] story-maker proves a successful 'sub-creator'. He makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is 'true': it accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside. (Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories" 265)

Reviewers see this quality in Rowling's tale. All the pieces of her story— characters, creatures, humor, games, and school— work as part of a whole to dispel the readers' disbelief. Eva Mitnick, in a review for *School Library Journal* in October 1998, praises the novel because once readers surround themselves with Rowling's story, they believe that they too can take the train to Hogwarts after finding the right platform. She writes, "The delight of this book lies in the juxtaposition of the world of Muggles (ordinary humans) with the world of magic" (Mitnick par. 6). Several months later the *Orlando Sentinel* praises the novel for the same reason (Pate, "Harry Potter"). They find in *Sorcerer's Stone* Rowling's ability to create a world readers can believe in, making her Secondary World a success according to Tolkien's principles. *Booklist*, *Reading Teacher*, and the Raleigh *News and Observer* praise Rowling for adding magical twists to familiar subjects, such as a boarding school and within it the student rivalry, sports, and academics.[6]

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[5] Estes, "Rev. of *Sorcerer's Stone*"; Zipp, "Harry Potter Swoops" 19.

[6] Cart par. 1; Giorgis and Johnson par. 6; Heyes par. 5.

The third trend in book reviews of *Sorcerer's Stone* contains a comparative quality. Reviewers of book one compare Rowling primarily to Dahl for her ability to infuse imagination with humor, but other comparisons crept in. *Christian Science Monitor* credits the novel as having the same classic quality as *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *The Wizard of Oz* (Zipp, "Harry Potter Swoops"). Michael Dirda writes in the *Washington Post*, "We have been here before - in Roald Dahl, Ursula LeGuin, 'Star Wars,' *Dune*. But in the right hands we're always happy to make the trip again" ("Orphan" X11). Following a similar pattern, other reviews contain comparisons to contemporary television shows such as "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" or to traditional fantasy literature such as Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*.[7] Dahl's name continues to turn up again and again as the primary author by which to compare Rowling. Even before Scholastic released the novel to the public, *Publishers Weekly* began the comparison to Dahl, following in the footsteps of the British media (Brown and Roback 220). *Booklist* and *School Library Journal* find the Dursleys reminiscent of characters in Dahl's novels.[8] A *Denver Post* reviewer says Rowling and Dahl share common fantasy antics and "skewed vision of institutions" (C. Martin par. 8). Comparisons to Dahl's work for Rowling's creative fantastical world continue, yet reviewers for the *Boston Globe*, *Horn Book Magazine*, and *Washington Post* agree that Rowling lacks the meanness found in many of Dahl's novels.[9] Even though a lot of comparative analysis spread throughout the reviews, much of it is on a surface level without delving into Rowling's first novel.

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[7] Pate, "Harry Potter" par. 7; Winerip 26.

[8] Cart par. 1; Mitnick par. 1.

[9] Dirda, "The Orphan" X11; Flowers par. 1; Rosenberg L2.

The critics' reception to *Sorcerer's Stone* is clearly overwhelmingly positive. However, some find fault with it, although even the negative criticism is glossed over by positive reviews. Yvonne Zipp, in a review for *Christian Science Monitor*, finds the ending to be too abrupt, yet allows that it is perhaps the reader's fault for not wanting the novel to end ("Harry Potter Swoops"19). Rosenburg agrees and compares it to "a cheap folding table," but places the blame on the editor and not the first-time writer (L2). Winerip finds the weakness in the novel's ending because she says characters act out of character to satisfy the plot (26). The only authentic criticisms came from the *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* and *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literature*. The first says that Rowling inserted many of the fantasy details for her own pleasure, and therefore they do not serve the plot of the novel, specifically the sport Quidditch. Further, the plot seems of no importance because the battle of good versus evil does not carry enough weight, particularly when comparing it to the school victories within Hogwarts (Stevenson). "Lack of depth" in the characters and the plot is the complaint of the second, suggesting that they are meaningful only to those of the "multimedia computer game" generations (Cawkwell par. 2-3).

By looking at *Sorcerer's Stone* as a children's novel and not taking it seriously as a piece of literature, reviewers neglect to comment on why the novel works as good escapism. Although they praise it for bringing fantasy back to readers and compare Rowling to Dahl, they fail to recognize that *Sorcerer's Stone's* qualities are reminiscent of the patterns found in great fantasy literature and fairy tales. It would not be until the series grew in popularity with both children and adults that reviewers would begin to be more critical about the novels and try to explain why they transcend cultures and generations.

Very little professional assessment occurs in the American scholarly and trade journals for *Sorcerer's Stone*. Again, this oversight can be attributed to the fact that the novel was not taken seriously as a classic piece of escapist literature until the series developed further. Before its release in the United States the first novel in the series did receive attention in the professional media, but only by *Publishers Weekly*. Yet even their early media coverage is limited to how the novels were doing in Great Britain (Eccleshare, "Letter" 21, 31 Aug. 98). They did note that a reading trend was increasing in middle grade school children, including both girls and boys, contributing to the popular success of *Sorcerer's Stone* (Maughan, "Halo" 92). Early on, Elizabeth Devereaux credits Rowling with her ability to combine fantasy with humor (28). Similar critiques would later appear in nearly all the reviews for the first novel. In the same article Devereaux also outlines Rowling's plans for the series that encompasses the time it takes to educate a wizard, seven years according to Rowling, between the ages of eleven and seventeen. To follow this plan, the reviewer explains, a novel will be written about Harry for each school year, and for all of the seven novels Rowling has extensive notes and even the final chapter of book seven written (Devereaux 28).

The popular media's response is nearly the same as the professional media's except that the popular media paid greater attention to the story about Rowling's struggle with poverty. Further, national magazines such as *Newsweek* and *Time* contain articles about the novel itself, but overall, there is very little media attention for the first novel.[10] The lack of

[10] Gleick "The Wizard" 86; Power 77.

the popular media's attention for *Sorcerer's Stone* becomes more noticeable when comparing it to the attention given the next three novels in the series.

Like most famed media stories, *Harry Potter* was not an overnight success. American book reviewers took their cue from the British and highly acclaim *Sorcerer's Stone*. Yet they did so without providing detailed analysis and are quick to point out the likeness between Harry and Cinderella, praise Harry's tale as a good escapist tale, and compare Rowling to Dahl. American media reaction in professional assessments barely exists for book one and the same is true for popular media except in its treatment of Rowling's past. Clearly, *Harry Potter* was not an instant media phenomenon with the release of *Sorcerer's Stone* and perhaps, if it were not part of a larger series, the media phenomenon would never have obtained the strength and popularity it has by the release of book four.

Sales Update

Newsweek	7 Dec. 1998	*Philosopher's Stone* 150,000 copies sold (Power 77).
Publishers Weekly	15 Feb. 1999	*Sorcerer's Stone* 275,000 copies in print and nine press runs (Maughan, "Race" 33).
Publishers Weekly	19 July 1999	*Sorcerer's Stone* 800,000 copies in print and 30 weeks on *New York Times* best-seller list (Maughan, "Halo" 92).

CHAPTER III.

ANALYSIS OF *HARRY POTTER* BOOK REVIEWS

"'Ah, yes,' he [Professor Snape] said softly, 'Harry Potter. Our new— *celebrity*'" (Rowling, *Sorcerer's Stone* 136). After the release of *Sorcerer's Stone*, Harry became a celebrity far beyond the walls of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. The *Harry Potter* novels quickly became publishing and sales record breakers, unstoppable *New York Times* best-sellers, and winners of various literary awards, all the while gaining fame that spans oceans. The next three novels in the series would be read regardless of reviews. Starting with *Chamber of Secrets* and *Prisoner of Azkaban*, American readers began to buy the books overseas— yes, reading the British versions— forcing Scholastic to push up the publishing date of *Chamber of Secrets* three months earlier than intended and releasing *Prisoner of Azkaban* just a few months later. With *Goblet of Fire*, not even reviewers were reading the novels before the anticipated release date, and the usual pre-reviews were withheld, so readers and reviewers would see the novel at the same time. Nonetheless, reviews swept the country, and Harry was on his way to becoming a member of most households across America and across the world for that matter. This chapter analyzes the reception of the novels in reviews by first looking at four examples of reviews for the novels in *Publishers Weekly, Booklist, Horn Book Magazine*, and the *New York Times* as an example of how momentum built for the series, and then by analyzing the overall response in book reviews for the novels.

Publishers Weekly, Booklist, Horn Book Magazine, and the *New York Times* all found *Sorcerer's Stone* reminiscent of Dahl's work, while lacking the meanness found in many of his

characters. They praised Rowling for adding magical twists to familiar subjects. Very little in-depth analysis is provided for book one, except perhaps by the review from the *New York Times*, which acclaims Rowling for "keeping the emotion, fears and triumphs of her characters on a human scale, even while the supernatural is popping out all over" (Winerip 26). Overall, *Sorcerer's Stone* received a welcome reception from reviewers, and the only criticism of Rowling's first novel is for the seemingly abrupt ending.

The next three novels in the series about the young wizard take Harry back to Hogwarts for three more tumultuous school years. *Chamber of Secrets* is oddly suggestive of *Sorcerer's Stone* as the novel opens with Harry back at the Dursleys, only this summer he receives a warning from an odd creature forbidding him to return to school. Thanks to the creative mischief of Harry's best friend Ron Weasley, he escapes the Dursleys and once again finds himself back at Hogwarts facing rumors that he is behind the trouble that is leaving many of his classmates, and even a ghost, in the school's hospital wing. Harry is in for a rocky school year with the same Quidditch thrills and dark forces threatening the Wizard world. In *Prisoner of Azkaban*, Harry confronts the possibility that a new enemy, Sirius Black, the famed inmate of the Wizard world's darkest prison and supposed cohort of Harry's archenemy Voldemort, threatens his life. Hogwarts, and particularly Harry, are placed under the protection of dementors, soul-sucking creatures that force Harry to face his darkest nightmare. Even under these conditions, Harry still manages to act like a young teenager, placing his childish desires before his own safety. The fourth and most recent novel, *Goblet of Fire*, is the pivotal book of the series. This novel is different from the first three in that it does not open at the Durleys and the Hogwarts' Quidditch season is canceled and replaced with the TriWizard Tournament. However, readers get to experience the most exhilarating

Quidditch match thus far, as Harry joins the Weasleys at the World Cup. Here and back at school, signs keep indicating the return to power of dark forces and Harry's life is forever changed.

Publishers Weekly's reviews for books two, three and four begin with a lighthearted review of *Chamber of Secrets* that acclaim the novel as being "more inventive that its predecessor" (Brown and Roback 94). It is a quick review going over the story and finding no fault with the second installment. Their review for *Prisoner of Azkaban* takes on a new approach as it provides a more profound analysis of the novel, finding it to be the pivotal novel in the series as it brings the minor details out of the first two novels to take on surprising importance. It is their first review criticizing Rowling's work, stating the novel's logic is "not airtight" ("Rev. of *Prisoner*" 195). The review for *Goblet of Fire* is the heftiest yet and *Publishers Weekly* claims that it is perhaps the most thrilling of the series thus far. This review, too, criticizes Rowling, this time for taking too long to get back to "beloved" Hogwarts. Yet she is praised for the details that become harder to follow and that surprise even the "most attentive audience" ("Rev. of *Prisoner*" 195). Whereas *Publishers Weekly* began by categorizing the first novel in the series for ages eight to twelve, it then changes that recommendation to all ages for the following three novels.

Like *Publishers Weekly*, the reviews for *Booklist* are short and sweeping in praise for Rowling's work. Sally Estes, who reviews all four novels, writes that *Chamber of Secrets* lived up to its predecessor and brings all the necessary magic for good fantasy. She goes no deeper than she did for *Sorcerer's Stone*. In fact, she does the same thing for *Prisoner of Azkaban*, only including that this novel, as well as the others, "have the same sense of continuity found in Brian Jacques' popular Redwall saga— with villains, heroes, schemers,

and innocents all firmly in their places, the seemingly impossible solved, and good triumphing over evil" (Estes, "Rev. of *Prisoner*"). For both of the previous novels she sets the readership at grades four through eight. For *Goblet of Fire*, her review continues to be short and to the point, but this time she mentions specifics regarding themes and Rowling's ability to suspend readers' disbelief with her writing that creates a layered plot tying up all the loose ends. She also does not cap her readership; rather she states that it is for grades four and up (Estes, "Rev. of *Goblet*").

Horn Book Magazine, too, capitalizes on the similarities of *Chamber of Secrets* to *Sorcerer's Stone*. In her review for the second novel, Martha Parravano writes, "But, truth to tell, you may feel as if you've read it all before. Rowling clearly hit on a winning formula with the first Harry Potter book; the second book— though still great fun— feels a tad, well, formulaic" ("Rev. of *Chamber*"). Just as the others, the review starts to dwell more on the literary elements with *Prisoner of Azkaban*. Parravano finds the characters more interesting, particularly Professor Remus J. Lupin, and concludes that the climax is heightened for the third novel ("Rev. of *Prisoner*"). The review for *Goblet of Fire* is strangely different from the reviews in *Publishers Weekly* and *Booklist* as Parravano has very few positive comments to offer about Rowling's fourth novel. She finds the characterization to be thinning, the plot hard to work out from the given clues, and the novel to be "fraught with adverbs" ("Rev. of *Goblet*"). The only positive comment she offers is that the novel works well as a transitional piece. She places all of the novels in the series in the intermediate reading category.

