THE NECESSARY INVERSION OF ENACTING JUSTICE

IN THE *HARRY POTTER* SERIES

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Introduction

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Anyone directly following the depicted examples of exacting justice in fictional literature has a fairly good chance of winding up in prison, especially since a good number of stories and novels have (notably ones involving archetypal heroes) the protagonists enabled to take matters into their own hands and carrying out their own justice—from rescuing a kidnapped princess to saving the universe. This falls in stark contrast to what Western society considers acceptable, in terms of legal standards, for readers may cheer the vigilante who finally avenges his father's death; however, the legal system frowns upon individuals circumnavigating the laws to administer justice. Thus, there exists an inversion in principals: people are instructed to let the courts do the work and yet are presented with virtually countless examples of exactly the opposite. Certainly, this is not a new theme in literature, for even around 800 BCE, Homer had Odysseus carrying out his own version of justice as he violently slew dozens of men who had usurped his home and had ill intentions toward his wife. While this phenomenon may not be problematic for adults, some may consider it unwise for growing children to be exposed to such a radical inversion in teachings. Young adults are in a transition, or initiation, phase, having to learn important lessons to utilize throughout life. Why complicate matters by inverting justice for them? Should not the hero simply be calling the authorities or filing a complaint and allowing the judicial system time for due process? While it would not likely be very entertaining, there are other reasons for this inverted justice to be considered beneficial: while the methods of solving problems differ in fiction, other lessons can be obtained—children can learn to evaluate whether justice is being properly upheld and they can see that individuals may disagree and take steps to fix or improve the system, though the methodology changes in real life.

The inversion of justice as it shifts from societal to individual is necessary in young adult fiction because it demonstrates helpful steps for assisting future adults in life: vicariously through the individual, one learns to observe justice, to evaluate whether or not it is functioning properly, and to see that each can make contributions in correcting the inadequacies or problems. With all this in mind, a prime example worth exploring is the *Harry Potter* series, where the hero continually makes decisions regarding justice and fairness; however, the genre itself should first be explored more thoroughly.

Genre Explanation

When first hearing the words "children's literature," a person may immediately have a denigrating or dismissive viewpoint, resulting from the assumption that that genre of literature does not have a serious place in academic study. Perhaps even the words "children" and "literature" seem odd or awkward being combined together. A children's story sounds fine; a children's book is commonly accepted. Despite this, the genre of children's literature does exist and may be very useful for deeper analysis into what children learn on their journey to adulthood, and what necessary lessons help mold their transition into becoming adults contributing effectively to society, especially when it comes to weighing justice, utilizing the court system, and voting on laws pertaining to judicial matters.

Admittedly, the classification of children’s literature may require broadening, thus allowing or even necessitating further division as the upper realm of children’s literature can be better grouped into young adult literature. This proves to be especially helpful as many would not think of “children” immediately entering adulthood, but rather undergoing an intermittent step—where the old ways are put aside and new ways are learned, a concept more embraced in contemporary ideology. Establishing exactly what age range this pertains to would be difficult as various factors affect the beginning and ending of this transition; however, considering the above caveat, one could estimate a youth from ages 12 to 18 is involved in the liminal transition into adulthood. Young adult literature deals with a plethora of significant or important life changes occurring within this period: dealing with the opposite sex, learning to earn one’s own income, finding ways of taking care of one’s needs, and discovering new ways to handle fairness and justice. That final element is an important one and even the word “discovering” should be used carefully, for making a faux pas on a date or mismanaging a task at a job may result in an embarrassing situation, something unfortunate, albeit expected as a part of learning: trial and error are natural aspects of life experience. That said, the “discovering” of the legalities, requirements, and restrictions of the judicial system may have irreparable consequences. As the saying goes, “ignorance of the law” is no excuse, yet what happens to a child not adequately or correctly taught the rights and wrongs of the legal system?

What happens if the young adult books that children read are teaching the exact opposite of what society expects of future men and women?

Granted, there is some acknowledgement of the fallacy of citizens being expected to know each and every one of the seemingly incalculable number of laws in practice, and many of those laws do tend to follow what many term “common sense.” Indeed, a child may feel that if a friend steals his ball, while he may seek an adult to remedy the problem, he may also feel permitted to find a way to get it back. As adults, common sense suggests the victim is expected to call the police or at least retrieve the ball within the allowances of the law, since heading over to a neighbor’s house with a baseball bat will almost certainly escalate and exacerbate the problem and lead to detrimental or tragic results. Few may know exactly which law was broken, but most will know that the individual must turn to the established judicial system to procure an acceptable solution.

In addition to that, laws are often customized to young adults needing a special judicial system. In America, people under 18 are often judged differently than those 18 or older. A seventeen-year-old may be sentenced to a juvenile correctional facility until he or she is 25, whereas that same youth one year later could be given life behind bars. To complicate matters further, the judicial system may even try accused youths as adults if deemed necessary.

Given the above, where does young adult literature fit into this process and how does it conflict with the assumedly correct values? Beginning with the first few years of a child’s life, it does not—or at least it does not appear to. Many books geared towards infants or early developers are simply designed to delight or to teach sounds, letters, or words. The goal is to either entertain or to teach children to read. The story is incidental. As the child grows, the purpose of the genre may shift—in general, for parents are certainly free to choose any book they want, and publishers may opt to publish works that do not fit this paradigm. Be that as it may, many children's books do begin to teach lessons about how to act and behave, while others often work to delight the reader, providing him or her with the ability to imagine, create, and explore. While young adult literature could relate to the aforementioned ideas of learning how to deal with the opposite sex or how to behave at a job, the genre also may be identifying proper ways to act and behave in regards to fairness and justice. Thus, the young adult category has much more room for exploration. Whereas earlier works could often be found didactic, young adult fiction may take on the common mission of many stories and novels today: entertainment merely for the sake of entertainment. This is not to say that the instructional aspect is neglected or omitted, for both are frequent; however, the emphasis on teaching may be reduced to prevent readers from feeling that the works are primarily for didactic purposes. Suffice it to say, the difference lies in *subtlety*. Intended or not, almost any work, even today, could be examined for allegorical meanings, but whether or not instructional writing was the author's intention is tougher to decipher—provided the author does not outwardly state whether or not this is true. Identifying allegorical meanings is nothing new, for classical works of literature, such as Shakespeare's comedies, contain accessible amounts of lessons and teachings. Consider Christopher Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love." On the surface, it appears to be an entertaining poem of a man seeking to seduce and have his way with a maiden; however, upon looking deeper, some may discover a not uncommon feeling of *carpe diem*, a poignant message in a time where time was so precarious and a lifespan often cut short.

While society may allow or expect fables with morals for young children, older readers may not be as open to pedantic messages on how to behave acceptably and why doing so is pertinent for entering adulthood. The messages on justice must come through via illustrated examples or through subtle imagery. Chances are more likely than not that there will be no final messages at the end. No explanation will be offered stating how justice was carried out in an inverted manner using an individual in place of society and its rigid court system. The reader must become enlightened through experiencing the protagonist's journey and agreeing (or perhaps disagreeing) with the choices made. Hopefully, the result is a reader who learns not to agree with all facets of justice and fairness, but not to disagree, either; moreover, he or she needs to observe first, to question assumptions and ideologies, to look more deeply into fundamentals society holds true, and finally, to weigh the judicial system itself to see if its scales are indeed balanced equally and evaluate the individuals responsible for carrying out justice in society.

Benefits of the Subversive Nature

Within children's or young adult literature, the subversive element ties in well with inverted justice since it allows the individual direct control over important decisions. A common phrase indicating a subversive or inversive situation is "the inmates are running the asylum," which not only suggests that authority has become inverted, but, moreover, that this inversion is in effect detrimental and harmful to society. The very people who are in need of help are controlling or "running" the system. Order has been upended, which implies an eventual result of chaos. While that may be true for institutions such as prisons or psychiatric hospitals, the case may be different in young adult fiction, for frequently the children are indeed in control, at least vicariously. The youthful protagonist must restore order, or perhaps save the world.

The importance of this lies in the fact that it offers a young reader a connection to individual control, allowing one to experience vicariously what it is like to have power over one's own direction as well as the direction of others. In early life, the infant essentially has no control and is subject to the complete dominance of others, most often his or her parents. As adults, people are usually given and expected to administer full control over their lives and perhaps the lives of others—for example, their own children. The young adult novel allows a simulation of this environment without any consequential damages, should things go wrong.

Another form of this power shift may be witnessed in simulated computer-driven experiences, such as driving video games, where underage drivers may experience the feeling of being behind the wheel without the risks associated with such an activity. Interesting is how those games frequently depict catastrophic results when cars go off the road, but this does not translate later into real life. In other words, participants are not developing an idea that the "wrecks" are a natural part of everyday driving. What is reinforced is that necessary separation of reality from fantasy and fiction—that it (the idea of horrendous accidents) is so unnatural or unreal, that it cannot (hopefully) or should not happen. Narrowing that gap even more would be amusement park rides designed to offer the same "thrills" of driving, but preventing any real chances of collision. This brings young adults even closer to the realistic elements of assuming control or "taking the reigns," but again, in a controlled, safe environment, with the fantastical element of simulating horrific accidents removed for good reason. Along with the changing-of-the-guard training, the young adult reader also receives another benefit from the inversive nature of children's literature.

Young adult books at best allow children an escape from being dominated by adults, which may be especially helpful when children feel injustice from those in authority. Inside a fictional work, the children may not only have control, but they also may find themselves the only people capable of fixing problems and restoring society to its proper place. The idea of placing children in control occurs in children's literature as well. In *The Wizard of Oz*, for example, Dorothy must find her own way out of her predicament in her quest to return home. While *her* status is elevated, the adults' positions are diminished: the witches (both good and bad) have limited powers or exploitable weaknesses, Oz is primarily a buffoon whose control over others is more of an illusion than a reality, her Aunt and Uncle are removed by distance and ineffective to assist, and, finally, her own parents are inexplicably absent. Dorothy may follow guidance and walk down a road suggested by others, but each step is her own.

In *Harry Potter*, the situation becomes more complicated; however, Harry is still the chosen one—the youth who must conquer evil. As well, his primary antagonist is an adult. While it may be somewhat farfetched, strip away the good and evil elements from the series and what remains is a youth challenging an adult figure—though perhaps Voldemort's actions demonstrate him to be a youth who has not completed his mental transition into adulthood properly or sufficiently. In Book 4, he eventually is found dueling not another man, but Harry, a fourth-year student. Duels between Harry and Malfoy seem natural and perhaps expected, but for a grown adult seeking to battle a teenage boy suggests a lapse in adult wisdom, protocol, and maturity. Unsurprisingly, Voldemort considers his actions man-like, evident in his words to Harry: “And now you face me like a man” (660). Another duel in Book 7 has Harry returning the same words back at Voldemort: “Be a man” (741). Once again, Voldemort has chosen to battle Harry in a duel, figuring he has superior power due to his age and experience, yet these actions suggest that Voldemort is yet another empowered youth, but one who misuses and abuses the judicial tools offered to him, reinforcing the message that every youth must finish his or her transition into adulthood, both physically and mentally.

The Role of Justice

To reach adulthood, the young adult learns essential instructions to fit in and adapt to inevitable changes occurring around him or her, yet this initiation period does not have to be entirely passive. In other words, the inductee needs not be completely submissive to the teachings around him. He or she may observe flaws or defects in the system in need of correction. This is not to say everything should be challenged and then refuted; moreover, the learner should understand *how* to evaluate and determine if all is as it should be. In effect, questioning should arise during the initiation into adulthood. A caveat remains: the hero may simply find fault with the established system only because he or she does not yet understand its methodology, reasoning, or logic. Thus, the hero must slowly examine his new environment and intelligently come to eventual conclusions of whether or not the system is indeed working effectively or is in need of change.

If this process does not occur, then the hero or youth enters adulthood without any new perspective or guidance to assist him in keeping civilization running smoothly. In an older or non-Western traditional society, no opportunity like the above may exist at all. The neophytes strip off the old ways, become equal with other neophytes, receive instruction on exactly what to believe, say, and do—and finally, enter adulthood with the correct ideals and traditions of their society. Such a system may appear conflict-free, but it does not allow for corrections, improvements, or choice—for the youth are not learning the lessons necessary to bring about such changes.

The Escape of Fantasy

Another useful element of the *Harry Potter* series is the theme or genre of fantasy since it introduces a secondary world, where a new justice system can be constructed. Examining the word "fantasy," one could find its roots extending back into the late fourteenth century, having a meaning signifying fiction or imagination (s.v. "fantasy"), though that is considering usage of the word alone, for mythology from Egyptian to Greek to Norse all contains "fantastical" elements woven into stories from the humorous and nonsensical to the didactic and allegorical. Many consider it a somewhat vague term in itself, for John Clute notes, "'Fantasy'—is a most extraordinarily porous term, and has been used to mop up vast deposits of story which this culture or that—and this era or that—deems unrealistic" (311). The *Harry Potter* series avoids immersing the reader immediately in fantastical elements, yet Rowling does not take long to guide the reader into this imaginative or “unrealistic” world. In Book 1, the very first sentence begins with words such as “perfectly normal,” but the second sentence continues with “strange or mysterious” (1). Everything begins plausible; however, soon after, Mr. Dursley “noticed the first sign of something peculiar—a cat reading a map” (2). Mr. Dursley may be doubtful and puzzled, but most likely, the reader is already well aware of a new world being created where new rules are coming into play. Clute notes, “When set in this world, it tells a story which is impossible in the world as we perceive it (PERCEPTION); when set in an otherworld, that otherworld will be impossible, though stories set there may be possible it its terms” (311). According to Philip Martin, fantasy is “speculative fiction that takes one giant step inward. It is highly imaginative, wondrous fiction, rooted in inner beliefs and values” (26). Those inner beliefs connect the work and the reader, allowing the reader the freedom to either accept or reject the values presented.

The idea of escape is not limited to fantasy only, for connections can and do occur in non-fantasy works. Susan Cooper observes, “In ‘realistic’ fiction, the escape and the encouragement come from a sense of parallel: from finding a true and recognizable portrait of real life. In those pages we encounter familiar problems, but they’re *someone else’s* problems” (280). Despite that, realistic fiction requires realistic or preset laws, and often the best way to question and analyze a system is by creating a parallel world to mimic, parody, or satirize the everyday one. In fantasy, the secondary world allows for exactly that to occur.

The creation of secondary worlds spreads across works from classical to modern day, for besides J. K. Rowling, authors such as J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, and Philip

Pullman all have made heavy use of secondary worlds, where themes of change and justice all become pivotal for the principal characters.

The workings of these secondary worlds establish whether or not the reader determines justice to be met. The new world may be imaginary and invented; however, some order must be first established for the hero to identify breakdowns. Poet and author Jane Yolen states, "The amazing thing about the fantasy world is its absolute consistency. Within the walls of any given fantasy world, all is logical. Of course, the world may be posited on the most illogical premise" (67). Fantasy can be confusing at first—just ask any foreign traveler what it is like stepping out into another land where people have a different word for everything, or where a handshake is suddenly replaced with a bow—or a kiss! Given time, even a story beginning *in media res*, should have the reader quickly becoming situated and ready to start deciding not only if the laws are working correctly, but also if they are right or wrong. To do this, the rules must be consistent: "All the rules that have been set down for that world, fantastic as the rules may be, have to work as surely as gravity works on our own world" (Yolen 67). Of course, this all falls under the duty of the writer and not the reader. Readers must simply follow their chosen protagonist—or, as it were, their elected leader.

The Once and Future Wizard

Even before making one decision, Harry Potter was chosen, indicating a continuance of a long line of literary motifs. The unsolicited appointment of Harry for his duty follows an idea that has surfaced throughout countless stories over time, for other such title characters underwent the same treatment: Arthur was chosen and given the unique ability to remove the sword from the stone. Moses was chosen by God to lead his people out of Egypt. One may examine just how these appointments came to be. No elections took place; no rhetorical speeches were made, and no votes were cast. Consider this similarity: Harry, like Moses, does not wish to be the “chosen” savior. With all these stories of chosen leaders, the notion of exclusive class systems and royal nobility comes up, asking if times really have changed over all the centuries of story-telling. One could even find similarities between this type of literary device and of Calvinism, where the idea of predestination, or selection, comes into play—some are pre-chosen for salvation; others are not. The same justifications may stand—that through omnipotent foresight (via the removal of linear time), the best candidates are chosen for their assignments, unfair as it may *seem* to those not chosen.

Fair or not, if the law or society has decided that one man (or child) should rule a kingdom, lead a people, or save humanity, then deviation from that is where the breakdown in justice lies. The idea of chosen leaders also presents problems representative of society: those in charge may not have adequate qualifications to lead or provide justice to others, as when a king becomes abusive or unable to reign justifiably over his people. In that case, the hero’s battle with justice is not with written statutes or courtroom decisions, but with the authoritative figures around him. The reader sees that laws may in fact sometimes be perfectly just; however, those chosen to enforce the laws need attention and perhaps dismissal from their duties.

What compounds the problem is that sometimes these figures may not be part of the general subversion of authority (adults and children switching roles), but may involve other children being empowered or chosen to lead and determine justice. Thus, those seeking justice end up conflicting with others also seeking justice, but without having developed the abilities to do so. While the goal of this apprenticeship is to allow youths to experience a mild form of adult responsibility, the results can cause injustice and turmoil within the initiation phase. Witness the quandaries caused by the appointment of prefects at Hogwarts in Book 5 of the *Harry Potter* series.

After the hearing and before returning to school, the reader learns that Ron has been chosen to be his house prefect and, even more surprisingly, that Harry has not. The matter has to be treated delicately at first since any rationalizing of the decision denigrates Ron's appointment, thereby belittling his abilities and suggesting the appointment system is flawed. Two of Ron's brothers, Fred and George, offer a couple of jovial explanations with, "I suppose all the mad stuff must've counted against him" and "Yeah, you've caused too much trouble, mate" (162), but the second reason does have some merit: Harry has just faced a courtroom trial for his prior actions. True, he was cleared of wrong-doing; however, readers may see a connection and a display of a weakness in the outside judicial system: despite the idea of being innocent until proven guilty, the occurrence of being suspected and/or tried for a crime creates an unfair assumption of the accused. Granted, the media takes on a fair amount of blame for damaging and perhaps slandering one's character, for accusations of crimes are often allotted front-page news with large, bold headlines, whereas acquittals often receive no mention or are relegated to lesser read areas of newspapers. In other words, it is no longer sensational or newsworthy, and is therefore unimportant to the media's mission. The trouble is that the person's character has been faulted or damaged, and he or she most likely lacks the power to restore and repair his or her reputation and status (fortunately, children under 18 have their identities kept secret to avoid damaging their reputation). This phenomenon is repeated more than once in the *Harry Potter* series, allowing children to see yet another possible avenue to explore in fixing justice once they attain enough power in the adult world.

Admittedly, correcting such a flaw might be an insurmountable task for an individual, though the ability to see things more clearly does help, especially when analyzing news events through such mediums as newspapers and magazines. If child readers develop that skill, then the transition to adulthood improves. Symbolically, Book 5 does reflect such an idea since both Harry and Luna Lovegood are able to see the invisible horses pulling the chariots taking them to Hogwarts. As discovered later, the reasoning is that they have both seen dead people, suggesting the initiation of witnessing death allows for a better knowledge of life—perhaps the affirmation of mortality strengthens the understanding of carpe diem. At first, such an idea may appear to be a dualistic concept: young adults need to live for the present, yet also live for the future? Instead of that consideration, perhaps it would be more strongly stated as an act of balancing: young adults should still enjoy and embrace their present life, while *preparing* for the next phase of it. This becomes apparent in the latter books (from *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* onward) where Harry still engages in humor, sports, and enjoyable activities, despite the seriousness of what is taking place all around him, and the impending battles to come. One prime example is found in Book 5, when Harry finds time to go on a lunch date with Cho, a fellow student. His date ends disastrously since he also needs to meet Hermione and discuss important, more-serious matters. While not outwardly stated, the reader may sense a feeling of unfairness for Harry, for he lacks understanding as to why Cho was so emotionally distraught. Hermione explains: “Look – you upset Cho when you said you were going to meet me, so she tried to make you jealous. It was her way of trying to find out how much you liked her” (572). Certainly, readers may learn about judicial matters and the importance of adult responsibility, yet simple lessons regarding the opposite sex may still be acquired as well. In either case, an increased understanding in human nature assists acolytes throughout the liminal phase.

Notably, another symbolic gesture is how Luna reads *The Quibbler* (a tabloid newspaper) upside down. What appears to be someone misunderstanding the news could be just the opposite, for the brain actually perceives images upside down and the mind corrects them by flipping the images subconsciously. Perhaps her actions show someone able to read through gossip and grasp the stories as they truly are.

Despite the positive aspects of having children begin to assume adult judicial roles, the question still remains: are these appointments just? Perhaps it would be more prudent to question if they are *fair*, and arguably, many appointments are not fair and stem from other factors besides qualifications alone. Choosing Harry for the Gryffindor House prefect may not have been deemed wise due to his extracurricular involvement in battling evil; however, Ron Weasley’s record of unwise decisions certainly should have put up some red flags hindering his appointment. Thus, one alarming factor remains: nepotism, for his brothers had also been prefects in the past. Arguments in support of the appointment may suggest that the Weasley family simply has a talent or special adeptness for carrying out prefectorial duties, but the argument is weak at best. Such occurrences demonstrate strong unfairness, but nevertheless, if the duties are performed well, then justice has not been violated. Again, it is one more thing for a rookie adult to deal with in the real world, especially in the work force.

Besides, if these newly appointed mediators of justice perform their duties well, then one may allow the unfairness of the appointed positions to be more readily understood (provide power is not abused) and accepted. Hermione receives the appointment of prefect, presumably due to her excellence in her studies and ability to judge right and wrong under pressing circumstances. Moreover, her election balances out Ron's appointment, considering his weaknesses. Combined, they counter another questionable decision: the Slytherin house appointment of Draco Malfoy as prefect. Unsurprisingly, the reader expects abuse from Malfoy as it derives from his type of character and his Draconian system, but combating that puts one's own sense of justice to test. The role of prefect is understood, as Ron states in Book 5, that "we can give out punishments if people are misbehaving" (189). Clearly, youths are given the power to wield justice. They are not simply reporting infractions, but weighing what the consequences will be. Despite that, Ron goes on to say, "I can't wait to get Crabbe and Goyle for something" (189). While we do not see a violation of justice, we do receive the notion that such an occurrence will happen by the following lines of Book 5:

> "You're not supposed to abuse your position, Ron!" said Hermione sharply.

> "Yeah, right, because Malfoy won't abuse it at all," said Ron sarcastically.
>
> "So you're going to descend to his level?"
>
> "No, I'm just going to make sure I get his mates before he gets mine."
>
> (189)

What is complicated is that it is not entirely clear whether the intention is to violate justice in order to "get his mates" first, or whether Ron simply wants to see his justice served first. He does not specifically say he will falsely accuse them of anything, yet he does joke about administering a particular punishment to Goyle, which he would subsequently hate: "I'll make Goyle do lines, it'll kill him, he hates writing" (189). Even this punishment becomes somewhat ambiguous, for Ron appears to be administering it unfairly by choosing something Goyle specifically hates; however, it is also something (the act of writing) which may serve him well in the future. Nevertheless, inverting roles (giving judicial authority to children) does provide them with the more difficult decisions of morality and fairness when having to perform such duties. Therefore, in reading fantasy, the child's vicarious experience is not just entertaining, but informative as well.

With the mix of fantasy into young adult literature, readers receive a world where the main derivation is in the placement of authority. A wise author will install logic and laws (be they unique or coinciding with reality) for the readers and characters to accept and follow, but through flaws in those laws or systems or faults in those assigned to carry out the laws, all can observe the opportunity for change. While the methodology changes from fiction to real life, the idea is retained: each has a duty to analyze justice and evaluate whether or not it is violated. Society establishes the law; men and women carry it to fruition. People can work together in bringing about justice, functioning as a unit, a team, or a society, yet people can also strive to think independently, as complete individuals—an idea which has been depicted in known literary antecedents for thousands of years.