Of all the reviews that exist for Rowling's series, it is the *New York Times* that began and continues to look at the novels more seriously and thoroughly, except for *Chamber of Secrets*, which they did not review at all although this book spent numerous weeks on both

the adult and children's best-seller lists. Yet because of their extensive reviews for the other three novels, it is necessary to include their overall assessments. Gregory Maguire inserts archetype patterns of the great fantasy novels of the past in his review for *Prisoner of Azkaban*, first by stating, "no nascent hero of either gender becomes effective without a decent apprenticeship. Rowling's books conform to one of the archetypal patterns of fantastic children's literature: the education of the hero" (12). Further, he compares the heroism of Harry and his education to great fantasy heroes of the past, such as Bilbo Baggins. He continues his review by using C. S. Lewis' reminder that "the desire for magic," such as that found in Rowling's works, is good for the imagination (12).

Stephen King provides a review of *Goblet of Fire* for the *New York Times*. He turned to Rowling's series during the summer of 1999 and says that after his automobile accident the novels "became a kind of lifeline for me" (13). His lengthy review is filled with praise for Rowling's use of humor to keep the reader's attention. He writes, "'Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire' brings the fun, and not just in stingy little buckets. At 734 pages, 'Goblet' brings it by the lorry load" (13). He says of her many inventive details that readers would normally find tiring, such as the Blast-Ended Skrewts and Quick-Quotes Quill, that Rowling keeps the pace moving so that readers never have time to dwell. In fact he writes:

> She gives the reader a quick wink and a giggle before hustling him or her along again, all the while telling her tale at top speed. We go with this willingly enough, smiling bemusedly and waiting for the next nudge, wink and raised eyebrow. (King 13)

For more than just her humor, King praises Rowling for bringing better-written and plotted novels to children than the popular R.L. Stine was able to do in the Goosebumps series.

Yet, unlike Maguire's review of *Prisoner of Azkaban*, he does not include her in the circle of British fantasy writers, such as Lewis and Tolkien, who are able to intertwine the inventive details with increasingly apparent aspects of dark themes. He writes that although such a theme is present in her work, it is only barely visible as compared to Tolkien "in which the fascism of Mordor begins as a distant bad smell on the breeze and develops into a pervasive atmosphere of dread" (14). Even so he does credit her with the ability to suspend readers' imaginations of all ages.

Reviews across the country for Rowling's second, third, and fourth volumes are very similar to the previous reviews. New details emerge in the different reviews, but the basic literary criticisms remain consistent. Most of the reviewers focus on the growing dark images in Rowling's novels and begin to approach them more critically than they had for *Sorcerer's Stone.*

Reviews for *Chamber of Secrets*, like the four previous examples of reviews, praise the novel highly while comparing it to book one. Very little in-depth analysis is provided of the novel; rather reviewers look at why this novel and its predecessor are a success, using the same comparative strategies as they did for reviews of *Sorcerer's Stone*, and begin to look for recurring themes.

A common trait of reviewers is not only to compare Rowling to other authors, but also to compare *Chamber of Secrets* to *Sorcerer's Stone*. The basic plot structure of the two novels is very similar, and many reviewers find her ability to continue with the same type of writing to be a positive attribute. As one reviewer remarks, "The novel is marked throughout by the same sly and sophisticated humor found in the first book" (S. Rogers). Another writes that although readers will recognize the framework of book two, they are still

in for a "ride that guarantees to propel them through some thrilling twists and turns" (Wergeland par. 27). Like *Horn Book's* Parravano, other reviewers found fault in the similarities between *Chamber of Secrets* and *Sorcerer's Stone* because, they claimed, it loses magical appeal and its opening chapters are not as surprising as the first novel's opening chapters.[11]

Although *Chamber of Secrets* received high praise, many were surprised by the novel's fast rise in popularity. Both Jonathan Levi and Dirda express surprise at its success, claiming that Rowling's prose is not particularly witty and that there must be more to the success than the apparent charm of the novels.[12] However, *Seattle Times* remarks that it is her ability to connect with young readers that leads to her success (Wergeland par. 26-29). Additionally, they credit her ability to allow readers to see in their imaginations, writing, "The tale is sturdily held together by one imaginative detail after the next, all so sharply drawn, they practically jump off the page" (Wergeland par. 26). Dorman Shindler writes, in a review for the *Dallas Morning News*, that Rowling's imagination is great enough "to fill twice as many volumes— and then some" (par. 11).

Like reviews for *Sorcerer's Stone*, comparisons started pouring in for *Chamber of Secrets* as well. In a review for the *Washington Post*, Dirda writes that it is "a heady brew of Roald Dahl, E. Nesbit, the Hardy Boys, and 'Star Wars'" ("Rev. of *Chamber*" X15). Levi disagrees stating that Rowling is "no Roald Dahl" but that she fills the novels with the culture from her youth, such as *The Wizard of Oz*, the *Chronicles of Narnia*, and *Star Wars*. Further, he

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[11] Dirda, "Rev. of *Chamber*" X15; Wergeland par. 24.

[12] Dirda, "Rev. of *Chamber*" X15; Levi, "No Goody-Goody" par. 13.

compares Harry's ability to become a children's hero to the popularity of Peter Pan and Mary Poppins (Levi, "No Goody-Goody" par. 18-19).

Both the *Seattle Times* and the *Los Angeles Times* began to pull themes out of *Chamber of Secrets* as rarely occurred in reviews of *Sorcerer's Stone*. Kari Wergeland says in her review for the *Seattle Times* that Rowling's works "play out the more familiar 'good guys against bad guys' scenario" (par. 19). She also mentions the idea of racial purity that Rowling introduces with the threat to "mudbloods" (derogatory term used for wizards who are not born of pure wizard lineage). Levi notes the idea that fairness is rewarded in the end and sometimes, for the greater good, rules need to be broken. Secondly, he says, "What more resonant message could a book send a child— or an adult, for that matter? In a universe regulated by school and music lessons and playdates, the power to choose is a Force as strong as any lightsaber" (Levi, "No Goody-Goody" par. 16).

By the release of *Prisoner of Azkaban* in September 1999, the clamoring to read Harry Potter's adventures began to reach phenomenon status. As one reviewer writes, "Each book has spawned more interest in the next, and demand for the third is ballooning faster than Aunt Marge, who is hit by an inflating spell in Chapter 2" (Kiernan 1). Many anxious American readers, as they did with the second novel, continued to purchase the British version that was already released. Reviewers, too, loved Rowling's third installment and began, really for the first time, to take the novels more seriously. As with reviews for *Sorcerer's Stone* and *Chamber of Secrets*, reviewers continued to use comparisons to look at Rowling's work; their love for her ability to write imaginative fantasy continued, but they also began examining themes further, and for the first time started talking about the readership age and overall looked more analytically at the novels.

Two areas that reviewers continue to come back to with each new novel are comparing Rowling to other authors and praising her ability to write good fantasy. Dahl, Nesbit, Tolkien, Lewis, and Carroll are all mentioned again as a base by which to compare Rowling's works.[13] Praise continues for her quality escapism, storytelling abilities, and imaginative details.[14] A first-time reviewer of the novels, Lee Siegel for *New Republic*, says of Rowling's ability to create fantasy that "With Harry Potter, Rowling has brought reality back into the literature of escape, and back into our fantasy-culture. What a rarity, a literary imagination that is not self-conscious, and studied, and uptight" (par. 4). He, like so many others, continues to be excited to be reading quality fantasy literature. Although reviewers continue to go back to this point, it is because of the popularity of the *Harry Potter* series that the fantasy genre is receiving so much attention right now.

Highlighting themes in reviews for *Prisoner of Azkaban* continues from book two, partly because reviewers begin to take the novels more seriously and partly to discover why the series is receiving so much fame. For example, Siegel contrasts the reality of the massacre at Columbine High School with the appeal of the first three novels:

> If two teenagers went on a rampage of killing in a high school, the slaughter had partly to embody the nation's surrender to television or computers. If a series of books came out about the adventures of a nearly adolescent boy swooping around on a broomstick, the rapturous reception of these books had partly to embody the craving for an antidote to the national submission

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[13] Menaker par. 9; Siegel par. 8.

[14] C. Jones par. 3; Reid A21.

> to television or computers. Yet the popularity of the Harry Potter books actually has everything to do with our symbolizing tendency itself. (Siegel par. 1)

While his assessment claims Americans are in need of an escape or "antidote" from mainstream society, he continues by praising Rowling's inventiveness and superb fantasy and pointing out themes for each of the novels. For *Sorcerer's Stone*, he says the theme is "the nature of identity," for *Chamber of Secrets*, "origins of class," and *Prisoner of Azkaban*, "depression" (Siegel par. 32-43). The *Washington Post*, *Washington Times*, and the *San Francisco Chronicle* find Harry's personal qualities to be the theme because he epitomizes the hero who is able to recognize his hidden strengths and understand what it is like to be the underdog.[15] The increasing darkness of Rowling's novels is apparent in *Prisoner of Azkaban* as she introduces the dementors who awaken Harry's nightmare, forcing him to repeatedly relive his parents' death. These soul-sucking creatures represent depression or even the darker side of humanity. The dark themes present in the third novel cause some reviewers to issue parent warnings. David Kipen writes, "Finally, it's a relief to see guns temporarily supplanted as fiction's weapon of choice, but the relief sours when characters start using magic wands no differently" (par. 13). Both Chad Jones for the *Oakland Tribune* and Siegel address parents directly, warning them of the increasingly violent images. Jones writes, "Rowling has unleashed some scary forces in these pages and deals frankly with the rather violent death of Harry's parents" (par. 10). Siegel says he does not remember a children's classic with as much violence. However, he credits the author for acknowledging her

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[15] Kipen par. 9; Menaker par. 12-13; Reid 21.

readers' strength, "Rowling's violence is a blessed acknowledgement of the nature of children, of their strong-willed impatience with their own alleged innocence" (par. 26, 28). Arguably, Bettelheim would suggest a warning is unnecessary because he believes that the dark images in fairy tales teach children that hardships in life are unavoidable, "if one does not shy away, but steadfastly meets unexpected and often unjust hardships, one masters all obstacles and in the end emerges victorious" (7-8). If fantasy literature is to teach children, then it cannot be biased and create a false perfection in the world.

By the release of the third novel, reviewers begin to look at the age of Rowling's readership. The darker themes and the popularity of the novels cause reviewers to expand the age of her readers beyond children to readers of all ages. Kipen writes that the novel is "refreshingly long, considering the age of at least half its intended readership" (par. 5). Rowling has stated repeatedly that she had no readership age in mind when writing the novels, but perhaps her publishers did as they marketed them as children's books. However, Kipen and others recognize that not just children are reading the series. The wide span of her readers' ages is attributed to her refusal to condescend to children. Bob Menaker refers to her success with adults and children in his review for the *Washington Times* (par. 11). "They're smart and clever, funny and serious, but most importantly, they're not written down to any particular age group," writes Charles Delint in a review of the first three novels (par. 5). Rowling writes to please herself, an adult. Ursula LeGuin says of maturity that it "is not outgrowing, but a growing up: that an adult is not a dead child, but a child who survived" (39). Rowling is awakening the child in readers of all ages.

Reviews for *Prisoner of Azkaban* include a comparison to the previous two novels, Rowling's ability to further expound on her imaginative qualities, and analysis of the

characters. Some of the criticism is as simplistic as for the first two novels. For example, she receives rave reviews for bringing new readers into the story line without insulting those who have read the first two novels (Kipen par. 6). Additionally, she is praised for the intense Quidditch match in the novel (C. Jones par. 14). Although some of the same type of criticism exists for *Prisoner of Azkaban* as for the first two novels, reviewers also begin to look at the novel in a more analytical fashion. Jones comments on the multi-layered plot as well as the notion that some characters turn out not to be who the readers thought they were (par. 16). As Rowling's story becomes increasingly complex, she forces readers to look at the plot harder than they did for the first two novels. Menaker said of the novels, "they're comfortable yet challenging" (par. 6), comfortable because readers relate to Harry; he is a modern-day Cinderella. Yet the situations he finds himself in, as well as the hardships he is forced to face, became more complex in the third novel. Siegel says that Rowling immerses herself within the work, adding "layers of literary allusion" making readers want to become part of the story, even to take flight with Harry (par. 22). Reviewers also begin to show their appreciation for Rowling's ability to create complex characters. DeLint remarks that her popularity stems from her grasp of her characters that makes reading the novels "like watching your children, or those of a neighbor or sibling, growing up" (par. 5). Harry is recognized as someone who is gallant, but the irrational adult cannot appreciate him, and this, writes Kipen, is someone we can all identify with (par. 9). Reviews for *Prisoner of Azkaban* represent the pivotal point in how Rowling is regarded as an author as reviewers begin to take the novels more seriously, recognizing that there is more to the series than their popularity in the press.

Reviews for *Goblet of Fire* continue to follow some of the same patterns as reviews for the previous three novels. The trend to compare Rowling to other authors is found in reviews for the fourth novel. Also, like *Prisoner of Azkaban*, reviewers begin to look at the themes, especially the darker images and who the audience is for these themes, and they also begin to look at the characters more in depth than they did previously. They pay more attention to the sense of humor Rowling infuses in the novels, her prose, the inclusion of social issues and satire, and her ability to build an alternative world. This novel, more than the others, receives negative criticism as reviewers begin to look more closely at Rowling's works.