Chapter 2

Contributing Antecedents

Engaging the Hero

Involving the Individual

Focus should not only be made on the individual wielding justice, but rather on the importance of the individual receiving lessons in justice during his or her teenage years. The importance stems from the youth's involvement in a liminal phase, or what Victor Turner classifies as liminality: "a betwixt-and-between condition often invoking seclusion from the everyday scene" (101). This concept was the middle phase of a ritual process derived from Arnold van Gennep, including the first stage of "separation from antecedent mundane life" and the third stage: "re-aggregation to the quotidian world" (101). Thus, within the time in-between, it is paramount for acolytes to receive proper instruction and learn the necessary values for the return into the group (adult society). This is where young adult literature comes into play, primarily when it focuses on the protagonist(s) experiencing the same rituals. Liminality is "often the scene and time for the emergence of a society's deepest values in the form of sacred dramas and objects" (Turner 102). During the liminal phase, tremendous learning often occurs, and it is frequently a time for one's culture and traditions to be engrained. Consider how both Hogwarts' and real society's children are taught a fair amount of history throughout their educational lives. Aside from military students, children do not usually learn about the American Revolution or the Battle of Waterloo to plan better tactical maneuvers in their future careers; adults teach these lessons to acquaint better the children with who they are and what their surrounding society is—by studying where they came from. The past provides a better understanding of the present and one's identity is more clearly defined. This is not to say that the familiarization of historical antecedents only occurs during this phase; however, it does suggest an importance of emphasizing these teachings before the child sets out on his or her own, perhaps as a reminder saying, don't forget who you are and where you came from. In effect, the adventure in fantasy is a precursor to the adventure in life. The individual, however, may not acquiesce to everything taught.

The teachings of the liminal period need not be always followed, and should not be considered infallible. According to Turner, "it may also be the venue and occasion for the most radical scepticism—always relative, of course, to the given culture's repertoire of sceptical concepts and images about cherished values and rules" (102). Hence, it is a period of questioning, a period essentially beginning when a child learns to speak and starts asking "why?" At first, children usually receive those answers; eventually, they begin questioning their validity and rationale. Such a procedure is not simply a matter of disbelieving all teachings, but either understanding them better or discovering fixable problems within them, or problems with those in authority straying from the values which their society holds dear: "Ambiguity reigns; people and public policies may be judged sceptically in relation to deep values; the vices, follies, stupidities, and abuses of contemporary holders of high political, economic, or religious status may be satirized, ridiculed, or contemned in terms of axiomatic values" (Turner 102). No shortage of questioning occurs in *Harry Potter*. Even Dumbledore, the series' most sage wizard, has his methods and motives questioned at times, notably in the later books when he is demonstrated to be human, having the same shortcomings as others. In Book 6, Dumbledore personally escorts Harry away from his summer home at Privot Drive. Once away, a slew of questioning occurs, beginning as Harry responds to Dumbledore's instruction to keep his wand ready: "But I thought I'm not allowed to use magic outside school, sir?" (57). Such a response is understandable, given the fact that Harry was nearly expelled from school in the last novel for using magic outside of Hogwarts. Dumbledore offers an explanation, to which Harry replies, "Why not, sir?" (58). Again, another question is posed. The use of *sir* demonstrates the fact that Harry is not disrespectful to Dumbledore's authority; moreover, he simply wants more understanding. Soon after, they arrive at a new location and Harry asks, "Er – where exactly are we?" (59). After receiving a reply, Harry asks, "And what are we doing here?" What might be seen as a challenge to authority is a growing need for a clearer understanding. In earlier books, it might seem presumptuous for a young Harry to require so many answers to Dumbledore's guidance, but Harry is in the latter stage of the liminal period where helpful and sufficient knowledge is paramount, especially given his challenges ahead. Nevertheless, proper balance is necessary for one to avoid becoming impertinent. After perceiving a problem with Dumbledore's hand, Harry asks what was wrong with it. Dumbledore replies, "I have no time to explain now" and "It is a thrilling tale, I wish to do it justice" (61). The following line explains the unspoken dialogue between them: "He smiled at Harry, who understood that he was not being snubbed, and that he had permission to keep asking questions" (61). Attaining knowledge is welcome; however, some information needs to be obtained at the proper time. Overall, the reader can see that even a highly authoritative figure such as Professor Dumbledore can (eventually) be questioned for better understanding and increased knowledge.

The reader learns that everyone is subject to scrutiny. It need not be done in a disrespectful manner, but analysis does need to be performed, as young adults or adults frequently observe in the work force where yearly reviews are often performed to allow the worker a better understanding of his or her performance.

Individuals must not only judge whether or not those in power reflect society's established "deep values," but should also evaluate the values themselves. Perhaps collectively, people have come to accept or embrace something unacceptable. Again, "ambiguity reigns," for who has the last decision in determining right and wrong? Many would agree that justice should protect citizens from bodily or mental harm, and should ensure one's property remains his or her own; however, how does one decide what is deemed "property," especially if said property is a living entity? Rowling breeches the question with the turmoil involving the house-elves. She complicates the matter by creating characters which are not quite human, yet not quite animals, effectively narrowing the gap between people and pets. While society has many groups purveying the idea of animals not being considered property, many do accept them as being bought and sold property and used as labor, such as in the case of work horses, performing seals, guard dogs, etc. Thus, with the house-elves, the situation depicted leaves room for analysis. Seen as slaves, one can argue for injustice being done—their very ownership of themselves has been stolen; however, as observed in the series, most do not want freedom and are content operating in a role of servitude (though such a phenomena may result from them not having ever experienced freedom—thus, no true alternative can be considered). Despite that, if such is the case, the reader may see Hermione, the primary liberator, as attempting to impose her own values and beliefs onto the community, an idea that does have merit in the outside world and to the author and readers.

Westerners may often maintain an ethnocentric viewpoint when viewing Middle Eastern countries and their traditions, which is not to say all views are incorrect, but moreover, not enough analysis has been performed or understanding achieved. One could easily point to a culture or society and say, “They don’t treat their women on an equal level,” yet the matter becomes complex if the “mistreated” women respond with, “We are happy with how things are. Why must you interfere?” Extend this into communism or apply it to the 1989 fall of the Soviet Union. Granted, countless were ecstatic; however, many were not thrilled about having no provided job or guaranteed food supply. Activists against communism simply helped end one problem without finding solutions for what remained thereafter.

Nevertheless, the issues must be open for questioning in order to maintain balance and justice. Leaders should be examined and laws questioned. With the house-elves, no one seems to be breaking the established law, and even Harry uses a loophole to free Dobby, an unhappy servant, whose owners abuse him. The idea of owning the elves is what is accepted by most, for as Peter Dendle points out, “Even kindly and nurturing Mrs. Weasley states that she wishes she had a house-elf to do the ironing” (165). A commonly agreed upon element of society may not stir the collective whole to effect a change, but that is where the individual must rise and explore her surroundings, starting with evaluation and analysis. Such troubling concepts must be worked out, as complicated as they may be. Dendle notes that “The elf rights subplot of the series is not among Rowling’s greatest successes” (165), yet “success” does not have to come with merely solving the problem, but establishing the idea that there may be a problem, and conversely, that one may not exist. Books are not always the answers to life; they may, in fact, be only raising more questions. According to Brycchan Carey, “By drawing on an issue with a long and contested history, but also with a solid tradition in children’s literature, Rowling creates resonances for the adult reader and opportunities for discovery and engagement for the younger reader” (103). A child’s (or adult’s) question may be why they allow them to be slaves or it may even be why the slaves do not mind being enslaved.

Even more important is the action Hermione takes, or rather the fact that she takes action. Whether or not readers agree with the classification of the elves as slaves, they can witness that Hermione does see an injustice and feels compelled to act. As Carey states, “a significant aspect of Rowling’s project is the promotion of political participation for young people and, rather than be narrowly prescriptive, she instead offers a range of political models for young people to explore and emulate” (106). Notably, her efforts to battle injustice do not require the use of wands and brute force; instead, they echo what real society would expect: supporting a cause, alerting others, and making a legitimate effort to effect change.

The Plight of the Hero

If a young adult book is going to instruct a young reader (or any reader for that matter), it will often utilize a common plot device which allows a connection to the reader: a central protagonist. While the central character's gender may play a role, it can often be dismissed in regards to needing to be a direct match, for how many female readers have completed the *Harry Potter* series, or how many male readers have enjoyed *The Wizard of Oz*. It is the journey the protagonist undertakes that establishes the connection with the reader, a journey which instructs the reader as well.

Because of this idea, the hero's adventure in the young adult novel should mimic the hero's journey in novels other than young adult works, both present and past. This is not to suggest that the hero will always be undergoing the same *type* of initiation. Homer's Odysseus already had a wife and child by the time he began his epic journey home after finishing his calling in the Trojan War. Dante's explorer was midway through life before his great descent through the circles of Hell. The journey may have many differences between those learning lessons for heading out into the world or those returning home. On a literal level, Harry and his friends do learn life-lessons and survival skills for entering society, along with learning how to defeat evil, but allegorically, the reader witnesses a tale of expressions in justice and injustice, and methods of correcting them—or conversely, examples of flaws which are simply too complex to solve immediately, but necessitate further investigation and consideration. These lessons may be engrained (consciously or subconsciously) into the young reader's mind. Considering that, there are many ways in which the archetypal hero's adventure does mirror the young adult's initiation.

The Connection to the Hero

In relation to the Hero's Adventure as defined by Joseph Campbell, one would begin with a comparison to the Hero's first step: A Call to Adventure. For the classical epic, the call would likely begin at a point in the hero's life where change is necessary. Harry Potter was simply suffering a dismal life trapped in an unhappy childhood awaiting what would appear to be an unhappy transition into puberty and adulthood. His call is necessary for it occurs at a time in his life where a child normally enters puberty or a ritual transitioning into adulthood. In young adult novels, the journey is most often boiled down to "coming of age" or growing up. It is by no means a quick process, for five to seven years may be involved as in the case of Harry; however, this also may vary in different cultures and by what occurs in that period. Furthermore, by facing serious crises requiring critical decisions, one may mature or enter the realm of adulthood faster than if otherwise. Likewise, young adults forced into early adulthood—as in the case of having to help raise siblings or being an orphan when the parents end up being removed from the home—might also transition faster. In effect, the timeline of this ritual may come down to how much time is spent between *work* and *play*. Essentially, the idea of "play" is being withdrawn from the youth, whereas the idea of "work" is being instilled. Fairness is being substituted with justice. Children may cry out, "that's unfair," when they feel wronged, yet having them state, "this is unjust!" is not terribly common. Certainly, it may be merely a matter of semantics since "fairness" (often a more personal, self-centered word) is usually the word taught first; however, upon learning the different meanings, one may need to evaluate further where the breakdown lies—that is to say something “unfair” simply violates an unwritten idea of right and wrong, but something “unjust” violates an agreed upon and usually documented law, though its origins are still often abstract or in need of deeper exploration. To warrant something being unjust, one not only needs to identify that a right has been violated, but explain exactly *why* this is the case. Hopefully, this type of thought process becomes a part of the youth’s mindset once he or she is called to adventure and the initiation begins.

One could question whether or not the child’s commencement into adulthood could be considered a “call,” for a call or request should be refusable. Desired or not, liked or not, a child *is* going to become an adult—although even that may not be entirely correct. As is the case for the epic Hero, one may attempt to refuse his or her calling.

While children are compelled physically to ascend into adulthood, mentally they may cling to their youth—perhaps grasping for the certainty and safety of what is already known to them. They may enter a phase often termed as a Peter Pan Complex, ranging from nostalgia of earlier years to an outright refusal to grow up. Peter Hollindale observes that children desire to grow up, but “they also want to remain children, or at least to take up adult privilege on childhood’s terms. This is the option that Peter offers, in perpetuity” (xxvii). While perhaps alluring, remaining in the liminal phase would prove detrimental, especially since all peers would eventually complete their initiation and move onward. Hollindale writes, “If we ask why Peter Pan is indeed the ‘tragic boy’, it is partly because he is exempted from a personal reality: he is free to play an enticing variety of roles, but in the end his freedom is the freedom to be nothing" (x). Entering the adult world may be delayed, but only temporarily; sooner or later, the child must accept his or her calling.