The similar characteristics found in reviews for *Goblet of Fire* and its predecessors are mainly in the comparative aspects, but also in the development of themes, the audience, and Rowling's characters. Reviewers add some new comparisons to the existing ones. For example, Linda Matchan adds George Orwell and Jonathan Swift to the list (G3). Tom Carson in the *Village Voice* adds the Luke Skwalker versus Darth Vader comparison again, but he also includes John Le Carre as an analogy (par. 6). Nye, like King's review in the *New York Times*, contrasts Rowling to Tolkien and Carroll because their series begin with the imminent threat of danger, whether it is Sauron or the White Witch, while Rowling slowly introduces Voldemort's threat and continues to build on it (par. 24).

References to Rowling's themes and the age of her audience begin to merge for the fourth novel, as the images grow darker in Harry's world. Carson categorizes the novel as a children's book because Rowling creates the type of creatures, jokes, and feasts that any 11-year-old would revel in (par. 5). On the other hand, Zipp writes, "As Harry gets older, his world gets bigger and the challenges he faces grow darker and more real— as they must if he

is to become a true hero" ("Rev. of *Goblet*" 21). It is for the same reason that she places the readership at twelve and older. A review in *Book Report* states that it is the length that may scare young readers, not the darker themes ("Rev. of *Goblet*"). A review in *US Weekly* says the novels must be darker to reveal what is truly at stake for the hero (Johnston). DeLint commends Rowling for introducing darker themes regarding mortality, racism, and human rights, without preaching to the reader (par. 7).

Just as reviewers had for *Prisoner of Azkaban*, they continue to look at Rowling's characters in reviews for the fourth novel, not just describing the bad characters and praising the good characters that was so prevalent in reviews for the first novel, but examining the characters' meanings: "the author gives her characters complex new dimensions— even exploring the chamber of secrets known as wizard puberty— without losing the whimsy that makes Potter fans long to ditch the Muggle world for a cottage in Hogsmeade" (Baldwin par. 2). Zipp pleads for Rowling to allow Harry to spend his summers somewhere other than with the Dursleys, unless she is going to develop them further as characters ("Rev. of *Goblet*" 21). Hermione is pointed to as the character with a social conscience as she fights for the rights of House-elves (Levi, "Pottermania" par. 8). Rowling receives praises for her introduction of Rita Skeeter (DeLint, "Rev. of *Goblet*" par. 7). Carson chooses Professor Snape as his favorite character because he makes readers aware that "adult virtue never stops getting more complicated. [...] [Snape] doesn't get any more likable once he turns out to be on Our Side," he writes (par. 10). Harry's character is examined as more than a Cinderella type. Levi complains that Rowling is not allowing him to grow up as she promised and would also like to see him be less perfect and even a little darker ("Pottermania" par. 7). Matchan, on the other hand, finds that Harry's character becomes increasingly complex in

Goblet of Fire because he is "prone to stubbornness, self-centeredness, and procrastination" (G3). Harry is our hero, yet he has the same flaws we do, even in the face of adversity. Nye looks at Harry more in the terms of typical epic heroes who are traditionally forced to choose between their two worlds and are first thrust into that other world, while Harry, she says, personifies magic in the Muggle world. She credits Rowling for making Harry different because "Harry seems to us a real boy, facing real problems, and engaged in a real battle with the creeping darkness that we all know is out there" (par. 23, 28).

Rowling, as she did in King's review, receives an enormous amount of praise for her infusion of humor into the series. In book four this becomes an even greater focus. Much of the praise for her humor focuses on her character Rita Skeeter; as Kristen Baldwin writes for *Entertainment Weekly*, we learn from the fourth novel that "Even wizard celebrities can't escape the tabloids" (par. 1). Both *US Weekly* and *People* remark on the humor Rowling adds to the characters and the plot.[16] Levi says:

> There are even a few comic turns presumably thrown in for the adult audience: jabs at the European Community's enthusiasm for regulation in references to mandated 'cauldron thickness,' magical tents with 10 bedrooms and Jacuzzi and a tilt at yellow journalism. ("Pottermania" par. 5)

Baldwin, too, remarks on the campsite, particularly the wizards who dress to fit in with the local Muggles (par. 3). Like King, these reviewers find the humor in Rowling's fourth novel moves it along at a wonderful pace.

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[16] Johnston par. 1; Papinchak par. 1.

As reviewers look more analytically at Rowling's work for *Goblet of Fire*, they begin to look at the quality of her prose, her inclusion of social issues, and her ability to create a believable secondary or alternative world. Carson writes of Rowling's prose, "she's a genius at construction[.] In the first three books, damn near every detail had a payoff; dozens of bits snuck in as comedy diversions or atmospheric goodies popped into place in the plot" (par. 7). Further he states that her books are tough-minded (par. 5). Baldwin says her "narrative is in no hurry" (par. 3). Her ability to create an engaging story that is both compelling and accessible is noted by Matchan (G1). Not only is the construction of Rowling's prose praised, but also how she weaves social issues into it. Nye suggests that this is a pattern of children's epic fantasies, and Rowling is working within that pattern (par. 8). Further, Carson describes her weaving in of social and political satire as "audacious" and compares Voldemort's eleven years in power to the reign of Margaret Thatcher (par. 9). Rowling also continues to receive credit for the creation of an alternative world, and not only because reviewers are excited to be reading fantasy again, but also because she is so successful at making a secondary world. Tolkien emphasizes that to make a "Secondary World" every aspect must be credible. He says, "Enchantment produces a Secondary World into which both designer and spectator can enter, to the satisfaction of their senses while they are inside" ("On Fairy-Stories" 273, 275). Nye continues to say that in following the epic fantasy pattern, Rowling creates two very distinct worlds, each with its own rules and cultures and the worlds remain very separate (par. 14). Matchan attributes her popularity to the seriousness with which she takes the "children's fantasy" world and the "workday," allowing her to speak to multiple audiences (G3).

More negative criticism is given to *Goblet of Fire* than any of the first three novels because reviewers are beginning to look at it more seriously and because the novel received so much hype before its release. But even the negative criticism continues to be softened by the reviewers' other remarks. Matchan complains that the story drags at times (G1-3). DeLint questions the editing again and admits if she is not being edited then she must know what she is doing. He suggests that the first chapter could have been dropped because it delays us getting to the main story ("Rev. of *Goblet*" par. 6-7). Nye admits that although there are emerging themes present, the symbolism does not seem to be as important as it normally is in children's fantasy literature (par. 25).

As the novels' popularity increases, so to does the number of book reviews. The reviews grow in complexity just as Rowling's plots do with each new volume. It becomes evident that the series' fame extends beyond children and reviewers are more critical in their analysis. Negative criticisms also increase due to the fact that the novels are beginning to be approached as serious works of literature.

Sales Update

New York Times	12 July 1999	*Sorcerer's Stone* 826,000 copies in print (Lipson E1).
Publishers Weekly	19 July 1999	*Chamber of Secrets* 900,000 copies in print (Maughan, "Halo" 92).
Publishers Weekly	20 Sept. 1999	*Prisoner of Azkaban* 1.6 million copies in print (Maryles 18).

CASE STUDY I.

HARRY POTTER STIRS UP CONTROVERSY

On a crisp Sunday evening in March 2001, members of the Harvest Assembly of God Church in rural Pennsylvania were warming themselves by a fire. Their fire was not an ordinary fire, for videotapes, albums, CDs, and books fueled it. The minister of the church, Reverend George Bender, later said he had no idea his burning would spark such controversy ("Church Book" par. 1-3). Yet when a person chooses to burn one of the most popular book series in America, media attention is sure to follow. Yes, Reverend Bender was tossing *Harry Potter* into the fire, and he is not alone in his desire to the remove the novels from the hands of eager children. The media started paying attention to school administrators removing the books from classrooms in September 1999, and the *Harry Potter* series topped the ALA most challenged book list in 1999 and in 2000 (Clark, Larra par. 1). The controversy surrounding the wildly popular series evolved into further media attention and spurred conversations about banning books in schools. Although book reviews ignore the issue, scholarly and trade publications and the popular media use the controversy and the popularity of the novels to debate the issue. The scholarly and trade publications examine the issue of book banning overall and its basis in our society as well as offer general support for Rowling's novels by trying to educate readers about the positive attributes in the *Harry Potter* series. The popular media delve into details regarding specific schools where the novels are being challenged and offer pros and cons about the series as literature for children.

Before analyzing the media's response to the controversy, it is important first to look at how it evolved. *Harry Potter* joins a long history of dispute over the place of fantasy in the American culture. LeGuin says the roots of Americans' rejection of fantasy lie in our Puritan background, "And if it cannot be justified as 'educational' or as 'self-improvement,' then, in the Puritan value system, it can only be self-indulgence or escapism" (35). She continues, saying that the misconceptions about fantasy usually arise in people who are truly concerned about the education of children (65). Therefore it is no surprise that the popularity of the *Harry Potter* novels cause concerned parents to examine the fantasy element and try to determine whether or not there is a place for it in their child's education. A report in *Publishers Weekly* in September 1999 claims that the ALA received word that the novels were being challenged in Michigan, Minnesota, and New York because of the witchcraft element. Shortly after, an organization formed to fight for the rights of children to read *Harry Potter* (Rosen 10). Muggles for Harry Potter (now Kidspeak) is an organization of children, supported by anticensorship groups, fighting censorship in schools. They received national media attention as thirteen states challenged the novels in 1999 alone (Kidspeak par. 2). Typically the general complaint concerns the portrayal of witchcraft in a positive light. Some even assert that the novels are teaching Wicca, thereby violating the separation of church and state. Other complaints began to emerge, including antifamily values and disregard for authority. These complaints and challenges to the novels spurred further media attention for the series. Professional media became significant in spreading the news about Muggles for Harry Potter. Throughout 2000 *American Libraries*, *School Library Journal*,

and *Curriculum Administer* all printed articles about the organization and why Muggles for Harry Potter found the novels to be beneficial for children.[17]

Professional media touch on the states where the novels are being challenged, but their main focus continues to be the overall issue of censorship. *School Library Journal* mentions the challenges in Michigan, New York, South Carolina, and Minnesota that came as a result of the publication of the third novel, *Prisoner of Azkaban* (Barger par. 1-3). *American Libraries* looks further at the challenges in South Carolina, which question the novels for a having a "'serious tone of death, hate, lack of respect, and sheer evil'" (Goldberg, "Not Wild" par. 1). Nearly a year later they highlight Tony Smerko, principal of a Catholic school in Illinois, for banning the novels without ever reading them because he had heard that they went against the teaching of the church (Glodberg, "Excommunicated" par. 2). Perhaps if Smerko, and others, had read the complete series they may have found the moral message they were seeking. At the end of *Goblet of Fire*, a student is dies at the hand of evil and the Hogwarts headmaster, Albus Dumbledore, tells his students:

> 'I say to you all, once again— in the light of Lord Voldemort's return, we are only as strong as we are united, as weak as we are divided. Lord Voldemort's gift for spreading discord and enmity is very great. We can fight it only by showing an equally strong bond of friendship and trust. Difference of habit and language are nothing at all if our aims are identical and our hearts are open.' (Rowling, *Goblet of Fire* 723)

Dumbledore's remarks at the end of term banquet in the fourth novel are just one example of the moral lessons Rowling offers throughout the series that are missed by critics who

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[17] See Ferguson; "Harry's Defense Team;" "Muggles Join."

cannot see beyond the magical motifs. As LeGuin says, the fear stems from parents' concerns over their children's education, yet she says, "They confuse fantasy [...] with infantilism and pathological regression" (65).

The complaints by parents and educators culminated in Rowling's receiving the top spot on the most challenged books of the year in 1999, joining Judy Blume, Maya Angelou, John Steinback, Margaret Atwood, Alice Walker, and R.L. Stine (Krug par. 1-7). The following year, she topped the list again, gaining three times more challenges than the previous year ("Harry Potter Tops Challenged" par. 1). Judith Rosen quotes Charles Suhor of the National Council of Teachers of English in *Publishers Weekly*, saying concerns used to be about "'a Communist plot to take over the schools. Now it's Satan himself and insidious New Age satanism'" (10). Suhor is not surprised by the reaction. Many concerned parents are not aware that the fantasy genre can allow children to find a deeper meaning in literature, which aids them in their future development (Bettelheim 4). The confusion is perhaps at the root of the Family Friendly Libraries (FFL) report, warning of the dangers of the novels and their inappropriateness in classrooms (Rogers and Oder par. 1). This, however, as expressed in a *Library Journal* article may have backfired as the pro-*Harry Potter* media rose in response (Rogers and Oder par. 2). The negative *Harry Potter* publicity only fostered further attention, increasing the selling potential of the novels.

Articles in both *Library Talk* and *Horn Book Magazine* describe why parents may object to the *Harry Potter* series and offer support for parents to move beyond their struggle with the series and see the positive themes in the novels. Kibra Gish writes in the May/June 2000 issue of *Horn Book Magazine* that the primary reason for parents' objection is the Bible's teaching on witchcraft. She illustrates parents' concern with the passage from Deuteronomy

18: 9-12, that explicitly states that witches and wizards are "abominations" to God (Gish par. 8). Further she brings up issues in the *Harry Potter* series that may be objectionable to Christians, offering examples from the novels followed by Biblical references. Yet she claims keeping children from the novels is not the answer. She encourages parents to talk over the issues of concern with children and that will deepen their faith (Gish par 23). Marylaine Block writes a more subjective article in *Library Talk's* March/April 2000 issue. She opens with the idea of how exciting it is that so many children are reading and then their parents want to pull the novels from their hands. She believes the censors do not understand the issues at hand and harbor feelings that their own children will not follow their values over those in books. Many parents would rather see their children reading realistic literature, which LeGuin describes as the "escapist literature of our time," and further she says, repressing the imagination will only allow it to "grow into wild and weedy shapes" (37). Even fake realism is filled with illusions as it creates a sense of what we believe reality should be in our current environment. Elliot Gose points out that critics "have noted so-called realistic fiction can actually cater to our illusions about life, making improbable wish-fulfillment seem plausible" (3). In fact, children can be more misguided by reality fiction than fantasy. In fantasy the make believe is obvious, and they can take with them the moral lessens woven into the stories. Reality-based fiction can actually create a false sense of hope or judgment. Block, however, acknowledges that parents do have a right to protect their children, writing:

> If we don't first acknowledge that parents have a right to protect their children and to fear books that undermine their world, and if we refuse to admit that we sometimes share the impulse to censor, we are condemned

> forever to stand in the trenches, one side armed with the First Amendment, the other with the Bible, eternally talking not with each other, but past each other. (Block par. 15)

The scholarly and trade media create a niche to teach both those who would ban books and those who oppose banning, while overall favoring the *Harry Potter* novels just as they did in book reviews.