Of course, one's environment may assist in decisions such as these. Harry Potter, for example, exists in an awful place with no foreseeable happiness. His call is quickly accepted; however, in real life, children may be experiencing the opposite. If a childhood is fun and exciting, if no bills need paying, and no job requires daily attendance, what incentives influence a child to accept immediately the call? Again, the young adult novel may take the reader from bad to good and offer results with problems solved and prospects gained, but what happens when a child desires not to leave the relative security and comfort of childhood? Joseph Campbell writes that "refusal of the summons converts the adventure into its negative. Walled in boredom, hard work, or 'culture,' the subject loses the power of significant affirmative action and becomes a victim to be saved" (59). Observe how much more important accepting the call becomes, for saving this victim may require counseling, therapy, or even institutionalization. A childlike mind in the adult world can expect great difficulties; however, the refusal may not always be a choice, for a childlike adult who was unable to recognize or follow the call may not understand or comprehend his or her predicaments, as unfortunate as they may be. In fact, the call was technically not refused; it was never heard.

The young adult novel, therefore, helps serve as an important reminder that 1) accepting the call to adventure (i.e., the transition into adulthood) is an important and necessary step and 2) the result or finish will be beneficial and rewarding. Obviously, the success of this depends on how the novel or story ends, for books ending in disaster or lack of hope may lead the reader to different conclusions about the benefits of accepting the call. More often than not, fortunately, most children's books end on a positive note, unlike tragedies where little signs of hope are offered. Still, young adult authors may respond to trends and societal fads where tragedy becomes popular and is illustrated in order to provide a more realistic depiction of the real world. Authors wishing to provide neophytes with a truer example of the adult world may choose this course of action, and, granted, there is some merit there, so perhaps the emphasis should be guided towards the journey itself and the lessons learned instead of the final destination and what eventually becomes of the hero.

There are other archetypal elements which tie into the adventure. One such element is "Crossing the Threshold." For Harry Potter, his threshold is crossed once he exits his home and leaves for school (though some may argue it to be when Hagrid visits the island shack). Similar to real life, it is not just the physical act of exiting the house that starts the journey—for obviously that happens countless times throughout childhood—but rather, it is the physical act *combined* with the youth's intention. Both are necessary. Afterwards, the initiation ritual begins; returning may be difficult, if not impossible. Thus, children's literature authors aggregate the ritual passage of adolescence with the Hero's Adventure, merging two types of journeys into one. Turner notes:

> The passage from one social status to another is often accompanied by a parallel passage in space, a geographical movement from one place to another. This may take the form of a mere opening of doors or the literal

> crossing of a threshold which separates two distinct areas, one associated with the subject's pre-ritual or preliminal status, and the other with his post-ritual or postliminal status. (25)

For Harry, an important passage occurs when he first arrives at the train station and not only walks, but also runs into the magical barrier separating the two worlds. While this does denote a change in worlds, his decision to leave had already been made. This is just another step in the journey. As well, his actions there exhibit the faith sometimes necessary in undertaking the journey into adulthood, for if he had been mistaken or misled, the result would have been equivalent to someone running full speed into a solid wall.

In life, a child may be undertaking his journey without actually leaving home or moving out. That is to say, he returns home nightly, but most likely has journeyed somewhere during the day, whether to school, to a friend's house, or to an organized club or function (e.g., baseball practice). Still, a physical and mental voyage has begun—the safe and secure surroundings of home have been left, albeit temporarily. Notice how many *Harry Potter* books have him returning back home for the summer, but things are different. Home is no longer as it was before, but rather it becomes a temporary resting point before another year of training and life experience. When his initiation is complete, returning home will no longer be an option at all. What may confound children to a certain degree is that idea of having an ample amount of time or the ability to return home frequently until the initiation is complete. The difference lies in the type of initiation or ritual taking place, for other rituals may involve an immediate or faster transition, such as military basic training or entering marriage (insomuch as the engagement to ceremony phase—provided it does not stretch out several years), whereas very little time is open for really exploring justice. Also, the military and marriage ritual in modern Western society is primarily elective, whereas the transition into adulthood is compulsive. It is a mandatory journey (at least for the achievement of normalcy), which begins, as the saying goes, with a single step.

Often, this first step requires an act of faith, because, as Campbell notes, what occurs outside of one's present sphere or life horizon is dark and dangerous: "Beyond them is darkness, the unknown, and danger; just as beyond the parental watch is danger to the infant and beyond the protection of his society danger to the member of the tribe" (77-78). While this darkness and danger may be particularly important to the infant, those negativities may lessen or disappear once children reach adolescence, yet one of those items mentioned may remain and possibly be the biggest obstacle: the unknown. Learning that that obstacle can and must be overcome is crucial for the hero, for how many adults remain in unhappy jobs or other situations due to complacency? Whether or not a sense of danger is felt, the unknown often signifies and suggests risk—something many prefer to avoid. Notably, the young adult novel may stress conquering the unknown, but other genres of literature do so as well. "Life can be better" is a popular theme and often sells well in all types of fiction and nonfiction literature; therefore, while children learn to analyze problems with justice and society, they develop skills to turn things around and focus inward, evaluating their own lives and looking for places to improve, at home or in the office.

The Idea of Solo Work Versus Group Work

Forced Separation

Involuntary separation from societal groups is necessary to compel the individual into finding solutions and developing identity. Humans, by nature, tend to cling to others, through want or necessity. Beginning at childbirth, with a baby instinctively crying out for his mother, to the very elderly, often being physically dependent on others, this part of human nature can inhibit one's desire to "strike out on one's own," and develop independent thoughts, making it more difficult to cast off the cultural ideologies of others. Certainly, children frequently enter a rebellious phase, seeking to distance themselves from their parents; however, they are often not doing so in order to become more individualized, but rather to reassociate themselves into other groups—usually those of their peers having similar interests.

If natural or realistic society does not provide proper guidance for the individual, then the medium of fictional literature furnishes inescapable paths for him to follow. Maternal or paternal dependencies are not a problem in the *Harry Potter* series since both parents are dead—a technique not uncommon in children's literature for Mary is without her parents in *The Secret Garden*, Peter Pan lacks any parents in *Peter and Wendy*, and Anne is missing her mother and father in *Anne of Green Gables*. Fairy tales also explore this idea of separation as in the case of *Cinderella*, where the father is missing or detached and the step-mother is abusive. Granted, the desire for unification is still present, for Harry frequently opines and yearns for the comfort, advice, and protection of his folks. In Book 1, he discovers a mirror which displays his parents to him. This instills strong emotion in Harry: “He had a powerful kind of ache inside him, half joy, half terrible sadness” (209). His wish to stay connected with his parents is evident here as the passage states, “How long he stood there, he didn’t know. The reflections did not fade and he looked and looked until a distant noise brought him back to his senses. He couldn’t stay here” (209). While the desire to stay connected with one’s parents may seem natural, a separation must occur sooner or later. Harry’s newfound method of quasi-connecting with his mom and dad seems beneficial at first, but at the same time, it prevents him from fulfilling his duty. Often nature needs to sever the connection between the archetypal hero and his parents to allow him to complete his quest alone. A little while later, Dumbledore will advise Harry to avoid the enchanted mirror: “It does not do to dwell on dreams and forget to live, remember that” (214). With Harry’s parents absent, he is forced to make independent decisions and evaluate right and wrong.

While his friends and faculty at Hogwarts offer some semblance of community for Harry, it is seldom enough, for “Harry occasionally feel that, even at Hogwarts, he is completely alone in a hostile world” (Kornfeld and Prothro 126). Phineas Nigellus points this out to Harry in Book 5: “No, like all young people, you are quite sure that you alone feel and think, you alone recognize danger, you alone are the only one clever enough to realize what the Dark Lord may be planning” (496). Several factors influence Harry’s feelings of loneliness: being an orphan is a primary one as each holiday sends most students home with families, leaving Harry with limited options. In addition, he is repeatedly reminded that he is the chosen one; he knows he is the solo hero to fight Voldemort. Even during full-scale battle in Book 7, the reality of being alone is present, especially in the forest: “He was perfectly alone. Nobody was watching. Nobody else was there” (705). For the moment, his comrades, his advisors, and his support are all missing. He is alone. Good friends and companions are often beneficial and important to have, and teamwork is witnessed repeatedly in each book. Nevertheless, at Hogwarts, like nearly all educational institutions, each child is graded independently. The reminder is clear: in life everyone is ultimately on his or her own. Having the faculty to evaluate justice and reason accordingly is paramount for all.

How important is solo separation? One example from *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* illustrates it as a matter of life and death. Harry and Cedric are from competing houses, yet team up and grab the goblet together: “The immediate result of this rare instance of inter-house cooperation is that Cedric is murdered, suggesting the disquieting notion that there is little value in working together to extend one’s family beyond its usual boundaries” (Kornfeld and Prothro 127). More striking is the fact that Cedric’s death serves no useful purpose in assisting the hero with his quest. He did not die as a martyr or one who willingly offered his life in exchange for another; he was simply part of an ambush, struck down before even firing a return shot. Teamwork killed one and benefited neither. Accordingly, had Harry relinquished his right to claim the trophy (for they had both arrived simultaneously) and allowed Cedric full rights to it, the results would have likely ended the same. For the hero and reader, the lesson is clear: do not wait for others to make the change; they may be less qualified.

Becoming an individual does not mean complete separation from encompassing groups. To be clear, the initiation should not teach one to “think differently,” but rather the neophyte must develop the *ability to think differently*. He or she can still belong, can still function as a contributing member of society, and can still partake in the enjoyable (and perhaps unenjoyable) rituals and traditions. In other words, he is not learning to be a deliberate outsider or one who espouses antithetical views to everything he or she witnesses and is involved in; moreover, one learns to be essentially aware if the group is heading down the wrong path or making the wrong choices. In effect, he or she learns to be a “difference maker,” but only when a difference *needs* to be made.

The Concept of Real Unity

Regardless of solo development, forming groups is still necessary for companionship, and sometimes survival. Likewise, common bonds unite members with common interests. In the *Harry Potter* series, the grouping levels quickly become apparent. One step up from being an individual, Harry first aligns himself with Hermione and Ron, forming a bond, which serves as companionship and protection from others, primarily school bullies. The next primary level is that of the school “houses,” which foster community and competition among students, although not all observe this collectivity as beneficial as noted by John Kornfeld and Laurie Prothro: “Rather than merely motivating students to do their very best in school, these ‘family feuds’ undermine any chance of camaraderie among houses and intensify their antipathy toward one another” (126-27). They also write, “This estrangement is particularly disturbing because the teachers and the headmaster himself cultivate and encourage it” (126). This may be true, although it still hinges on common interests and is affected by the current necessity of bonding levels. In other words, when the common interest changes to a higher level, as when Voldemort directly threatens the entire school, then the houses may unite to overcome that adversity. Thus, the grouping levels alter as the common interests change. That said, one noteworthy exception may be the student grouping in relation to the faculty. Overall, there does not appear to be a common bond of “students against teachers,” for some students bond with certain teachers and rebel against others. This may be due to the teachers also representing particular houses and therefore representative of competing student groups, although it might be closer in lines of “good” students bonding with “good” teachers and “bad” ones with “bad.”

By necessity, these groupings do fluctuate, and if the individual will not separate himself from the group, then the group may eject the individual. Groups to belong to are available at all levels, yet as the series’ examples demonstrate, each will fail or expel the hero at one time or another, forcing him to continue his independent journey alone. Jealously often wedges discord into Harry’s smallest group of friendship. When Harry’s name comes up as a candidate in the Tri-Wizard Tournament in Book 4 (through no doing of his own), Ron ostracizes Harry, leaving him befuddled as to why. Hermione, his other closest friend, must explain that it was simply jealously that caused the reaction (289). In other cases, Hermione must distance herself in order to focus on her studies. Time and time again, we see Harry’s closest comrades abandoning him or the group, amicably or otherwise, for *individual* hang-ups or needs.