Library Journal was right in their November 1999 article; media attention for *Harry Potter* increased, specifically in the popular media, regarding the issue of challenging one of the most popular series in America. The popular media's attention is twofold. First, it is a forum for the issue of book banning. Secondly, headlines surfaced in newspapers, specifically local ones, about challenges to Harry Potter. When addressing the overall issue of book banning, perhaps the most acclaimed article is Judy Blume's editorial for the *New York Times* on October 22, 1999, in which she says:

> I knew this was coming. The only surprise is that it took so long— as long as it took for the zealots who claim they're protecting children from evil (and evil can be found lurking everywhere these days) to discover that children actually like these books. If children are excited about a book, it must be suspect. (A27)

Blume says the challenges against her own books are for reality; with *Harry Potter* the critics just found another "ism" to complain about in fantasy. She writes that the real threat is not the banning, but ignoring those banning the books because parents begin to believe that they can remove any book they like from school libraries, leading to a loss of teachers' rights to read to their students (A27). An article in the December issue of *Christian Century* followed

Blume's defense of the novels, praising Rowling for creating a moral world. Further, it agrees with the critics that the fantasy genre is powerful, but not in a way to foster the spread of evil; in fact, in a pull quote it says, "Books of fantasy can help us see the ordinary in fresh ways" ("Wizards and Muggles" 1155). An article in a regional newspaper, *The Commercial Appeal* (Memphis, TN), does not cover specifically where the banning occurs, but rather promotes the reading of *Harry Potter* because it brings laughter to children. David Waters insists in the article that the parents banning it must be Muggles. He looks at quotes from various publications, comparing and contrasting the positive and the negative, while inserting quotes from Rowling's novels (Waters). However, not all popular media articles place *Harry Potter* in a positive light, particularly not an editorial by the Reverend Connie Regener in the *Los Angeles Times*. She insists that fantasy writing is okay for children if it does not hide evil. She looks for a clear distinction between good and evil and could not see that in the *Harry Potter* series. She writes, "'Those that make light of evil, such as casting hexes as a practical joke, model an accommodation with evil that I cannot endorse. Evil should never be glamorized'" (par. 9). The attention on the novels attracted a group of psychiatrists to analyze Harry in one of their sessions at the American Psychiatric Association's annual meeting. For Harry the news is good; they claim he is good for children because "The books are 'not merely escapes but tools for children and adults to work through their daily struggles'" ("Harry Potter Goes to Analysis" par. 11). These psychiatrists spent a session to discover what fairy tale scholars have been saying for decades. Bettelheim says that fairy tales work within children's unconscious and offer new dimensions to their imaginations: "Even more important, the form and structure of fairy tales suggest images to the child by which he can structure his daydreams and with them give better direction to his life" (7).

Handfuls of regional or local newspapers highlight specific instances of challenges to *Harry Potter*. Many of them start by providing examples about parents who do not like the wildly popular novels or with a tale of a child who must leave the classroom when the teacher begins to read one of the novels in the series. Consistent throughout the articles is the idea that because a handful of parents complain, many students are deprived. The articles are not overtly pro *Harry Potter*, but the theme is present between the lines. Articles in Minneapolis' *Star Tribune*, *Buffalo News*, *The Bulletin* (Bend, OR), *The Gazette* (Cedar Rapids-Iowa City, IA), and *The Jackson Sun* provide examples of how the anti-*Harry Potter* arguments are leading other parents to rally in his support. [18] The articles also try to reach their readers on a personal level, particularly by giving examples of what is occurring in the local schools and providing the opinions of parents and educators on both sides of the issue. National newspapers also bring the issue to local and personal levels. A *New York Times* article cites a school in Buffalo where the students break out into applause when the teacher begins reading *Sorcerer's Stone*, except for one child who leaves the room because his parents do not want him listening to the themes of witchcraft (Wilgoren A1). A *Washington Times* reporter gives an example of an angry mother, Elizabeth Lindsey, who believes that reading the novels promotes one religion over another and quotes her saying, "'We have enough evil in this world without making it fun for children'" (Richardson par. 3). *U.S. News* cites Muggles for Harry Potter as heroes in the struggle to allow the novels to be available in public classrooms (Cannon 28).

With the eruption of media headlines following the banning of *Harry Potter* from classrooms after the release of *Prisoner of Azkaban*, the series was quickly becoming a media

[18] See Draper; Freedlander; McDaniel; Rey; Stover.

phenomenon. The *Harry Potter* media attention was no longer reserved for book reviews and stories detailing Rowling's past, as both the professional and popular media joined to address book banning in public schools. The reaction of removing Rowling's series from young readers caused the media, whether inadvertently or not, to create more attention in her favor.

CHAPTER IV.

ANALYSIS OF PROFESSIONAL MEDIA'S RESPONSE TO *HARRY POTTER*

"Dobby has heard of your greatness sir [speaking to Harry], but of your goodness, Dobby never knew..." (Rowling, *Chamber of Secrets* 15). Americans, too, have heard of Harry's greatness in the print media, but it is his goodness and Rowling's ability to write his story that consumes much of the professional media. The professional media, or scholarly and trade publications, follow Rowling's past just as the popular media did, react positively to the *Harry Potter* series in book reviews, and are a forum to discuss book banning in American schools. Like other media vehicles, the professional media attention to the novels grew with each new release in the series. This chapter focuses on their contribution to the growing media craze in a chronological fashion and positions the professional media's response within the time of each novel's release date, beginning with *Chamber of Secrets*. Overall, the professional media did act as an industry watch, particularly in the area of territorial issues, and questioned why the novels were gaining such widespread appeal, trying to learn of Harry's goodness.

Sorcerer's Stone was released in the United States in September 1998 and *Chamber of Secrets* followed in June 1999. The British versions of *Philosopher's Stone* and *Chamber of Secrets* were already successes in Great Britain with a large following of both children and adults before Scholastic released their American counterparts (Eccleshare, 31 Aug. 1998 21). The majority of the coverage in the professional media before the publication of *Chamber of Secrets* in the United States primarily focused on the presales of the novel via the Internet. It

offered the professional media an opportunity to talk about territorial rights because the Internet is now a popular book-buying tool, and many Americans found their way to the British version of the second novel long before Scholastic released it. Both *School Library Journal* and *Publishers Weekly* point out that on-line sales are changing the book industry, as customers are no longer limited to their local bookstores.[19] The demand for *Chamber of Secrets* and the rush of many readers to buy the British version forced Scholastic to move up the publishing date from September to June 1999 (Maughan, "Halo" 92). After the release of *Chamber of Secrets*, *Publishers Weekly* printed an article in their July 19, 1999 issue highlighting the effects of the first two *Harry Potter* novels on the industry. In the article, Shannon Maughan says the novels are creating new readers, booksellers are using them to direct readers to other works, and retail stores are finding an increase in the number of customers willing to buy hardcover editions rather than waiting for the paperback editions ("Halo" 92). Almost immediately, the professional media noticed the impact the *Harry Potter* novels were having on American readers and booksellers. Judith Rovenger, from the New York Wetchester County Public Library, says, "'Anytime there is a publishing phenomenon like Harry Potter it's good for children's books in general. More and more adults are discovering children's books and saying 'Hey, this is good stuff'" (Maughan, "Halo" 92). Although the series created noticeable increases in readers by the release of the second novel and was being referred to as a phenomenon by the media, it was not, however, until the release of book three that the series became a phenomenon in the print media. The *Harry Potter* series did, however, begin impacting the publishing industry, and that impact is visible

[19] See Margolis; Maughan, "Race" 33-34.

in the professional media's early reaction to the novels where it is not the quality of the novels they are exploring, but rather the industry impact.

By the release of *Prisoner of Azkaban* in September 1999, the professional media's attention turns to the quality of the novels rather than the industry impact, realizing the *Harry Potter* series is only growing in popularity. By this point they are a forum regarding book banning in public schools and start to look at the novels in a more serious fashion. In fact, an interview in *School Library Journal* in September 1999 focuses on Rowling's plans for the novels, particularly the darker themes that seem to develop in *Prisoner of Azkaban*. On the question of evil she says,

> 'I could go one of two ways: I could either make him [Voldemort] a pantomime villain... [meaning that there is] a lot of sound and thunder and nobody really gets hurt. Or [I could] attempt to do something a little bit more serious—which means you're going to have to show death. And worse than that, you'll have to show the death of characters who readers care about. I chose the second route.' (Feldman par. 34)

The dark themes in *Prisoner of Azkaban* force the professional media to notice that Rowling is doing more in her novels than creating the typical "happily ever after" fairy tale. She does not try to protect her readers, particularly her child audience, from harm by writing stories with clear themes of good versus evil. LeGuin says that although children do need protection, they also need the truth in their literature. Fantasy is a vehicle to speak about good and evil and particularly to talk to our innermost selves or moral core (66). Harry is forced to face his greatest nightmare in the third novel and has to make moral choices on how to handle his fears and anger. In addition, Rowling is following a typical pattern,

playing on her readers' need "both to escape and to face reality" by creating a secondary world where the reality of death exists (Gose 5).

With the series' increasing popularity, the professional media addresses the novels' appeal to such widespread audiences. In the 75th anniversary issue of *Horn Book Magazine*, Roger Sutton asks why the *Harry Potter* novels are receiving such unprecedented attention. He recalls that there were neither discussions nor cheers when Stine's Goosebumps series started making their way onto the *New York Times* best-sellers list. Although he respects Rowling's work, he notes that most scholars never paid attention to best-seller lists until the *Harry Potter* series came along (Sutton, "Potter's Field" par. 3-4). Although other children's books appeared on the *New York Times* best-seller list in the past, the *Harry Potter* series prompts conversations about what qualities make a novel a best-seller, a classic, or both. An article in *Library Journal* on October 1999 addresses the novels' popularity, not with critics, but with adults and children, claiming Rowling's novels are not great literature and that they do not transcend their genre as Tolkien was able to and Richard Adams did in *Watership Down*. However, the article praises Rowling for her ability to create quality escapism or "pageturners," and it is this escapist quality that brings such wide audiences to the series (Fialkoff par. 2, 7, 9). A similar article in *New Leader* finds Rowling's appeal in her combination of Harry's Cinderella quality and the school story, not her ability to write quality fantasy (B. Allen par. 2, 4). Rowling's formula is reminiscent of fairy tales, and their popularity has reached adult and child audiences for centuries. Fantasy and fairy tales do transcend generations and speak to the human personality at all levels (Bettelheim 5). Harry's tale is as old as any tale that has touched readers for decades. That is why LeGuin says Tolkien wrote in the language of fantasy, not because he was an escapist, but rather

because it is an appropriate and natural language (64). The criticism Rowling received from the professional media is a sharp contrast to book reviewers who praised Rowling repeatedly in their assessment of the first thee novels for her quality fantasy or escapist qualities. Some even compared her to Tolkien. Rowling is able to speak to wide audiences through fantasy, bringing meaning to readers of all ages; even if she is not able to write at a level consistent with Tolkien or other fantasy authors, she is credited with creating quality escapism that speaks to multiple generations.

The professional media also recognized Rowling's appeal in the popular media. In the November 1, 1999 *Publishers Weekly* issue, Maughan writes, "In the past six weeks, the junior wizard's face has graced the cover of *Time*, and Rowling and her novels have been featured on *60 Minutes*, the *Today Show*, and the *Rosie O'Donnell Show*" (36). At the same time, headlines were rushing in about the banning of *Harry Potter* from public schools, and news began to appear about a copyright dispute filed by the author Nancy Stouffer, who claims Rowling's use of the term *Muggle* and her character Harry are stolen from her own novels. The professional assessment was correct; Stouffer's claims created more attention in the popular media than it did in the scholarly media. They did, however, report in December 1999 that a lawsuit was filed against Stouffer on behalf of Rowling and Warner Brothers to protect the Harry Potter franchise and to stop Stouffer from continuing to make false claims against Rowling (Milliot 22). Although the professional media is aware of Harry Potter's fame in the popular media, they, too, use it by capitalizing on it to promote other books. For example, the following headline appears in *Commonweal*, "Hey! Harry Potter Has Cousins!" to recommend other books for children's reading (Donnelly). Although Rowling's series had already been hailed as a publishing phenomenon by the media, it was not until this

point in the scholarly and trade media coverage that *Harry Potter* reaches American print media phenomenon status. As the publicity moves beyond book reviews, Rowling's controversies, and the novels' popularity, the *Harry Potter* series provides a means to talk about the overall industry, and Rowling and Harry's names are commonplace in the media. The phenomenon quality is observable during the same time in the popular media as well. Rowling's story is no longer only a popular read, but influential in the media world, and this influence continues with the professional media's reaction to the fourth novel in the series.