Within the houses, separation occurs for a plethora of reasons, showing that even those supposedly united will (at times) desert or fail others in need. The difference, however, is important to note. In Book 5, fellow house students bond with Harry in efforts to defend themselves better after the school system fails to equip them properly for real-life situations. Each student displays a strong desire to learn—they are all unified in cause and effort, but still, it is Harry who will eventually undertake the greatest battle. Readers see that attaining justice may be desired by the core of society, yet the individual becomes the one to carry it out.

Above that is the more general example of how the group of students (including Harry) has to use three essential steps in handling justice: evaluating the situation, analyzing it, and (if necessary) finding an alternative solution. This is what occurs when Professor Umbridge refuses to offer proper defensive training in their Defense Against the Dark Arts class. There, they had 1) to evaluate the outcome of following the established system, including the recent changes 2) to decide the system was faulty and going to lead to their demise, and 3) to implement a change, albeit against the rules, for fixing the problem. When questioned about learning to use defensive spells in Book 5, Professor Umbridge replies by saying, “Why, I can’t imagine any situation arising in my classroom that would require you to use a defensive spell, Miss Granger. You surely aren’t expecting to be attacked during class?” (242). This response comes despite several years of attacks happening to not only Harry, but other students as well. It was clear that they were not learning to defend themselves effectively by following Professor Umbridge’s and the past instructor’s teaching (or lack of teaching), and therefore needed to subvert authority and undertake a more proactive approach. Certainly, the case involved the ends justifying the means, for in a less dire situation, the arguments for subverting authority would be considerably weakened, but that is all part of weighing the necessity of moving to step three. Step one should always be performed. Children should be taught to evaluate what goes on around them and understand more about the specific situation. Nowadays, many parents include reasoning even when disciplining children, to help them (and perhaps they themselves) in knowing why the punishment was necessary or justified. Along with hopefully preventing the fault from recurring, the parent encourages the child to find reasoning behind actions and consequences.

As stated previously, it is at the highest level of adversity or danger when the unified group should remain intact, yet that is where the larger breakdowns occur. Rather than unifying the wizard world at a time when great evil is approaching, the Ministry of Magic (echoing many faulty governments or rather faulty aspects of government) frequently offers divisive elements to separate groups or render them less effective. A concrete example occurs in Book 5 where Professor Umbridge causes outrage among the pupils at the school as well as the faculty. Her lack of defensive teaching has caused the students to form their own training group. She prohibits students organizing in societies, teams, groups, and clubs. (351). In essence, she acts as a hindrance to the school's mission, which leads to Dumbledore having to flee the school. At a time when cohesiveness is most important, unity is falling apart. The reader sees justice failing at the highest level of Hogwarts, and the not uncommon literal motif of one individual by necessity being required to make all the difference.

Philosophy and Justice

Cicero's Reasoning

Determining the sources of what many consider justice may help shed light on how the protagonist's or hero's involvement is pertinent to maintaining order. It would not be a far-fetched statement to claim that few children are likely to have studied the translations of the writings of Cicero, though a brief understanding of his philosophies regarding justice might explain how the concepts fit into our society and, subsequently, our literature. Edward Clayton summarizes Cicero's *On the Laws* as follows: "Philosophy teaches us that by nature human beings have reason, that reason enables us to discover the principles of justice, and that justice gives us law. Therefore any valid law is rooted in nature, and any law not rooted in nature (such as a law made by a tyrant) is no law at all." Thus, Harry Potter, and the reader likewise, is instinctively qualified to examine the laws and those performing them to ascertain whether or not they are working. The difference between real life and fiction comes when flaws are found. Stories may depict the individual personally fixing the problem, as is seen when Harry does battle with his adversaries, but the reader must be aware of the difference: in real life, one must take his or her troubles to the collective whole, or rather those in charge of solving injustices—people ranging from judges and jury members to perhaps even parents. In society, the next step after identifying the issue is convincing others that it is indeed a problem in need of solving, which is often the case in the *Harry Potter* series. Likewise, the credibility of the characters frequently determines whether or not those around them will believe the troubles presented. It is not a matter of deciding if their issues are truly relevant and in need of attention, but a matter of if those issues truly exist at all, for many times in the *Harry Potter* books, the young adults are simply accused of lying or misinterpreting danger.

A difficulty young adults often face lies in convincing adults of their truthfulness—a concept that becomes heightened within the realm of fantasy. Because they are caught in the middle of the liminal phase, evaluating the veracity of young adult's claims is often difficult as many discover that the simplest means of attaining desires is by fibbing. Nevertheless, insisting on 100 percent honesty seems ironical considering a common part of the parenting process involves falsifying information in order to "protect the child." Witness this in parents' withholding information regarding tragedy and death from children or at least altering the truth, only needing to explain later the difficult details. Such a contradictory method of reasoning is not only for protection, however, since adults may also tell untrue stories either to avoid hard-to-explain ideas such as procreation or to avoid spoiling an enjoyable tradition, as in the case of Santa Claus. Early childhood appears to be almost a case where both parties are allotted some room for engaging in "storytelling." Young children listen to imaginative books containing monsters (e.g., *Where the Wild Things Are*) and parents partake by providing or reading these stories to them. Despite the acceptance of Santa Claus and other such fables, one could question whether or not this type of teaching involves lying to children, and whether the fiction books do so as well. Certainly, the idea of fiction or imaginative works being "lies" is nothing new. Even Renaissance writers felt moved to defend their genres against such accusations. Sir Philip Sidney states it clearly in *The Defense of*

Poesy: “Now for the poet, he nothing affirms and therefore never lies, for, as I take it, to lie is to affirm that to be true which is false” (35). When asked if Santa Claus is really true or if Peter Pan is a real boy, the parent then faces the dilemma of how to respond, yet for *Harry Potter* and other such novels, they are sold as fiction and affirm nothing to be entirely true. This early phase, however, and the breeches in honesty, may again be part of a natural process, for if (as Cicerco explains) humans are only following reason offered by nature, then these occurrences are a natural phenomenon and do not violate any form of justice.

Qualifying the acceptability and legality of laws during adolescence involves a duplicitous nature due to children being taught to question the laws, while still being unable to alter them. The exception frequently occurs inside fiction since the hero finds ways to circumnavigate the rules or laws. Often the easiest solution is just to break them. If the end results are good, there is usually no later punishment—the ends *justified* the means. Despite that, there are examples in the *Harry Potter* series where breaking the law has repercussions, where the *ends* are not accepted, such as when he faces the courtroom trial in Book 5 for using magic outside of the school and nearly expelled. Still, the real world does not expect children to break any laws which do not seem just or appealing to them. Questioning and evaluating may occur, but changes may not. While this may appear a negative aspect, in effect it serves a good purpose, for children may still lack the wisdom to understand the deeper meaning and purpose behind the limitations and rules set upon them. A youth may determine that the legal drinking age is unjust and unfair to him or her and desire for a change to be made; however, a few years into adulthood, he or she might come to the conclusion that the cons far outweigh the pros in allowing minors to consume alcohol. Adding to that, one may later conclude that perhaps he or she would have drunk responsibly, yet as a collective whole, children may differ in their needs—suggesting that the rules need to be set down for what is best for everybody, not just the ones able to articulate the assumptions and foundations behind such laws. If a youth estimates a law or rule to be unjust or unfair during his or her liminal period, then this estimation should be strong enough to remain pertinent when adulthood is reached. At that point, others would need to be convinced as well, hence the necessity of good writing skills or solid oratorical techniques. One can quickly see why orations were so commonly discussed in ancient philosophy, though they may be used for negative purposes as well as positive ones.

Thus, the young reader has a formidable task ahead, but the desire to perform should come readily. Conflict drives most literature, with adversity replacing normality and characters being thrown into situations where readers yearn for their escape. Augmenting that is when the hero is an underdog or represents those in society who have been given an unfair or unjust burden to carry—whether by nature or society. As noted by Cicero, people look to root out any tyrants abusing the law, and, by extension, any groups doing likewise. Readers or heroes, however, also have to evaluate the laws: are they following what is right? Are they following *nature*? Unsurprisingly, this may be far more difficult than merely identifying an adversary erring in the wrong. The reader commonly observes Professor Snape being unfair to those outside the Slytherin house, but exactly which law is being broken? In Book 1, Snape pelts Harry with questions he cannot answer and prevents Hermione from responding. Such actions demonstrate inequality as seen by Harry's reaction to Snape accusing him of deliberately sabotaging another student's potion: "This was so unfair that Harry opened his mouth to argue, but Ron kicked him behind their cauldron" (139). With unfairness, fighting back is much more difficult than combating injustice. Snape is merely being spiteful and mean, but is meanness a form of injustice or just a character flaw? Of course, the more serious the violation, the easier it becomes to identify injustice (despite not readily being able to define it or even explain its roots). Readers may understand Voldemort's motives a little more in the latter books, but most would not absolve his crimes of kidnapping and murder. Such conclusions often do not take much (if any) analysis, yet matters grow complicated when one has to delve into the workings of society and establish what is in need of alteration.

Defining Justice

The idea of true justice is indeed philosophical; however, some definition is necessary to establish an idea of injustice, especially since the word is used frequently throughout the *Harry Potter* series. *Webster* defines justice as "the maintenance or administration of what is just especially by the impartial adjustment of conflicting claims or the assignment of merited rewards or punishments" ("justice"). An alternate definition is "conformity to truth, fact, or reason" ("justice"). More light might be shed by seeking out the word's root, "just": "having a basis in or conforming to fact or reason" ("just"). Likewise, another alternative might be helpful: "acting or being in conformity with what is morally upright or good" ("justice"). What becomes apparent is that the word hinges upon the ideas of “good,” “truth,” and “reason,” yet all three are arguably difficult to define accurately and involve a great deal of ambiguity. Thus, the concept of injustice would suggest one has steered away from things which are good or true. Perhaps it would be prudent to return to Cicero’s suggestions that laws be rooted to nature, though his definitions seem fairly rigid and inflexible. Cicero, via the final words of his character Laelius, states:

> There will not be different laws now and in the future. Instead there will be one single, everlasting, immutable law which applies to all nations and all times. The maker, and umpire, and proposer of this law will be God, the single master and ruler of us all. If a man fails to obey God, then he will be in flight from his own self, repudiating his own human nature. (129)

What becomes difficult to determine is if the laws are just, or a way of bringing about and enforcing justice. Is the law based on nature or is the idea of justice based on nature? The latter would seem more fitting, for laws should be alterable should they prove to be inconsistent in aligning with what is just and true. Nature itself is what may remain immobile. If such is the case, then exploration using human nature or what is deemed “natural” should reap clearer results or deeper understanding. Another interesting reference to Cicero is found here:

> Finding the source of law and justice, he says, requires explaining “what nature has given to humans; what a quantity of wonderful things the human mind embraces; for the sake of performing and fulfilling what

> function we are born and brought into the world; what serves to unite people; and what natural bond there is between them. (Clayton)

If this is the case, then what has nature given to mankind? Certainly, life could be considered the primary gift; hence, taking away a man’s life is a strong form of injustice. Following that logic, anything intentionally harmful to another would be unjust as well. This is focusing only on dealings in society, and not harm resulting from natural occurrences or forces of nature (e.g., cancer, disease). Perhaps those victims may proclaim unfairness, but claiming injustice would sound awkward, suggesting it is when man deviates from nature not when nature takes its natural course. Injustice also occurs frequently (as seen in many laws) when property or possessions have been wrongly taken. Using the rationale above, injustice is easier to identify when in relation to life and property and not in regards to what is “true” and what is “good,” terms that would prove difficult to create any infallible laws for society to uphold. Thus, if the laws deviate from protecting people and property, then a good sum of justice is contained therein. Obviously, the matter is far more encompassing, but for an acolyte learning to enter adulthood, it is certainly more than enough to comprehend.

Practical Application

Examining the Laws in Place

To assist in correcting or improving justice, one needs to go beyond the juvenile feeling that events are not fair, but rather one must become better acquainted with how the legislative system is supposed to function. Its flaws may vary: it may be faulty working as designed and directed, or it may have been corrupted over time—possibly what worked before no longer serves the common people.

Most countries having lengthy histories will have an established system in place to administer justice whenever and wherever necessary (in theory at least). Being that Harry’s homeland is England, the foundation of the United Kingdom’s legal system (and by extension, the United States’) should be examined, for what seems “right” and “wrong” for a child may be influenced by his or her direct environment, but for an adult, justice must be obtained through knowledge, through experience or instruction, of a proper and set system. Without that knowledge, it becomes exceedingly difficult to know where justice is failing.

While the foundations of justice are somewhat abstract, the foundation of law for America is essentially rooted in its Constitution, a fact that differs from England. America has a written Constitution to weigh court decisions and written laws against. Violations against this may result in rulings being overturned or laws being rewritten. Despite that, there are a good number of similarities (as in a good number of Western countries) in the legal systems. According to the Institute of Legal Executives, “The constitutional law of the UK is regarded as consisting of statute law on the one hand and case law on the other, whereby judicial precedent is applied in the courts by judges interpreting statute law.” Still, for any adult, lawyer or otherwise, knowing each and every written law is virtually impossible; however, many may find that the majority of laws will break down into two simple and perhaps childlike rules following the idea of justice above: do not take from others what is not yours, and do not hurt others. From failing to pay taxes to murdering one's neighbor, a great number of laws boil down to these simple concepts. If a child knows that these basic rules need following, then an adult should have a good chance at knowing when the system needs correcting.

Obviously, the vast number of court cases and stacks of legal books demonstrate that rules are not always crystal clear, thereby requiring precedence of legal decisions to obtain answers. Also, those brief definitions of the law do not take into consideration examples such as two boxers, who may hurt each other, yet no law is being broken during boxing matches. Likewise, how does the law determine who exactly has the right to own what? Nevertheless, the hero must continually evaluate justice within the law and ensure everything is operating correctly and serving society appropriately. At first, those concepts may appear too serious for exploration within young adult or children's literature, yet there is a simple way such tasks can be undertaken.

The Idea of Play

Despite the often serious aspect of Harry's nature (especially in the later books), there remains a consistent element of play within the series, suggesting its importance in judicial investigation. Entering adulthood, the opportunity for "playing" diminishes—at least on the surface, for most jobs require people to act, talk, and behave like "adults," greatly hindering any chance for exploration of atypical ideas. A vital exception to this is in the arts, with writing and performing being two important examples. With writing, one can use a number of tools to question laws or leaders, occasionally without even cognizance of those being dissected. *Play* becomes accessible again, and the adult writer is allowed to enter this realm freely and stir up some thought-provoking ideas. Witness how the majority of children's books are written by adults. Fantasy books take this concept even further, showing how play can involve breaking many known rules and substituting new ones in a secondary world. The freedom of play may be lost upon adulthood where the opportunity to critique, parody, and analyze authoritative figures and laws may be reduced, or, worse, result in harmful consequences. Turner writes about the notion of "antistructure" as the "dissolution of normative social structure, with its role-sets, statuses, jural right and duties" (28). Not only does antistructure allow evaluating society's norms, but it is also almost a form of rebuilding, whereby each element can be observed in a new fashion to see how truly useful and necessary it is. The whole idea seems to suggest that in order to justify the rules and laws, one must be entirely removed first—a feat difficult to do within the confines of everyday adult life. Aside from the theatre, grownups do not often take on alternate roles. Thus, a person who is not a doctor may never explore what the medical field involves (in general theory at least). Games such as "tag" or "kick the can" allow new rules to be followed or invented. A role-playing game like "Cops and Robbers," may allow children to explore the motivations and rationales behind laws and rules. Granted, such reasoning may be entirely for self-entertainment; however, with adults inside the stage world, a wide variety of discovery opens up—order can instantly be removed. According to Brian Sutton-Smith, "We may be disorderly in games either because we have an overdose of order, and want to let off steam, or because we have something to *learn* through being disorderly" (qtd. in Turner 28). The opportunity is encouraging for it exists in both children's society and the adult world. The former has ample room for play and experimentation, while the latter has the medium of the stage or authorship to exude ideas and evaluate justice—with a bonus of perhaps being able to persuade others to agree.

Another interesting addition to the benefits of people *playing* through the written form is how their views and opinions come through vicariously in young adult literature, yet the reader may often feel a sense of self-discovery in his or her awareness in critiquing the judicial system. Younger readers may truly think it is Harry's idea to question the established system, whereas others may understand that the philosophies, either consciously through decisive choices in writing or unconsciously through socially conditioned customs, come from the author. Nevertheless, the reader can observe that, yes, authority can and must be questioned—those in power are subject to scrutiny. Written laws are open for debate and analysis. If the reader takes those ideas away, then the arts have served their purpose. *Play* is not just for children.

Chapter 3

Criticisms and Responses

Overview

Few would argue against the sensational success of the *Harry Potter* series, since, as a consumer good, the books have sold worldwide and generated a windfall of revenue for the publishing company and the author herself. While writing Book 1, J. K. Rowling "was also working full time, and bringing up her daughter as a single parent" (Richard Pettinger). What might have begun difficultly certainly changed over the years: "The Harry Potter brand is worth an estimated four billion dollars, which makes J. K. Rowling, by some reports, more wealthy than Queen Elizabeth II" (Heilman 1). Adding to the Cinderella story is the rags-to-riches angle and the fact that it was her first real success. From a marketing standpoint, everything is copasetic, yet critical reviews go beyond the mere dollars and figures of sales, and delve into the literary merit and value of the popular works. Since determining judicial relevance by proclaiming the importance of such an idea in children's literature is being professed, it would serve well to address these critiques, especially where they pertain to justice or fairness.

Faculty Review

Special attention should be given to the established system of law and order within the *Harry Potter* novels to evaluate how effectively the current system is operating. While judicial rule is in play at Hogwarts, the main "authority" to which they are subjected is, unsurprisingly, the teachers. Here, their effectiveness is limited at best.

Megan Birch takes the series to task for shortcomings in the faculty and underdeveloped or misrepresented characters of the staff. Fortunately, the series includes numerous professors and faculty members to choose from, with many having integral participation in the story. Birch points out, “Most teachers at Hogwarts are stock caricatures. Their behaviors, their dress and appearance, the subjects they teach, and their instruction fit neatly into shallow and conventional stereotypes” (104). Important reasons exist for this being true. Primarily, the focus of the *Harry Potter* novels, like many young adult and children’s novels, is not on the adults, but rather on the youth. A writer may choose to spend words and paragraphs flushing out three-dimensional well-rounded adult figures, but, in doing so, attention is pulled away from the principal characters. Still, children live in an adult world, and if they are going to critique justice and the actions of adults, those adults need to be present and fully represented, and, fortunately, many are.

While it is true that several of the adult characters are perhaps shallow, there are several fully realized adult characters in the novels, too. Late in the series, readers learn about the backgrounds and motivations of characters such as Professor Dumbledore, with his obsessive past and how yearning for a chance to see his family cost him dearly: “I lost my head, Harry. I quite forgot that it was now a Horcrux, that the ring was sure to carry a curse” (Book 7 719). Readers also learn that Snape, who faced mistreatment in his younger years by James Potter and his friends, felt great love for Lily Potter: “Tears were dripping from the end of his hooked nose as he read the old letter from Lily” (Book 7 689). Notably, many of the adults’ personas are built upon what happened in their early years, the period when the foundations of right and wrong—or justice—is forged. The added exposition into the characters' lives is helpful; children see that polar presentations of good and evil may be present, but far more often than not, people are duplicitous, having different aspects to their personalities. They do not fit into categories of good and bad, but have both elements tied to their human nature, elements which vacillate as well, further complicating matters. How does a child decide if someone is "good" when he sometimes does bad things, or vice versa?

Still, Birch is correct, for many teachers in the novels remain as flat characters with limited agendas. The reader sees them as only doing their jobs without any subtext occurring, not having anything to offer beyond the basic academic lessons that they teach. Often, teachers are proven inept and unable to perform after a certain range of time. One such example is the Defense Against the Dark Arts position, which changes every year due to various reasons. Again, this serves the notion that students under initiation may witness flaws or inadequacies inherent in the teaching system, similar to the judicial system. The scope of what the student learns during the initiation period need not be resigned only to evaluating and identifying areas to correct or improve in regards to legality, but rather the skill sets may allow a transverse examination of all aspects of adult life. In other words, anything and everything is open for critical analysis and subject to possibly needing changes.

Harry Potter may be a fantasy series, but fantasy relies on believable ties to human nature to remain effective and relatable. Birch notes that "Both Binns and Professor Trelawney are seemingly ineffective teachers who are not closely tuned in to their students" (105). Instead of being a fault in the writing, this better serves as an excellent example tying readers closer to reality. It is somewhat surprising that a critic would point this out as problematic, for how many adults went through their entire educational process having never faced instruction with such teachers? Children as well can probably relate to such examples of poor teachers who were perhaps in the wrong profession or simply fatigued with their jobs. Having both caring teachers and indifferent ones only strengthens the suspension of disbelief.

What Birch misses here comes from a misdirected analysis. With Professor Binns in Book 2, the fact that he is a ghost may echo a disconnect of his subject matter (History) with his students, for some view the past as something distant and inaccessible. Combined with the fact that the History of Magic "was the dullest subject on their schedule," (149) this prevents a close rapport with students. Regarding Professor Trelawney, Rowling writes, "Professor Trelawney's reclusive and aloof behaviors and personality, not age and death, distance her from students" (105), and Birch observes and points out that "she typifies the new-age, alternative, free-spirited teacher who is gentle and kind, though ineffective" (106). In Book 4, students resort to feigned learning or faking their divinations and even Hermione, a student who craves knowledge, finds no merit in Professor Trelawney's methods: "If being good at Divination means I have to pretend to see death omens in a lump of tea leaves, I'm not sure I'll be studying it much longer! That lesson was absolute rubbish compared with my Arithmancy class!" (111). Focus should not be on how ineffective her techniques and methods are, but on the questionable content she delivers. Her curriculum deals with predictions and divining future events, which fail to come true later—at least in whole. She has a vague idea of events to come, yet like all others, neither she (nor anyone else) can ever fully predict the future. The example serves to show that despite all the advancements and benefits of "magic" (and by extension, science), one can never truly foretell the future—keeping free will intact. It is a much needed point: if one is going to learn to improve or change the future, one must know the future is *changeable*. Granted, the professor's obtuseness and ineptitude does demonstrate her to be rather pitiable; however, Rowling's world is not about a pleasant utopia where everyone is treated fairly and justly: moreover, it is a society where injustice and unfairness occur at every level.

If rounded characters within the adult realm are necessary in children's novels, then certainly a seven-volume series spanning thousands of pages has room for at least a few fully fleshed out adult roles—and this is the case in *Harry Potter*. Birch makes a detailed observation of Professor McGonagall, whom she finds is "more detailed and complicated than portraits of more minor characters" (108). She notes how McGonagall is the "strict disciplinarian" teacher and becomes an even more fully rounded character when she steers in the other direction—with a softer, flexible, and more humane side. In essence, her opposite nature completes her characterization. Dumbledore's profound goodness is balanced by his earlier mischief, Snape's darkness with his sacrifice to others, and McGonagall's strictness with her willingness to forgo certain rules. This is not to say that black should become white, or vice-versa, for true good does not usually instantly become true evil in most fantasy or otherwise literature; however, the shades of grey do require balancing. Complicated characters show complex personalities. More importantly, the idea of the opposite remains paramount. Situations, like personality traits, must become inverted. The reader must attain insight that, when necessary, the pupil can become the teacher; the follower can become the leader. The child entering adulthood must be aware that a complete reversal may eventually happen—that with the birth of a child, a "child" may immediately become a parent, though ideally a lot of lead time and preparation time is afforded.