The professional media's reaction to the *Harry Potter* series after the release of *Goblet of Fire* continues to explain Harry's appeal long after the release of the novel, which in turn creates greater influence in media and publishing circles. After the release of *Goblet of Fire*, Rowling's impact and the phenomenon status of her novels are evident as articles appear in the professional media regarding how her novels caused the *New York Times* to include a children's list because one or more of her novels had been present on the best-seller list since 1998 ("No Adults"). An article appears in *Instructor* to illustrate how teachers can use the series in their classrooms (Lockman). The lawsuit with Stouffer continues to make media headlines, particularly after Thurman House decided to republish her Larry Potter books; the first of twelve in the series was released the following September ("Original Muggles"). The *Harry Potter* novels were the dominant choice of teens as they chose their top 20 books for Teen Read Week, celebrated October 14-21, 2001 ("Harry Potter Tops Teen"). Additionally, reviews continue to use the *Harry Potter* novels to promote other books. *School Library Journal's* review of *Artemis Fowl* in May 2001 states that the main character is nothing like Harry, but tries to gain fame by using his name ("Make Way"). An article in the *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* illustrates the popular response to the

series by students in Pune, India. Urvashi Sahni says that children can identify with Harry because he is a child and a student, but also because it allows them to imagine that they themselves are Harry, "magically powerful, good, brave, and famous" (750). In the July/August 2001 issue of *Book* magazine Rowling is listed as one of the "Ten People Who Decide What America Reads."

As *Harry Potter's* influence in the media and with readers grows, so too does the need to continue to explore the novels' appeal long after the release of *Goblet of Fire*. In an editorial in the January/February 2001 issue of *Horn Book Magazine*, Sutton compares Rowling's series to L. Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz* because both are filled with fantastical images, good witches, and both are questioned by parents who are afraid of what their children will learn from the tales:

> Harry's success could be seen as evidence of a welcome unbuttoning of critical standards that were too tight to begin with. It could also be argued that he shows us that children have better taste than we've given them credit for. Harry has called into question any number of myths that govern our ideas of what children 'like'— for starters, they like short books. (Sutton, "When Harry" par. 3)

Sutton also says the excitement surrounding the novels may just be a result of the excitement that children are reading again and without product tie-ins. *Reading Today*, too, compares Rowling to Baum and uses an informal survey to show that the *Harry Potter* novels encourage children to read and explore other authors and works ("Tale of Two"). Zipes claims that critics are missing the point because it matters not just that children are reading, but more importantly what they are reading. He said, yes, they will become functionally literate, but

they will become part of a "process by which we homogenize our children. Making children all alike is, sadly a phenomenon of our times" (188). Zipes' argument is reductive, for most works of classical literature are read by masses of people, and society itself has a tendency to homogenize culture.

Several articles in the May 2001 issues of *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literary* address Harry's widespread appeal. In the first, Leilani Clark writes:

> Perhaps the books' appeal may lie in their ability to traverse genres, combining them all into one cauldron to produce all the elements of an addictive read-adventure, fantasy, and school in one narrative, with the archetypal orphan child hero. Rowling has succeeded in providing an intertextual narrative with multigenerational appeal. (par. 1)

Zipes would agree with Clark because he sees the novels as a culmination of traits, but finds those traits to be associated with modern television and film, not quality literature (177). Yet fairy tales typically feature an orphaned protagonist coping with supernatural occurrences (Opie 18). Further, Clark explores the themes in the novels, particularly those relating to school, evil, and differences. She sees Dumbledore as the character who portrays an understanding of differences, not Hermione as so many other critics have (Clark, Leilani par. 14). In the second article in the journal, Winifred Radigan is not surprised by Harry's appeal to diverse age groups and races. She says, "We all have felt left out and misunderstood. We all have had our fears and embarrassments made public. [...] And we all have felt the wonder of things going just right" (694). Radigan restates that Harry feels like an old friend and Rowling's story speaks to the child within all of us (694). Fairy tales create a sense of wonder about us as we place ourselves in the stories, trying to discover how we would react

in similar circumstances. Speculation is an essential part of development and growth (Opie 20). Through Harry, Rowling created a character that acts as a mirror for both adults and children.

The professional media's assessment of Rowling's novels is not a standard by which the popular media reacted to Harry Potter. Rather, the popular media's interest in the *Harry Potter* series covers the same topics as the professional media and at the same time. Overall the series stimulates conversations in the professional media about the quality of literature and the importance of fantasy and fairy tales in everyday existence.

Sales Update

Commercial Appeal	6 July 2000	*Sorcerer's Stone* 13th on *New York Times* best-seller list after 80 weeks, *Chamber of Secrets* 3rd after 55 weeks, and *Prisoner of Azkaban* 4th after 41 weeks (Koeppel par. 8).
Los Angeles Times	7 Aug. 2000	35 million copies sold of first three novels in 30 languages worldwide (Miller par. 7).
Los Angeles Times	20 Oct. 2000	43 million copies sold of all four novels (Mehren par. 1).

CASE STUDY II.

HARRY POTTER— GOOD NOVEL, GOOD MARKETING, OR BOTH?

It is hard to conceive that 9000 FedEx trucks were deployed strictly for the delivery of *Goblet of Fire* on its release date, July 8 2000, a work touted as a children's novel. The fourth novel in the planned series of seven is breaking children's book publishing records in the United States. The first three novels in the series boast sales of 30 million before the release of book four. Before its release date Amazon.com sold an estimated 350,000 copies and Barnes and Nobles on-line sold an estimated 360,000 copies of *Goblet of Fire*. Not one of these novels reached the hands of readers before the release date and many did not even know the title of the novel when they ordered it on-line. *Entertainment Weekly* reported that Rowling was due to make an estimated $10 million from the first printing of book four alone, and Warner Brothers may make as much as $1 billion in revenues from the movie connected to the first novel in the series, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (Fierman par. 7).

The *Harry Potter* series is a media and marketing frenzy with sales and readership records to prove it. Early on during the publicity an *Oakland Tribune* reporter writes of Harry's fame: "POOR Prince Harry. The young royal used to be the world's most famous Harry. But that title has been overtaken by Harry Potter" (C. Jones par. 1). Perhaps he is mocking all the publicity and fame surrounding *Harry Potter*, yet there may be some truth in his statement. A *New York Times* survey shows that one in four children between the ages of six through seventeen had read the novels by April 2001 (Race C10). More astonishingly, another survey released in May/June 2001 estimates that 95 percent of children and 90

percent of adults have heard of *Harry Potter* ("NPD to Track" par. 1). Both Scholastic and Bloomsbury claim that the marketing is relative compared to the quality of the novels, yet the marketing is almost as fantastical as the novels themselves, and it is apparent by the American public's overwhelming awareness of the novels. Furthermore, the success of the marketing becomes evident as this case study examines the reaction to the marketing in the American print media.

The media's reaction, particularly the popular media, to cover the marketing of a children's novel in and of itself makes it noteworthy. The efforts by Scholastic in their famed word-of-mouth campaign, Rowling book tours, and especially the secrecy and pre-party campaigns surrounding the release of book four are not unnoticed in the print media. Just after the release of book four, *Business Week* says of the marketing:

> Welcome to one of the biggest and oddest literary events in history. [...] It was the fastest-shrinking book pile in history— with nearly 3 million copies selling in 48 hours in the U.S. alone. The spellbinding plots, written by Scottish welfare-mom-turned millionaire J. K. Rowling, captivated kids everywhere, but the hidden hand of hype played a role, too. With contests, theme parties, and giveaways, conditions were hot for Harry. (Brady)

They, unlike many of their contemporaries, recognize the marketing planning that led to the hype surrounding book four. With such high sales figures and awareness statistics, it is hardly necessary to analyze whether or not Scholastic's marketing campaign is a success. It is necessary, however, to analyze why the media reacts so positively to the marketing— particularly the emphasis on the simplicity of it, when clearly that is not the case— and why it

has worked in making the *Harry Potter* series one of the fastest selling children's novels in the United States.

Levine, editorial director of Arthur A. Levine Books, an imprint of Scholastic, bought the novels from Bloomsbury in 1997 at a book fair in Bologna, Italy before their publication anywhere (Carvajal and Levine C16). Immediately Scholastic found their own illustrator for the novels, ensuring that their look would be one that would sell. According to Brenda Bowen, vice president and publisher at Simon and Schuster Children's Books, book packaging is becoming increasingly important, and Scholastic is smart to create a cover that people want to pick up to touch and then read. The cover design worked, as parents eventually started buying the hard cover editions, no longer needing to wait for the cheaper versions in paper back (Maughan, "Halo" 93, 92). The emphasis placed on the physical appearance of books is not one that is going without criticism. Zipes, while criticizing the marketing of *Harry Potter*, cites an article that describes the metamorphosis of how children choose their reading books. The article points out that once children checked books out of the libraries with the assistance of librarians and now they are buying them at bookstores based on their appealing cover design. He argues that the buying experience shifts the marketing of novels from their contents to their physical appeal. Zipes claims, "Gradually, books began to be produced basically to sell and resell themselves and to make readers into consumers of brand names" (Zipes 6). The *Harry Potter* novels can be placed into Zipes' assessment because Scholastic hired its own illustrator to create a novel that would be appealing to an American audience. In addition, the novels are part of an intended series that will continue to increase their selling power. *Harry Potter* is also a recognizable brand name, one that will only increase with the release of the movie *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's*

Stone. Two-thirds of the same children polled by the *New York Times* plan to see the movie upon its release (Race C10). Without a doubt the marketing efforts of Scholastic, with the broad appeal of the novels' contents, have turned them into a brand name. The power of that name is being tested with merchandise associated with the movie's release. However, the increasing popularity of the novels prior to the release of the movie or the merchandise to accompany it proves that their contents are attracting more readers than brand buyers.

Zipes, in his statement regarding the novels' physical appeal, fails to recognize the power of Internet sales, where readers do not get to see and touch the book jacket. Yet it is the very popularity of Internet sales that is causing copyright challenges for Scholastic and Bloomsbury. As anxious American readers chose not to wait for the sequel to book one, *Chamber of Secrets*, to be released from Scholastic, they went to sites such as Amazon.com's British subsidiary to order the novel already available from Bloomsbury (Carvajal E1). In addition, several American bookstores purchased *Chamber of Secrets* from Bloomsbury to distribute in the United States. Scholastic soon halted the action of Bloomsbury selling directly to American bookstores, but they could not keep Americans from turning to the Internet to purchase the novels (Wergeland par. 5). To counteract their loss of sales to Bloomsbury, Scholastic pushed up the release date of book two from September to June of 1999, creating media headlines across the country (Maughan, "Potter's U.S." 18). Articles appeared in newspapers such as the *Seattle Times*, *Dallas Morning News*, *Florida Times Union*, and the *New York Times* covering the release news of *Chamber of Secrets.*[20] It cannot be denied that Scholastic created a novel that readers want to pick up and purchase at hardcover prices,

[20] See Lipson E1; Shindler; Stansel; Wergeland.

but the Internet sales and resulting copyright disputes prove that readers are being driven by more than a fancy book cover and recognizable brand name as Zipes suggests.

The overwhelming positive response to the *Harry Potter* series may explain why most reporters choose to gloss over the marketing efforts of Scholastic, stating that they simply sold the novels on a word-of-mouth campaign. However, the *New York Times* reports:

> Scholastic [...] used the marketing strategies and techniques given to promising adult fiction titles. Barbara Marcus, the executive vice president of the book division, said the strategy included sending nearly 2,000 advance copies to so-called 'big-mouth' or influential adults and children. Scholastic placed Harry Potter in all its advertisements and in the fall and holiday catalogues, invested in easel displays and posters and brought Ms. Rowling to the United States. (Lipson E1)

The "big-mouths" include critics and librarians as well as Scholastic's "'own universe of big mouths,'" reports *Business Week* (Capell, Light, and Palmer 54). By no means are their marketing efforts simple, for the first printing of *Sorcerer's Stone*, 35,000 copies, a marketing budget of $100,000 was granted, and it was treated as an adult best seller long before it earned that title (Lipson E1). Yet both *Publishers Weekly* and the *Washington Post* report that it is almost only word-of-mouth recommendations that turned *Harry Potter* into best-seller status.[21] As already pointed out, the Internet plays a large role in the success of the series, and as one expert states, because the novel was already available in England, by the time the Scholastic's word-of-mouth campaign began, a buzz of excitement existed on the Internet.

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[21] Maughan, "Halo" 92; Reid A21.

Technology today makes a word-of-mouth campaign move much faster than was possible in the past (Cohen par. 5). The point-of-purchase marketing that Scholastic created with easel displays and posters also reinforced the word-of-mouth campaign, creating a stronger image of *Harry Potter* for a potential buyer. It is important to place a new product in the front of the potential customer as many times as possible to reinforce the brand name, as Scholastic did with posters and advertisements.