Furthering that is the concept that "teachers can be rule-breakers" (110), which Birch observes. Even should students or readers take the reins and assume control, they must note that if the system does not function properly, sometimes rules must be broken in order to reestablish order and civility. This is where young adult literature gets exceedingly complicated, for how much is too much? What is merely bending or breaking the rules and what is an outright violation of the law, which warrants prosecution and jail time? Professor McGonagall appears to break the rules merely to allow Harry to compete in sporting events, in which case the rules (or laws) appear completely arbitrary and only exist for the sake of existing, sending mixed signals to young readers. Despite that, it may be a necessary example, for society instructs youths to think independently and to look for changes when needed, and then seeks to empower them to take steps in bringing about these changes. Such degrees of acceptable rebellion are perhaps unteachable. Fantasy literature often provides a simple path of the ends justifying the means. If everything works out in the end, then all the rebellion, chaos, violence, and damage caused are mitigated, alleviated, or forgiven entirely. In the real world, and especially the adult world, every severe action usually has harsh consequences, yet it would be unfair to single out one fictive series for such a shortcoming. With both fantasy and fiction, the rules simply need to be established beforehand. In both genres, works may or may not choose to deal with the repercussions of incidents involving serious actions or death. As well, when reading a plausible, realistic work, one may infer that a hearing will eventually take place after a death (even in self-defense); however, the work may choose to avoid actually detailing the process, leaving the reader to assume the environment's judicial system will handle things accordingly.

Institutional Review

Adding to the critique of the faculty characters, Birch also comments upon the series' treatment of the *Harry Potter* educational system: "With regard to curriculum and the institution, the *Order of the Phoenix* stands out as a critique of both institutional constraints that schools face today, such as increased accountability, standardization, and high-stake testing, as well as a critique of common curriculum practices" (115). Few would argue with this, especially considering how much instructional time is lost in simply preparing students to pass particular tests. The system is flawed; change is required. The irony remains that the flaws are incorporated into the very system built to initiate and prepare a child for adulthood, compounding the child's (and reader's) need for careful scrutiny. Both in the fantasy world and likewise the real world, children may witness problems in need of fixing; however, timing also plays an important role. Repairing a faulty school system may be deemed difficult or perhaps impossible while the student is undergoing the educational process. He or she may lack the power to change anything, or more importantly, the proper knowledge to discern whether or not the problems were indeed problems after all. Completion of the program and the perspective of hindsight may be required to identify truly *what did and did not work*. In other words, students may not have the capacity of fully understanding why things are done a particular way until after the initiation is complete.

The caveat to this way of thinking is this: a former student might not have enough motivation or incentive to try and alter a problematic educational system once he or she has completed the curriculum. After all, it is someone else's problem then. Be that as it may, it is a worthwhile prerequisite. Change is often difficult and sometimes costly. Those seeking to effect it should be determined not to better situations only for themselves, but also for society in general. Those are the ones likely to see it through to the end.

Readers of the series may notice the faults of Hogwarts in varying levels. Birch points out that "traditions overshadow learning and we learn that the most important aspects of school do not occur during class instruction" (115). Traditions are powerful, often outranking other elements of society, causing education to suffer and sometimes putting people in harm's way. At times, traditions may be simply historical and benign; at other times, they may be in need of overhaul, as readers see real-life educational problems echoed in the series. It is no question that acolytes learning to empower themselves to fix flaws and find solutions may see the necessity of overhauling the educational system as in the judicial system; however, again, it is not the series' primary focus. Birch writes that the series "does not provide a substantial alternative vision of how school can be" (116). No, it does not. It is not part of Harry's adventure. For Harry

Potter and his friends, there are much more serious problems to tackle. Reforming the educational system is all well and good, but first, they must overcome pure evil and save the world.

Faulty Legalities

Those wishing to critique the structure and methodology in the *Harry Potter* judicial system will likely find ample opportunity, though these “shortcomings” may be intentional, helping readers understand the necessity of critical thinking. Susan Hall points out that in the series, the wizard world weakens because “two separate legal systems, wizard and Muggle, are presented in considerable detail and contrasted: the contrast, while subtle, shows the wizard system as deficient in adequately acknowledging the rule of law” (147). She explains the “rule of law” in reference to A. V. Dicey’s 1908 writing, roughly stating that the law needs to punish those who break already set laws, to be equal for all, and to allow courts to apply those laws. Basically, she is explaining how things are supposed to work in order to demonstrate where the breakdowns lie. More likely than not, however, is the fact that most young readers will neither have read Dicey nor understand a more formalized articulation of what the law is “supposed” to be. Readers may simply sense something is wrong, and expect the hero to take action.

Egalitarian forms of justice are suggested as ideal in the *Harry Potter* series, though its idealism must be accepted. Again, if Rowling’s two worlds are based on a system of justice built upon ideals professed by people such as Dicey, then any deviance from equality signals injustice to the reader. The trials or lack thereof illustrate this: some receive them and some do not; also, they involve both sides of good and evil. Harry receives a trial himself, but many Death Eaters do so as well. Even a non-speaking animal such as Buckbeak is offered a trial, limited as it may be. Despite that, other human characters, such as Sirius Black are not afforded the same considerations. Hagrid is only suspected of a crime and sent to the series' most maximum security prison. Whether or not a child understands how such inequalities can jeopardize all members of society, such phenomena may be frightening. If nothing else, a sturdy judicial code should provide some sense of security, saying people are always safe from jail, provided they do no wrong. When the child reader observes this not to be the case, then he or she might form an objection and desire a change in the judicial system.

Equality for all comes across as ideal, yet it is grounded in cultural beliefs. That is to say, readers will only see justice being broken when people are not being treated equally if they are raised to believe that people are indeed equal. The idea of injustice appears to a great many Western readers because of this mindset. Written down or not, the assumption is that all people need to be treated the same, regardless of class, ethnicity, bloodlines, etc. Obviously, this is not an issue for most, but again, it is a cultural element and more difficult to analyze when moving beyond the idea of questioning as to whether if it is breaking previously written laws, or if it is breaking the foundations of justice: truth and reason via nature are two concepts much more abstract and difficult to "weigh." The series' examples suggest that equality within justice is a much safer method for both the outside world and the wizard world (and therefore the reader's world). Still, injustice does not always deal with serious issues such as theft and murder, for it comes in milder forms, as in the case of prejudice.

For a young child, being ostracized because of race or class may instill feelings of unfairness or injustice for the victim, but while that is unfortunate and unkind, it may not be an actual violation of a written law; however, equating justice to the ideas of what is true and right, allows more exploration for establishing whether or not such mindsets hinder what is natural for humanity. In Book 1, Malfoy dislikes Hermione, due to her Muggle background, and six books later, the problem has not been completely resolved. The reader may side with Hermione and resent Malfoy and his misogynistic shortcomings, but throughout the series, no real solutions are presented to curb these types of problems—readers may merely see those at fault as being intolerant or ignorant. Rowling does nudge the reader in the right direction, for Hermione fights for good and is proven to be vastly intelligent and thoughtful, whereas Malfoy's family is shown to be associated with evil and his character suggests a short-sighted, misguided youth. In effect, aside from that, what solutions can an author really provide readers for combating prejudice? She cannot simply kill off any characters demonstrating such personality flaws, for that would violate the story's verisimilitude and, as well, it may include some of the ones readers side with and care about. In Book 5, the reader may be a little surprised to find these lines when the trio is discussing the school's chosen prefects for their fifth year: "'And that complete cow Pansy Parkinson,' said Hermione viciously. 'How she got to be a prefect when she's thicker than a concussed troll'" (188). In effect, she is demonstrating prejudice against Pansy before allowing her to begin her duty. While both Draco's and Pansy's personality may suggest that they will perform poorly in their duties, they both should be allowed opportunity before judgment is passed. The reader finds that assumptions and stereotypes are indeed present in the positively rendered characters as well. The frequent biases against Hermione do make it easier to absolve her of her faults; however, it still follows a path further away from truth or what is right. What this does is show children that these smaller issues are perhaps more difficult to solve than the larger "good versus evil" ones. Having such illustrations and defects among all the characters does help show that no one is perfect (not even the prefects) and constant self-analysis is also beneficial in one's attempt at bettering society. Sometimes those changes are the most important and the most accessible ones, for children must learn to identify fixable solutions, and not merely enlighten the world to more civilized mindsets. Eradicating prejudice is noble, but not always possible, though attempts should still be made. Hall comments on how inequality through prejudices hinders the abilities of members of society to contribute fully and strengthen their community. She notes, "The value of the synergy between Harry and Hermione's wizard talents and their Muggle experience is rendered less effective because of the wizard world's prejudice against Muggles" (148). Importantly, while Harry and Hermione are hindered, they still find ways to succeed. Children may witness that although prejudice exists, solutions can be found to achieve their goals. Seeing prejudice as wrong is easy when the reasoning is completely unfounded by any rationale; however, Rowling does provide an example to make such clear clarifications murky.

With Professor Lupin, the matter becomes even more complicated. Despite his assistance in battling evil and successes in teaching, his resignation is almost compelled once the truth surfaces in Book 3. He states, "This time tomorrow, the owls will start arriving from parents…. They will not want a werewolf teaching their children" (423). Empathy from the reader will likely elicit a sense of unfairness for losing a likeable and loyal character; however, Rowling's technique of displaying the problems with prejudices is tainted here—the anticipated concerns of those parents are not entirely unfounded. Professor Lupin could be dangerous should he forget or be unable to take his medicine. Like a tamed wild animal, he *should* be safe, but he has the potential to harm a child unwillingly should the right circumstances arise. Thus, that particular example suggests that people from other cultures, classes, or races are good well-meaning people and should be accepted; however, problems still exist in acceptance. Therefore, both examples are present: accepting an "outsider" such as Hermione offers a great boon to the community, but an outsider such as Lupin offers potential risk. Despite that, there are many situations where prejudice hurts the hero's chance of saving humanity. In terms of mission fulfillment, prejudice is indeed an obstacle, an antagonist. Even the word itself suggests one has been pre-judged—again, lacking a fair trial.

Rowling goes even further in displaying the dire necessity of trials, for characters may be slated for execution without due process—showing how a fair judicial system is warranted. A mistake such as wrongful imprisonment may perhaps be rectified and reparations offered (though this is seldom if ever seen); however, a mistake involving execution is obviously permanent. Hall observes that "the Ministry of Magic, which rules the wizard world, does so by means of the exercise of wide discretionary powers, which are not subject to review by any legal process. Ministry officials enjoy a high level of immunity from being called to account for their actions" (148). One need not have a clear overview of the written law to know that justice is often broken when accountability is absent. Even after the Ministry's attempt to expel Harry in Book 5, they continually present a hindrance to him and his mission of defeating Voldemort. Whereas Harry should have been focusing on defeating him, readers learn that "he had been too absorbed in what was going on at Hogwarts, too busy dwelling on the ongoing battles with Umbridge, the injustice of all the Ministry interference" (383). What often happens in revenge stories is the hero is forced to enact justice due to the impotence of the judicial system, yet here, the system (via its arbiters) is not impotent, but acts as an antagonist to Harry's quest. As well, the agents of execution, Dementors, appear to wield some independent thoughts in executing punishments, furthering the idea that the individual administering his or her own form of justice proves to be a problematic and an often unwise solution. Nevertheless, this idea is ironically overruled in the fact that Rowling allows her heroes to do exactly that.

There appears to be a conflicting tolerance of vigilante or independent justice operating inside the *Harry Potter* books since some characters function and thrive best outside the rules or laws, while this motif is unacceptable for others. The trio of Harry, Ron, and Hermione frequently disobeys rules and authority, although the end results are almost always positive. Moreover, had they followed every rule strictly, they would not be successful or perhaps even alive. Opposed to that are the antagonistic figures who are proven to be in error when they break the rules. One should also consider, however, that the trio does in fact operate as a group much of the time, suggesting a form of checks and balances to ensure justice is not passed by any single opinion alone. In effect, the group acts as a micro society.

More people questioning problems can offer more solutions than those going about it on their own. Different backgrounds can also lend assistance to providing new solutions. Witness this with Harry and Hermione as Hall writes:

> Harry and Hermione, having been bought up in the Muggle system, can bring rule of law-based thinking to problem solving. They function as touchstones against which previously unquestioned assumptions of the wizard world are measured and often achieve "the right answer" by means that other wizards overlook. (148)

To keep justice fresh and effective, sometimes an outsider is necessary. This role is undertaken by the reader as he or she witnesses and sides with the importance of questioning those assumptions within the book and, hopefully, outside the book as well. Once again, notice the idea of finding the "right answer." The end goal is not always to check and weigh if figures are following the written or established law, but to question whether that law fits into what is just, into what is true and right.