An additional element of Scholastic's marketing campaign is Rowling's book tours throughout the United States. The book tours began after the release of the first novel to generate continued excitement for the series. Nearly a year after the release of *Sorcerer's Stone*, a minimum of 1,000 people greeted Rowling at each United States stop reports *Publishers Weekly* (Maughan, "Keeping" 36). The success of book one and the telling of her own tale by the print media makes it possible to believe why so many people would want to meet this fairy tale princess. Jennifer Pasanen, vice president of marketing at Scholastic, says of the tour with Rowling, "'it's like traveling with a rock star'" (Maughan, "Keeping" 36). For book four Rowling continued her publicity tour, but according to *Time* it was not to increase sales, but rather it was to make herself accessible to her readers (Gray, Brahim, and Cullinan par. 15). Bloomsbury, too, created an extensive book tour and publicity stunt for *Goblet of Fire* that included a scarlet fire engine, once named the Queen of Scots, used as the Hogwarts Express— the scarlet steam engine that leaves from Platform Nine and Three Quarters at Kings Cross in London to take wizards-in-training to Hogwarts (Rowling, *Sorcerer's Stone* 94). Booksellers received vouchers to hand out to children to buy book four, and they could then use these vouchers to gain access onto the train at one of its destined stops for book signings by Rowling (Cowell C14). Although Rowling used these book tour experiences to

make herself available to her readers, the tours also created additional excitement for the *Harry Potter* series. Marketing does not end once a product becomes a bestseller, but continues to reinforce that the product is worth additional purchases, in this case book five, or to create additional first-time *Harry Potter* readers.

Perhaps the most noteworthy marketing plan is the secrecy of the title and contents of *Goblet of Fire* before its release on July 8, 2000, allowing for two things: first, the novel would be released simultaneously in the United States and in Great Britain, thereby eliminating the Internet copyright disputes. Second, since the title of book four remained undisclosed until moments before its release and only the author and the publishers knew its contents, the amount of publicity was reaching an all time high. The attention *Goblet of Fire* (known as "book four" until June 28, 2000) received was without the usual advance review copies and pre-publication interviews (Cowell CI). One reporter claimed that the secrecy was to secure as many first-day sales as possible before readers discovered it was not a good novel (he later changed his stance and stated that the novel lived up to its hype) (Delint, "Rev. of Goblet" par. 4). With no book to review, the media covered, instead, the possible contents of the novel, the marketing, and the three novels previously released. Although the media had nothing to write about the novel itself, it seemed the secrecy generated more media attention than the previous three novels had following the usual publicity channels. Rowling herself says:

> The marketing was literally Don[']t give out the book. And it wasn't even a marketing ploy. It came from me. This book was the culmination of 10 year's work, and something very big in terms of my ongoing plot happens at

> the end, and it rounds off an era; the remaining three books are a different era in Harry's life. (Jensen, "Rowling Thunder" par. 2)

Whether or not the plans not to disclose the novel's title or contents were Rowling's own does not disqualify the plan as a brilliant marketing scheme. According to Rita Clifton, chief executive at a brand consultancy firm, the secrecy surrounding book four was similar to a new car release. The obsessive secrecy, says Clifton, creates excitement and anticipation (Cowell C14). The excitement is evident in the number of newspaper and magazine articles covering the novel's release. As CNN.com points out, the media all jumped on the secrecy bandwagon, covered the story, and then began creating stories about the stories already written. The article went as far as to say, "[...] the media acted according to the publishers' plans. They took the marketing reins" (Allen par. 25). CNN.com's perspective on the marketing was correct; the *Harry Potter* series had already gained enormous media attention, but by the release of book four, *Harry Potter* became a media phenomenon. With nothing to report of the novel itself, the media did not lose momentum; they caught onto the excitement and anticipation. The *Los Angeles Times* describes the secrecy as "Fort Knox-like security" (Miller par. 10). In another article Roy Rivenburg writes, "Now that the third secret of Fatima has been revealed, the biggest mystery of the planet seems to be the plot of the next Harry Potter book" (par. 1). Adding to the media's delight were the accidental copies of book four sold just days before the July eight release date (Koeppel par. 6). It was reported that 31 copies were sold in Richmond, Virginia and two copies were sold in South Jersey. Yet not one of the buyers released any detailed information regarding the plot of the novel (O, Crowley par. 4).

As Clifton suggested, the excitement before the release of book four turned into a celebration that was garnished by Scholastic as they provided prerelease party packages to bookstores around the nation. These parties became the focus of the press, turning them into a national media event rather than an event held to get children excited about books. For example, the *Los Angeles Times* reports, "the much-bally hooed release of 'Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire' was greeted with costume parties, games and rounds of hot cocoa in bookstores around the country and in Britain" ("Wizardry" par. 3). This example reinforces the point Zipes made about children becoming brand consumers as they were dressing in *Harry Potter* costumes, playing *Harry Potter* games, and eating *Harry Potter* type food. The media's response to one bookstore's event was described as: "scores of photographers and camera crews waited [by the front doors]— a media crush usually reserved for movie stars at a preview. Outside, hundreds of *Harry Potter* fans formed a line halfway down the block" (Miller par. 34). The *Harry Potter* news ticker that illuminated Times Square on midnight of the novel's release augmented the parties (Cowell C14).

The media's coverage of the publicity events did reflect a feeling of excitement. Much of the media coverage reflected the excitement at prerelease parties as "fun" because children became thrilled about the opportunity to read a new novel (DeLint, "Rev. of Goblet" par. 11). The *Los Angeles Times* describes the excitement as:

> Sleeping bags, pillows and flashlights in tow, wizard lovers camped out Friday night at bookstores from London to Los Angeles, awaiting the bewitching hour when the latest and darkest Harry Potter adventure would be released. (Miller par. 2)

At a bookstore in Brooklyn everything from the decorations to the food— resembling Bertie Botts Every Flavor Beans and Butterbeer found in the novels— welcomed readers awaiting the midnight release (Kirkpatrick, "Magic Halts" 14). In Seattle, one bookstore owner is reported as ordering 300 books that she thought would last through Christmas, and found as RSVPs came in for her party she was required to buy an additional 500 books to meet the needs of all the customers (Jensen, "Wizard" par. 1). Yes, the parties were covered by the print media and turned into frenzy, yet children were experiencing firsthand the excitement of a novel's release with their cronies, and this excitement can only reinforce the joy of reading.

Most of the excitement for the first three novels and even book four was without the usual toy tie-ins and cartoons or movies that accompany many popular children's novels. "What we're talking about here is a foreign import with no television show, no movie and no celebrity. It's a noisy world and it's hard to get attention for a children's book," says Nancy Pines, a publisher at Simon and Schuster's Pocket Books (Carvajal E1). With Scholastic as the U.S. publisher, and the novel edited with American terms, the novel is no longer a complete foreign import. Yet for a children's novel, it is unprecedented to receive so much attention without all the usual tie-ins. Rowling is being celebrated for creating a novel that does not need the usual products to achieve success (B. Allen). However, the release of the Warner Brothers movie *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone,* on November 16, 2001, changes Rowling's basis of success as the *Harry Potter* gimmicks make their way into stores and homes across the country. Lorenzo di Bonavenura, president of Warner Brothers, is aware that the publishers of the novels are treating them as classics and says, "'We are very conscious of the quality of Harry Potter'" (Capell, Light, and Palmer 54). As conscious as

Warner Brothers, the publishers, and even Rowling are of the quality of the novels without tie-ins, products are now on store shelves and this may change how readers view Harry Potter. No longer can individual imaginations create pictures of the characters since the movie trailer, posters, and toys are now defining them. However, licensing of children's novels is not a new idea. It has happened with Beatrix Potter's characters, *Winnie the Pooh*, and the *Wizard of Oz*, according to a *New York Times* article. In 1999, the revenues related to publishing tie-ins increased by 30 percent to $40 million (Lauro C17).

Just a year after the release of book one in the United States, Warner Brothers paid an "undisclosed seven-figure sum" for the movie rights for the first two novels. The movies are acted versus animated at the request of Rowling (Eccleshare, 1 Nov. 1999 24). Steve Kloves wrote the screenplay for the first movie and Chris Columbus, whose credits include *Home Alone* and *Mrs. Doubtfire*, directed it. Rowling worked very closely with both Kloves and Columbus on the project, and reportedly said the "childish" part of her is excited to see the movie as the culmination of ten years of her imagination. Further, she said, "[it] will be the most extraordinary experience, and I do believe because I've seen some things already" (Jensen, "Hogwarts" par. 1).

Now with a movie out, product tie-ins are making their way to store shelves. Treating the *Harry Potter* series as classics, as the publisher and producer are trying to do, should limit the number and type of product tie-ins. However, parents can now throw their child a *Harry Potter* theme birthday party, complete with hats, glasses, paper products, and even wrapping paper. Products seem to be slipping away from the classic mode to the normal tie-ins associated with children's novels. Warner Brothers has worldwide licensing rights and began releasing products last fall and continues to do so (Lauro C17). Magical

candy is no longer reserved for wizards; children can buy Bertie Bott's Every Flavor Beans. These beans are unlike the original beans in the first novel, where Ron warns Harry:

> 'When they say every flavor, they mean every flavor— you know, you get all the ordinary ones like chocolate and peppermint and marmalade, but then you can get spinach and liver and tripe. George reckons he had a booger-flavored one once.' (Rowling, *Sorcerer's Stone* 103-104).

Hasbro and Jelly Belly made a 38-flavor version of the magical beans. Most of these are in the usual flavors, but they threw in "black pepper, grass, booger and horseradish" (Mucha par. 10-11). In addition to party favors and candy, toys are out to accompany the movie. Mattel is responsible for these toys, and it is through their work that we can now see the usual tie-ins, such as action figures, a toy version of the Nimbus 2000 (Harry's famed racing broom), and an electronic dragon, "Roarin' Snorin' Norbert" (Barnes CI). It is no surprise that Rowling reportedly expressed reservations about the commercialization of Harry Potter, yet she is just as responsible as the publishers for the selling the rights to Warner Brothers, and she was aware of the usual products that accompany children's films (Gray, Brahim, Cullinan par. 17). A novel that once sold on the imagination of its readers alone is forever changed as character descriptions are turning into actors, and toys resembling those actors are defining the characters. With all the movie hype, it is hard to ignore how Warner Brothers is defining Harry and his world. Although British and American readers already have pictures of Harry, his movie debut is creating a new and more prominent image (see Appendix). Our own imaginations may no longer be sufficient as the characters in their magical world light up the big screen.

The incredible marketing plan for the *Harry Potter* series cannot take all the credit for its popularity. It has been a successful campaign, as the readership and the awareness of *Harry Potter* is extremely high. As most of the media offers positive remarks about the novels and create a fairy tale story about Rowling, it is no wonder their response to Scholastic's marketing is overwhelmingly positive as well. Scholastic could not be more pleased with the positive attention children's literature, in particular *Harry Potter*, is receiving. Yet there is a perilous side to this, as Sutton points out that best-seller lists are created by reporting and marketing and a trend is created which says, "lots of people have bought this book and, therefore, so should you. Harry Potter has become a case not of attention focused on a children's book, but attention focused on attention" ("Potter's Field" par. 5).

CHAPTER V.

ANALYSIS OF POPULAR MEDIA'S RESPONSE TO *HARRY POTTER*

"'I've taken out a subscription to the *Daily Prophet*. I'm getting sick of finding everything out from the Slytherins,'" Hermione told Harry after rumors began to spread based on his popularity and his participation in the Triwizard Tournament in *Goblet of Fire* (Rowling 540). Even in the wizard world, it appears that popularity draws the same amount of media attention as it does in the Muggle world. Whereas Harry received instant fame just a year after his birth, Rowling's popular series did not receive instant fame until after the release of *Prisoner of Azkaban*. This attention grew with the secrecy and release of *Goblet of Fire*. The American popular print media's response can be categorized into two areas: before the release of *Goblet of Fire* and after the release of *Goblet of Fire*. This chapter analyzes the popular media's response to the *Harry Potter* series after the publication of *Sorcerer's Stone* as it began to build and develop with each subsequent release. The coverage in the popular print media began with the presales of *Chamber of Secrets* and *Prisoner of Azkaban*, then turned to the excitement surrounding the release of the third novel, followed by the hype encircling the secrecy and simultaneous release of *Goblet of Fire* by Scholastic and Bloomsbury. Eventually Rowling's series became a consistent fixture in media headlines.

Popular Media Before *Goblet of Fire*

Although the popular media's attention gradually built momentum after the release of *Sorcerer's Stone*, it is important to note that Rowling's own saga of struggle appeared very

early in the media coverage and continues to receive attention. In addition, beginning near the end of 1999, the controversy regarding the appropriateness of the *Harry Potter* novels for public schools erupted in the media. Still, however, the surprising popularity of Rowling's novels is the focus of the media after the release of *Sorcerer's Stone* and *Chamber of Secrets*. Across the nation, articles appeared about the best-seller status of the first two novels: "Faster than you can say Abracadabra, the first two books popped onto the New York Times Bestseller lists— a rarity for children's books— and have sold 1 million copies each," reports the *Orange County Register* (Takahama par. 23). The same sense of surprise appeared elsewhere in articles about the series.[22] The popular media, like the professional media, also looked at the novels' appeal, trying to answer why they were climbing up the top ten lists. Linton Weeks suggests in the *Washington Post* that it is, "at least in part, because parents seem to enjoy them as much as their children. The books also are finding an enthusiastic readership among boys in particular," he wrote ("Sheer" A12). Tolkien believes that fairy-stories are not to be specifically associated with children because the "desire" or "awakening" that occurs in good fantasy writing can happen to readers of all ages (269, 267). Rowling's fantasy world awakened the child in readers of all ages.

The popular media did not agree about the qualities within Rowling's novels that entice both children and adults. Several articles in the *New York Times* are written in reference to the Whitbread Prize, a top British literary award, for which *Prisoner of Azkaban* was nominated. In a *New York Times* article, William Safire contrasts the *Harry Potter* series to *Huckleberry Finn* and *Alice in Wonderland* because he finds that they are not written on two levels, "entertaining one generation while instructing another" (A27). He describes the

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[22] Giltz par. 1; Marvel par. 6.

purpose of adult literature as doing more than following plots, but also exploring characters and ideas, insinuating that an adult reader cannot grow reading the *Harry Potter* novels (A27). Another *New York Times* reporter, Sarah Lyall, like Safire, addresses the novel's popularity in her article and refuses to classify it as "high art" just because it is popular with wide and varied audiences (B9). Seamus Heaney received the award for his translation of *Beowulf* on a five to four vote. The popular print media in the United States focused more on the *Harry Potter* novels' top ten status than they did on the novels' appeal. Although some articles addressed why the novels increased in popularity, the popular media did not cover their success with the same depth that the professional media did.

The popular media also covered the hype surrounding the sale of the British versions of *Chamber of Secrets* and *Prisoner of Azkaban*. In-store promotions included parties for the release of the third novel, generating further media attention. It was not only the professional media that tracked the presales of the novels and their effect on the industry, but also the popular media. For example, a July 19, 1999 *Entertainment Weekly* article reports the following:

> Because of the lost sales— estimated by one insider to be as high as 20,000— Scholastic will also release the third book, Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban, this September, only a few weeks after it comes out in the U.K. Some publishing insiders believe the series may spur big changes in the industry: Rights to popular authors may soon be sold by language instead of by country. (Giltz par. 2)

The presales of novels two and three became prevalent subjects with the popular media. Their role proved to be as informant, always updating readers on Harry Potter's latest publishing news, unlike the professional media who acted as an industry watch.

The American popular print media covered the sales of *Prisoner of Azkaban* with reverent excitement, describing scenes at bookstores across the nation. An article in the *Washington Times* highlights the excitement of children reading hardcover novels as soon as they are released, and the article contrasts the novels to the usual illustrated paperback books typically popular with children (Amberg). In Great Britain and the United States, children and their parents flooded bookstores to celebrate the release of *Prisoner of Azkaban*, and the media was right behind them drawing on their excitement. In Great Britain, the novel did not go on sale until 3:45 p.m. to prevent children from skipping school to get their copies ("Potter Phenomenon" par. 12). In the United States, children crowded bookstores, celebrating the release with parties catered with Scholastic's own marketing materials: "In a scene that was replicated at bookstores throughout the Washington area and around the nation, more than 50 kids [...] crowded into the Borders in Vienna for a party celebrating the official publication of 'Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban'" (Weeks, "Sheer" A12). The bookstore celebration was just beginning as Scholastic and Bloomsbury were preparing for the simultaneous release of *Goblet of Fire*. Unlike Rowling's fourth novel, *Prisoner of Azkaban* was released using the typical publishing channels. Its contents were not secret, and American readers could find the novel overseas before it was released in the United States. Even without the secrecy, the popular media covered the events for the release of *Prisoner of Azkaban* with nearly as much excitement as they would later show for

Goblet of Fire.[23] *Harry Potter* had certainly become a phenomenon in the print media by the release of *Prisoner of Azkaban* as reporters were standing in lines along side anxious children to cover the excitement.

In addition to the literary criticism offered in book reviews, articles appeared in the popular media analyzing the novels. Particular interest rose in the novels' star. An article in the *Dallas Morning News* described Harry as, "an unlikely hero, a skinny, myopic 11-year-old" (Marvel par. 1), while an article in the *Orange County Register*, on the other hand, recognized Harry as a Cinderella type (Takahama par. 13). The popular media inserted the same themes of rivalry and good versus evil and literary comparisons into their articles as they offered in book reviews.[24] The *New York Times* printed several articles about the fantasy genre and common motifs found throughout the *Harry Potter* novels. In an article on October 10, 1999, Pico Iyer says that Rowling's appeal is her ability to take traditional British rituals and insert them into the story, yet make them "seem as curious to outsiders as the rights of passage of tribal Africa" (39). A month later, Richard Bernstein addresses Bettelheim's theories presented in *The Uses of Enchantment* about fairy tales' abilities to address the reader's inner-self and how they can teach readers to deal with terror. Bernstein says the *Harry Potter* novels are a success because Rowling created a hero in Harry who faces many of the same problems as children do today (E1-E2). The popular media's critical analysis of *Chamber of Secrets* and *Prisoner of Azkaban* did not reach the same sophistication as it did for *Goblet of Fire*, but they provided more analysis than they had for *Sorcerer's Stone*.

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[23] Gleick "Abracadabra!" 72; Marvel.

[24] Amberg par. 3-6; Iyer 39; Marvel par. 25-28; Reid A21; Weeks A1.

Before the release of the *Goblet of Fire*, Rowling's series continued to create media headlines. An article in the *Boston Globe*, with the subtitle "Americanizing Harry Potter comes at a cost," presented an overview of the changes Scholastic made to the text so it would be more appealing to American audiences (Whitehead E1). The *Minneapolis St. Paul* released a profile of Mary Grandpre, Scholastic's *Harry Potter* illustrator (Brauer). *Entertainment Weekly* released a glossary of *Harry Potter* terms in January 2000 (Steffens, "Hogwarts"). These examples illustrate the hold *Harry Potter* had on the popular media, even in between each novel's release.

Popular Media After *Goblet of Fire*

Partygoers across the country and Great Britain, dressed in Hogwarts attire, anxiously waited for the clock to strike midnight, releasing the most anticipated novel in the *Harry Potter* series while the media was in tow to capture the excitement. The marketing case study provides an overview of the success of the secrecy campaign and how it created media headlines before and after *Goblet of Fire's* release. This section, rather than focusing on the marketing, analyzes the overall popular media response to the *Harry Potter* series just before and after the release of *Goblet of Fire*. The popular media, more than book reviews or the professional media, reflects the phenomenon status of the series that erupted before the release of *Prisoner of Azkaban* and more so after the release of the fourth novel.

Regional and local newspapers played a vital role in covering the prerelease parties at their own bookstores. Following is one example of the excitement that became prevalent in newspapers across the country:

> Muggles may have been thoroughly confused Saturday, but Harry Potter fans were in their glory, racing around Orange County dressed like wizards with capes on their backs, lightning bolts on their heads and owls hanging from their necks. They were in search of the much-anticipated fourth Harry Potter installment, which went on sale at midnight. Bookstores stayed open until 1 a.m. and then reopened early at 8 a.m. to begin a day of Harry Potter mania. [...] 'Ten minutes to go!' they chanted. 'Five minutes to go 30 seconds!' (Basheda)

The eager readers' and the media's jubilation of the novel's release mirrors the wizards and witches' celebration after the downfall of Lord Voldemort in the opening chapters of *Sorcerer's Stone* (Rowling 10). In an editorial piece she wrote for the *News Tribune* (Tacoma) a reporter describes her own experience of standing in line as part of a "great literary tradition" that followed in the footsteps of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century authors' serial releases, such as those by Charles Dickens, as the anxious readers would wait in line to grab their copies of the newest installment (Merryman). Articles portraying the same excitement and anticipation appeared throughout the country.[25] It is not just the fact that the media covered the bookstore events, but rather the excitement in their articles that reflects what a strong hold *Harry Potter* has on the popular media.

After the excitement about the release of *Goblet of Fire* lessened, the popular media began to look at the novels for their literary significances, just as the book reviewers had. They began to glamorize Rowling's influence, as illustrated in the following example from a

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[25] Ebnet; Campbell 1+; Kirkpatrick, "Harry Potter Magic" 14; "Wizardry."

Time article: "For years, literary culture has been portrayed as gasping on life support, sustained only by old-fogey teachers and hidebound school curricula. The death of the author was surely at hand. And then came Rowling" (Gray, Brahimn and Cullinan par. 12). It is clear that *Time* created a more distressed situation than existed in the literary world, but in the popular media Rowling herself is a fairy princess with magical powers equal to Harry's and even Dumbledore's own powers. As with the previous three novels, comparisons continued in articles for *Goblet of Fire*.[26] Further, the popular media not only compared the novels to other fantasy titles, but also began to suggest why the comparisons were relevant. An article in *Los Angeles Times* suggests that scholars will find Rowling's use of common motifs and writing that does not talk down to children comparable to other children's classics ("Wizardry"). Heather Arden, professor at the University of Cincinnati, says:

> 'The phenomenal popularity of the Potter chronicles may be linked to the way they reflect the underlying attractions of the Arthurian World. They give their readers a picture of a wonderful community centered on a super-human leader and made up of exceptional individuals of whom the hero is the most exceptional.' (Kinzer B13)

Others focused more on the fantasy world Rowling created, claiming that she is able to take children to places they have never been, nor will ever go, but where they are able to learn values that they can then apply to their everyday lives (Merryman). Articles in the *New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times* both speak of the parallel universe Rowling created and the motifs that it shares with fairy tales.[27]

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[26] Jensen, "Hocus" par. 1; "Wizardry" par. 6.

[27] Mehren par. 11; Weisman A24.

Just as they did in the book reviews, the popular media places particular importance on the themes found in *Goblet of Fire* and Rowling's character development. In an interview with *Entertainment Weekly*, Rowling says of the novel's theme and title, "I preferred Goblet of Fire because it's got that kind of 'cup of destiny' feel about it, which is the theme of the book" (Jensen, "Rowling" par. 2). Nearly a year later, Stephen Kinzer writes in an article for the *New York Times* that "Harry Potter is infused with Middle Earth ethos," writing on the destiny of an ordinary person who goes on to win large victories (B13). Reporters continued to bring up the dark images as themes, specifically the good versus evil motif as well as death and grief (Mehren). Robert Libsyte claims the success of the novels is because of the jock culture present at Hogwarts (P11). The attention focused on the characters is on the role reversals, and more specifically, the idea that all of the characters are not completely good or completely evil. Steven Weisman writes in the *New York Times*, "More than the previous books, 'Goblet' is filled with dizzying reversals in which good characters are found to be evil and vice versa" (A24). In commenting on the Dursleys, Rowling says she created characters that materialize abuse, and not just to Harry, but also to their own son for stuffing him so much with both food and "putrid ideas" (Mehren). *Time* reports Rowling saying that Harry and his two best friends are all disadvantaged in one form or another. Ron, she says, has a father he loves but who is very unconventional as compared to other fathers and Hermione's know-it-all personality is because she, like Harry, comes from the Muggle world and is insecure about being behind or left out (Gibbs). The popular media's focus on the dark themes should not come as a surprise because darker images are more prevalent in *Goblet of Fire* than in the previous novels; however, their focus on character development and

meaning indicates that they began to look at Rowling's series more critically as a work of literature.

The copyright infringement claim brought forward by Stouffer for Rowling's use of the term *Muggle* and the similarities between Harry and her character Larry Potter propelled the *Harry Potter* series to gain additional media headlines. The *New York Times* uses the subject to talk about intellectual property rights in an article on April 1, 2001. David Kirkpartick outlines Stouffer's case against Rowling in his article, but used her case to provide an example of a growing trend. He writes:

> But with a few phone calls, Mrs. Stouffer was on her way to joining a growing parade of aggrieved writers and artists who have helped to turn intellectual property litigation into a burgeoning cottage industry, with its own small plaintiffs bar and even insurance policies to protect successful writers and musicians from the high cost of fending off claims. ("Court Battle" 1)

According to Kirkpatrick, Stouffer registered for the trademark in 2000. As it turned out, Stouffer's lawsuit against Rowling brought the opportunity to have her series, *The Legend of Rah and the Muggles*, republished by Thurman House (Flamm, "Between"). The *Associated Press Online* released an article chronicling the publishing history of Stouffer's first book, which actually began as an activity book. In 1987, her company, formed with two others, Ande Publishing, was forced to declare bankruptcy just before Stouffer's book hit the markets, and she now has no records of the books since they were in her studio when it collapsed after a snow storm in 1996 (Raffaele par. 18, 21). Stouffer's case received more

attention in the popular print media than it had in the professional media, reflecting the popular media's fixation on controversy.

After the release of *Prisoner of Azkaban*, the *New York Times Book Review* changed the specifications of their best-seller list for the first time in sixteen years. They added a separate children's list, with three areas, picture books, paperbacks, and chapter books. The change in the list is something the *New York Times* planned for years, according to Jennifer Weiner. In a *Philadelphia Inquirer* article, she writes that Scholastic was "Initially angered that the book would be moved to the children's list, and is even more outraged now that Times has segmented the list" ("Controversy" par. 10). Although the *New York Times* claims the list change was suggested years ago, the *Harry Potter* series is receiving credit for the new children's list in popular media articles.[28] Rumors began to spread that the *New York Times* received pressure from other publishers because the *Harry Potter* novels monopolized the top spots usually reserved for adult best-sellers. Like Stouffer's case, the popular media clung to the controversy surrounding the change in the *New York Times* best-seller list.

In March 2001, Rowling garnered further media attention with the release of two books based on titles found in the pages of her *Harry Potter* series. The first is a Hogwarts library book, *Quidditch Through the Ages*, by Kennilworthy Whisp, that comes complete with a library card and severe warning from the librarian not to mistreat the book. The second book, *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, by Newt Scamander, is one of Harry's textbooks, which includes his own personal notes written within the pages. The proceeds from the two books go to the Harry Potter Fund at Comic Relief United Kingdom, a charity

[28] Campbell and Collison par. 3; see Flamm "Between."

that aids children in developing countries (Gray, Brahim, and Cullinan par. 16). Both books contain author bios as well as a note of appreciation from Dumbledore. *Quidditch Through the Ages* even includes a page for praise the book has received; for example, Rita Skeeter of the *Daily Prophet*, wrote, "I've read worse" (Whisp). The *New York Times* reported that Rowling "has managed to turn about a month of writing into a donation expected to top $36 million" (Kirkpatrick, "2 Harry" C12). With the assistance of publishers, printers, bookstores, and the other companies involved in the production of the $3.99 books, Comic Relief receives $3 for each copy sold (Kirkpatrick, "2 Harry" C12). A review in *Buffalo News* finds both books to be funny, particularly *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, and only criticizes the small font size and newspaper quality paper that was used to keep production costs down (Westmoore par. 11). These books are not plot-driven and are meant only to supplement the series; therefore, it is likely that only *Harry Potter* fans are purchasing these books, and they will do so regardless of the quality of the paper or the font size.

The impact Rowling has on the popular media is profound. Her name or Harry's can be found in various articles that have very little connection to her own series. The popular media also credits Rowling with bringing children back to reading.[29] Even children relying on Braille can now read the novels ("Impressive"). Moreover, the *Harry Potter* series is continuously used to promote other novels.[30] Alex Berenson's headline, "Watch Your Back, Harry Potter" is for an article touting a video game unrelated to the series (C1). Some authors claim the multiple print runs necessary for Rowling's novels are the reason why they had trouble getting their own novels printed (Flamm, "Inside Scoop"). The *Detroit Free Press*

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[29] Gray, Brahim, and Cullinan par. 12; Ilnytzky par. 1-4; Ragland par. 3.

[30] See Campbell and Collison; Pate, "'Fowl' Play."

claims *Goblet of Fire* changed children's novels forever (Campbell and Collison par. 2). Controversy erupted when Texas' University Interscholastic League, a high school literary competition, added the *Harry Potter* series to its list, making media headlines (Vaughn). Articles appeared about Scholastic's illustrator and Jim Dale, the reader for the books on tape.[31] Articles about Scholastic's profits usually made mention of the *Harry Potter* series and how their success contributes to Scholastic's success.[32] Now with the movie out and the assortment of merchandise to accompany it, the *Harry Potter* series is guaranteed a commonplace in everyday media.

Why did the popular media pay so much attention to *Harry Potter*? The obvious reason is to sell their publication with a story that is important to their readers and to cover that story with the same depth as their competitors, creating a race for *Harry Potter* media coverage. As the novels' popularity increased with readers, the media attention increased. The other reason is less obvious to the media themselves. Rowling's novels, with characteristics reminiscent of fairy tales and escapist qualities, speak to all of us on a variety of levels. Fantasy, as LeGuin said, is a natural language and it touches even the popular media.

Sales Update		
AP Online	12 Apr. 2001	Year 2000 annual juvenile books sales reach 446.8 million copies, a 35.8 percent increase from six years ago. *Harry Potter* novels account for 19.8 million of total books sold in 2000 (Ilnytzky).
Reading Today	June/July 2001	*Harry Potter* novels reach 100 million copies sold worldwide.
USA Today	2-4 Nov. 2001	116 million copies of all four novels in print in 200 countries around the world (Puig 2A).

[31] See Cheakalos and Nelson 111-112; Hoffman B2.

[32] See Capell and Dawley; "Profit Jumps" C7.

CONCLUSION

Do Rowling's novels deserve all of the media attention, or is it, as Sutton says, just "attention focused on attention" ("Potter's Field" par. 5)? At first glance the novels appear to be just another pop culture icon filling space in the media, while acting according to the marketers' plans. Although the novels are not on the same level as Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, Rowling skillfully acts as sub-creator and provides a Secondary World in which as many as 116 million readers believe while they are immersed in her story. She is bringing the powerful fairy tale of Cinderella back to readers of all ages. Her story is filled with common fairy tale archetypes and her protagonist, Harry, is the kind of hero readers have always known and loved.

The next phase in the *Harry Potter* media attention is currently underway. With the release of the movie *Sorcerer's Stone* on November 16th, headlines are growing rapidly. A recent front page of *USA Today* says of the movie in a headline, "'Harry' may be just the ticket these days, anticipation is soaring like a Nimbus broomstick, taking the spirits of a nation with it" (Puig 1A). The headline represents the power of *Harry Potter* as they credit the movie in aiding the nation in its recovery from the recent terrorist attacks. In its first ten days alone, the movie grossed $187 million (Karger). Of course, movie-related merchandise is changing the classic quality Scholastic placed on the books. It is hard to wander far without seeing a product related to the move. In addition, Daniel Radcliffe's face is everywhere. The commercialization of *Harry Potter* does change the quality associated with the books that once sold on imagination alone. The good news is that many of the original

fans are learning that books are often better than movies. A troll is believable in one's own imagination, but once computer graphics are used, it looks artificial. Magic comes alive in any imaginative reader, and children are learning that their own imagination is more powerful than any movie. Although the movie is receiving positive reviews, hopefully it will create additional readers as it furthers the attention placed on Rowling's novels, and this can only be a positive result of the $125 million it took to bring *Harry Potter* to the big screen.

The next phase in the *Harry Potter* media craze is likely to focus on the release of the fifth novel in the series, currently titled *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix.* A specific release date is not available for the novel, and it probably will not be until the excitement of the movie's release no longer consumes the media. Regardless of when it is released, fans are ready to find out how Rowling's climax in *Goblet of Fire* begins the new era in Harry's life. *Harry Potter* chat rooms and fan websites offer endless discussions on what is going to happen as the series continues. Soon after the release of the fourth novel, many reporters tried to discover the secrets held in the remainder of the series. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* reports that Rowling plans to have the Dursleys act in an unexpected manner in the fifth novel and that Ginny Weasley, Harry's best friend's younger sister, will play a larger role (Weiner, "J.K." par.10). Clearly, the novels are growing darker and more complex. According to Jensen, Rowling says that she is portraying shades of evil. Dumbledore's speech at the end of *Goblet of Fire,* as he explains to his students that they will have to choose between "what is right and what is easy" is the set-up for the remaining novels ("Hocus" par. 2). With each novel, Rowling brings a tighter story and pulls together details to make the plot more rewarding. Reportedly she also says, "Everything is on a bigger scale" (Jensen, "Rowling" par. 7). As Harry grows in the novels, his world does as well, along with the

choices he has to make. The larger scale brings a larger magical world, and readers will find themselves in places they have not yet seen, according to Jensen ("Rowling par. 7). Regardless of whether the medias' reports are true, the guessing that is occurring is a healthy use of the imagination. The secrecy about the fifth novel's plot encourages readers, particularly children, to explore the possibilities and meanings within Rowling's novels. Surely, although conservative parents and some educators would have us believe otherwise, this type of growth in children's imaginations cannot have a negative impact on them. As LeGuin says, stimulating the imagination will keep it from becoming "wild and weedy" (37).

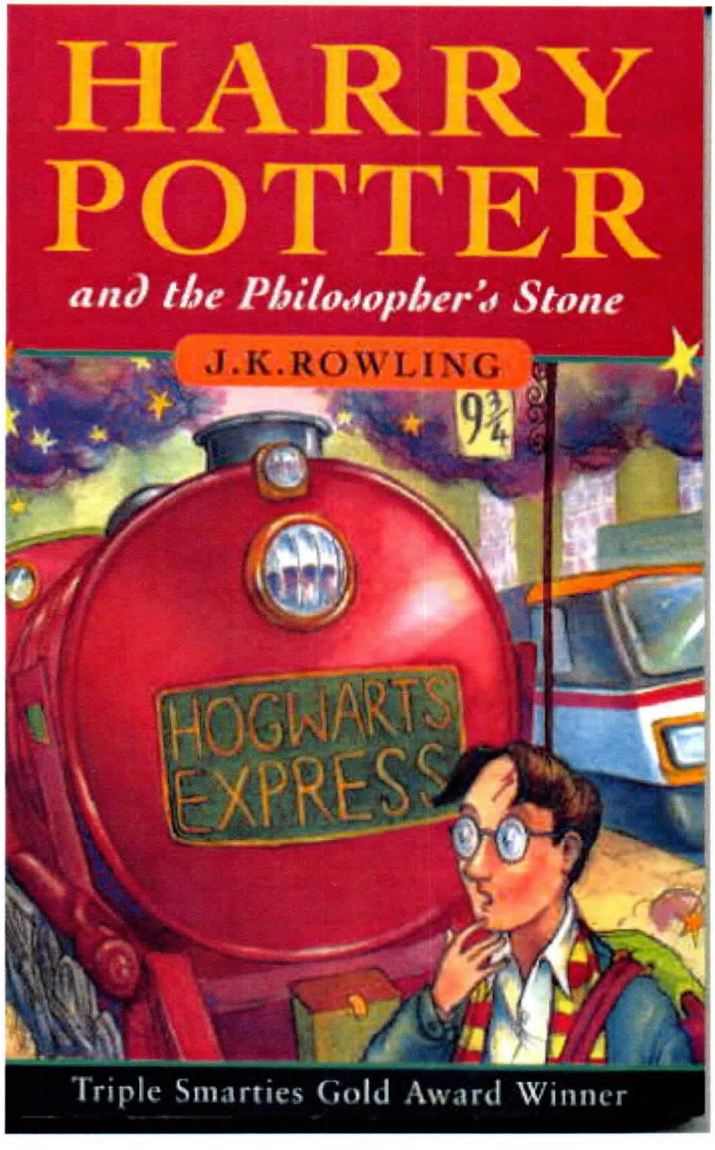
In the press Rowling is keeping the plot of *Order of the Phoenix* to herself. It is hard to know whether the publishers will repeat the secrecy of the novel's content as they did for *Goblet of Fire*. This unveiling works every year for the automotive industry and builds excitement for each new product before the veil is ever lifted. This marketing strategy worked for *Goblet of Fire*, and there is no reason to believe that it will not work again, particularly because the final chapters of the novel pave the way for unexpected twists in fates. The media's and the public's response to the secrecy campaign only fostered more excitement. Although *Harry Potter* became a phenomenon in the media by the release of the third novel, *Prisoner of Azkaban*, popularity and excitement only continues to grow for Rowling's series. If momentum continues, the secrecy campaign could continue to generate excitement. If the novel disappoints readers— which is unlikely— they, and the press, will grow weary of the hype forced by the publishers. Yes, Sutton is correct, the *Harry Potter* media story is attention focused on growing attention; not one publication allows itself to fall behind in the great race for the latest news story. However, media attention focused on a well-written series of novels and their popularity across ages and cultures is not a negative

occurrence. The increase in attention leads to new readers, and if the media's response can turn generations of television fanatics into reading fanatics, then the result can only be positive.

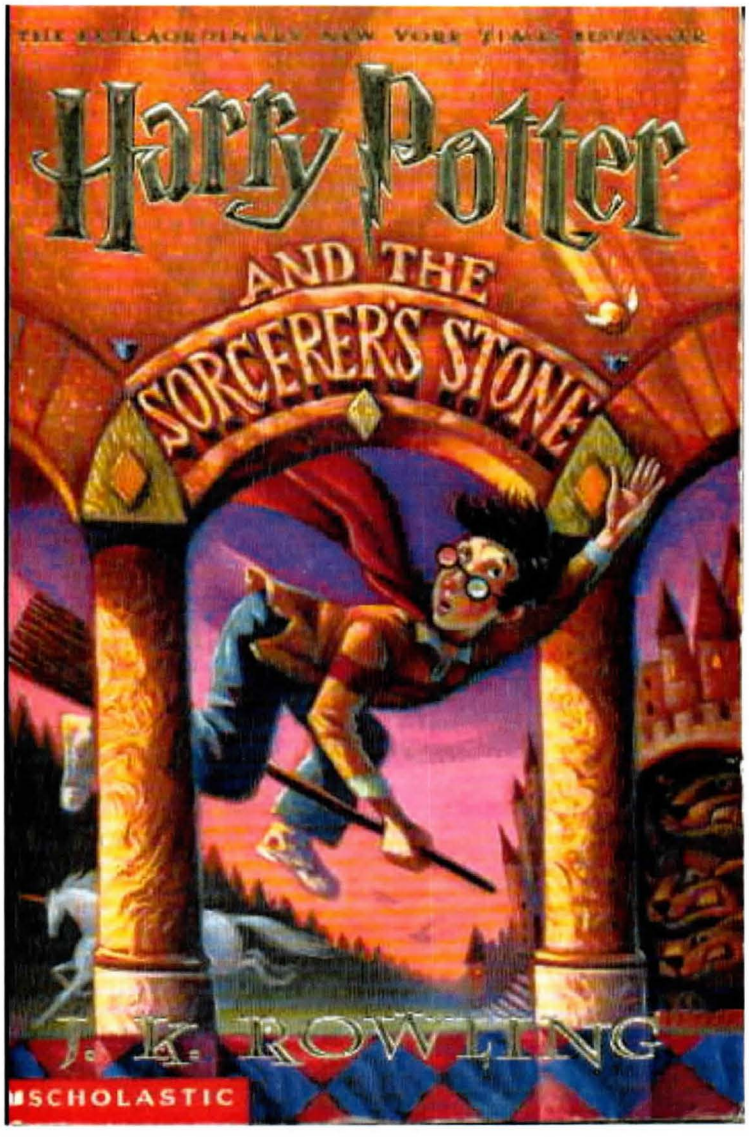
APPENDIX

Appendix

The Many Faces of Harry Potter



1) The original Harry Potter: paperback cover of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone.*



2) The American Harry Potter: paperback cover of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone.*

3) Warner Brothers' Harry Potter: British actor Daniel Radcliffe, featured on the October 2001 cover of *Vanity Fair*.

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