The fallacies and shortcomings in the judicial system of the *Harry Potter* series are what allow readers to witness problems and opportunities for change. Overall, Hall is correct is stating that the *Harry Potter* wizard world "does not recognize the rule of law in the Dicey sense at all" (147). It does not and should not, for a utopian society would leave the heroes (and readers) with nothing to do, with no assumptions to be analyzed or philosophies to be questioned. Hall goes on to write, "This absence of an understanding of the rule of law represents a fault line in the terrain of the wizard world on which the forces of chaos can apply maximum pressure" (147). Whether or not she considers this misunderstanding to be Rowling's fault or that of the powers that be within the wizard world is immaterial, for our heroes need exactly that: a problem to solve. In addition, a society needs not necessarily follow Dicey's model, for again, different cultures may find different methodologies more effective for their own ideas of truth, fact, and reason. What is crucial is simply having an established system, so a society can agree on what works best. More importantly, it is something members of a society can adhere to, making changes whenever it is deemed necessary, changes perhaps pointed out and suggested by the individual, be it a child or adult, girl or boy, insider or outsider. Exactly who questions, analyzes, and evaluates justice is less important than the idea that it simply needs to be done, and done repeatedly in society.

Originality

One particular challenge facing Rowling and her *Harry Potter* series is a lack of originality. Evidence of this is apparent: names are borrowed from historical figures and past fictive or mythological works. To some, Hermione may appear original at first, but to readers of Greek mythology, they may recognize the name as the daughter of Menelaus. Severus was a Roman emperor. The concepts of evil trolls, powerful wizards, magical wands, fire-breathing dragons, and enchanted castles have all been imagined in past stories and epic adventures. When asked about her views on *Harry Potter*, author Ursula Le Guin notes about the first book, "I read it to find out what the fuss was about, and remained somewhat puzzled; it seemed a lively kid's fantasy crossed with a 'school novel', good fare for its age group, but stylistically ordinary, imaginatively derivative, and ethically rather mean-spirited" (*The Guardian*). In order to create a connection, an author often uses concepts already familiar to the reader; constructing fantasy out of completely new ideas would prove difficult for many. Even later in the same interview, Le Guin admits that she was inspired by the *Leaves from the Golden Bough*, which she read as a child. Despite that, many past and present authors simple do not reinvent the wheel, per se; moreover, it is the combination of such elements that offers fantasy literature its merit for being re-presented again and again over the years. Adding to that, Rowling combines those archetypal elements with modern-day society, allowing a fresh presentation, combining past and present aspects of life.

Repetition of past concepts should be tolerable as stories and their messages often bear repeating. Instructing children on how to question assumptions in society and think critically is important; however, presenting these lessons through purely didactic writings would most likely cause many children to tune out and forgo reading at all. Using the medium of fantasy literature, children receive the benefits of allegorical teachings, as well as an increased vocabulary over time. Without realizing it, children may be learning important lessons about justice and fairness.

Plausibility

Writers of fantasy literature have to come to terms with some inherent aspects of fiction and fantasy: the story did not happen (fiction), and the story can not happen (fantasy). Science fiction may allow a higher degree of plausibility in that perhaps things could happen on a future date when technology advances far enough, but for fictive fantasy involving teleportation fireplaces and invisibility cloaks, the writer and audience must agree to forgo certain rules and begin the journey.

That said, there likely will be places where the plots becomes thin or perhaps implausible, even when following the rules set up in the newly established universe. Kieran Healy makes her view clear and simple when she states, "The real problem is more that Harry seems to be an idiot." Her reasoning comes after having read Book 5: "Harry is now a hot-headed adolescent and doesn't always make the right choices. But having it happen for the *n*th time (with Harry showing absolutely no capacity to learn from previous mistakes) begins to grate in a book that's 760 pages long." By his fifth year of school, Harry is older and somewhat wiser, but he still remains in the liminal stage. Lessons learned during that period are not always remembered and followed after the first time. Repetition is necessary for a child to grow and learn from experience, be it from positive or negative reinforcement. Judging a fantasy work for plausibility should be done by linking with the universal elements that bind the human race together. If children are forgetful and slow to change bad habits, then Harry fits a plausible figure accordingly. Healy does take a few other elements in the series to task for shortcomings. Notably, many authors and readers prefer to side with Horace's advice in the *Ars Poetica*: "There should be no god to intervene, unless the problem merits such a champion" (128); however, as Healy points out, "The character of Grawp serves no purpose at all in the story other than to save the day, *deus ex machina*, a few chapters after he is introduced." Arguably, the character could have been eliminated and the character count shortened, though readers thoroughly enjoying the series may not desire having less people in the books. Since his vocabulary and speech is limited at best, Grawp can serve another purpose: he is representative of problems being solved by brute force rather than through thought and intelligence. When society relies too heavily on this type of mindset, problems can occur. Communication becomes difficult. Understanding becomes slow. A society may desire a strong military for protection and order, but a strong diplomacy is necessary too, both inside the community and outside. Fortunately, the character of Hagrid splits the two and offers might, but still some rational thinking as a complement.

Healy points out other mistakes made by characters in the series, but again, these echo real life—for everyone. She notes that Harry neglects to use the two-way mirror offered by Sirius and that Harry and Ron often speak too openly about the covert Order of the Phoenix. People, especially children, are prone to often missing the simplest solutions. The lessons learned in children's literature are not solely focused on preventing problems; rather they serve to illustrate ways to fix problems created by either themselves or others.

Length and Murkiness

Another criticism of the series falls in the way of sheer volume—the texts primarily grow in size to where the latter ones reach over 600, 700, and 800 pages. This is not to say a good story cannot be lengthy, though solid writing is necessary to pull off such a feat. Upon finishing Book 5, John Mark Eberhart states, "Rowling is not a hopeless writer, but her boundless success is gutting her prose. She needs an editor like the Hulk needs anger management. She needs a human X-Acto knife to slice the surfeit. She needs the relative crispness of her first three books" ("The Age"). Whereas Book 3 ended at 435 pages, Book 4 stops at page 652, a near 50 percent increase in volume. The abrupt increase does appear odd. If the targeted age of the child reader is following Harry's advancement in years, then one might expect a progressive increase from book to book; however, the rapid increase happens once again as Book 5 totals 870 pages, another substantial increase.

Support of these changes will most likely depend on the reason one is reading the books in the first place. For someone only reading the *Harry Potter* series to feel connected to others (from a literary or non-literary standpoint), the chore of reading so much more may feel overwhelming; thus, the reader may look for characters to omit and ways to make sentences more laconic. Conversely, a reader who enjoys being immersed within the *Harry Potter* world may welcome more material to engage in. Either way, the reading is not compulsory for most. For those wishing to have fewer pages to read, the easiest solution is to simply not read the books at all.

Harmful Evidence in *Harry Potter*

Since positive aspects of the series are being considered, one should examine critical perspective in regards to negative aspects as well. In analyzing assumptions, children learn to view both sides of an issue and explore arguments and reasoning; thus, the same openness should be offered to critical analysis of the series. In an article entitled "Controversial Content: Is *Harry Potter* Harmful to Children?" Deborah J. Taub and Heather L. Servaty-Seib explore key issues concerning the books and their reception. From a religious viewpoint, they note that "The religious concerns include assertions that the books portray magic as harmless, fun, or good and that they may encourage children to dabble in the occult" (14). Taub and Servaty-Seib also point out how some believe Rowling's inspiration comes directly from Satan. As radical at that may be, opposite views are also listed: "Several Christian leaders who support and admire the *Harry Potter* books find the books promoting values such as courage, love, friendship, and loyalty, with a moral approach of good vs. evil" (16). Contrasting opinions are important for consideration. In both legislative and judicial aspects, children must learn that all sides of an issue or argument need exploring for a more thorough understanding.

Another concept explored is that of scariness. The novels deal with many deaths and always by unnatural causes. Oversized snakes and spiders also factor into the stories. Overall, there is no shortage of scary elements to frighten children (or adults). There is a solution, however, since,

> The child who is reading independently has the ability to control the pace of the story rather than being at the mercy of the pacing of the movie or TV show.…The child has a number of options including putting the book down, skipping over the scary paragraphs or pictures, reading more quickly or slowly, peeking ahead at the ending to reassure him/herself that everything comes out OK. (21)

If scary parts of life can be observed and dealt with in a fictive world, then the lessons learned may prove beneficial in real life. A child may have no idea how to deal with the loss of a friend or relative, but through literature, he or she may witness that others who are the same age have faced similar problems and come out alright. By experiencing these emotions during the liminal phase, the future adult may have an advantage by having some idea of what to expect, should tragedy befall him or her.

Chapter 4

Close Analysis

Overview

The juvenile reader may simply receive *Harry Potter* as enjoyable entertainment, but the subtle lessons in justice occur early, even within the first book, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. Just a dozen pages into the book—a book arguably directed at the reader's age possibly mirroring Harry Potter's—one comes across a serious and macabre passage as adults discuss what was attempted on the baby Harry Potter: "They're saying he tried to kill the Potter's son, Harry. But – he couldn't. He couldn't kill that little boy. No one knows why, or how, but they're saying that when he couldn't kill Harry Potter, Voldemort's power somehow broke" (12). In that one passage, the word 'kill' is used *three* times, associating it with death, that of a child no less. In fact, while Rowling chooses to avoid directly stating that a character was attempting to murder an infant, that is exactly the case at hand. Words such as "son," "boy," and his proper name are used instead, suggesting the author's hesitance to state the idea that life is indeed serious and precarious, even for those who are not yet adults. The adventure does take place in a fantasy world, but the idea of people dying, young and old alike, occurs in the real world as well. With these "grownup" ideas beginning the series, the lesson informs the reader that he or she has begun a new journey, an initiation adventure leading out of childhood and eventually ending in adulthood.

Life's Early Stages

The ritual journey into adulthood begins at an age where children start making their own decisions, contrasting the early stages of life, where parents or providers maintain full control. The reasons are obvious, though a written example displays the projection of what outcome these decisions will have later in life for the child. Early on, Dumbledore states, "Can't you see how much better off he'll be, growing up away from all that until he's ready to take it?" (13). As babies, children need all decisions made for them, but the example shows that these immediate decisions are intended to govern a child's path and well-being beyond infancy. While having parental guidance is helpful and often necessary, the child must become cognizant that he or she will be allowed—or should be allowed—to begin making independent decisions. Those decisions may be limited in some aspects, for a young adult is still subject to adult control (often for good reason), yet one must learn to at least start thinking for oneself and evaluating exactly what will make him or her "better off." Again, this phase of having adult wisdom and direction needs not necessarily end at the beginning of the youth's transitory period into adulthood; however, the child must begin to have opinions and ideas regarding his or her own best interest, for the same mindset must be applied to weighing judicial matters for others or society in general. Justice must be evaluated within the home before it can expand outside of the home.

Resistance to this new way of thinking may come immediately from those in control, either derived from fear or a hesitance to allow the child to enter the liminal stage, a stage which requires both parties to explore exactly why things are the way they are. Rules, requirements, and restrictions all must be examined for reasoning and understanding. Such undertakings will benefit both the adult and child if followed, yet in the novels, readers witness a strong defiance to this transition, especially in Book 1: "Don't ask questions—that was the first rule for a quiet life with the Dursleys" (20). In the book, the rule exists to cover a lie, suggesting it may be somewhat necessary, or presumed necessary since they too may be only doing what is "best for the child." The problem lies in that it may become a common escape from ever discussing the more difficult questions and having to offer explanations. With the example in Book 1, the message implies that the foster parents are doing wrong by withholding this information and that his real parents (should they still be alive) would be allowing his full mental development. The child reader receives the impression that, yes, questions are good. The effect is not to challenge authority at that point, but to understand life better.

Near the beginning of the child's transition into adulthood, bringing about actual changes may prove difficult. In chapter two of Book 1, Harry's situation illustrates that he does ask questions and attempts to make the best of things, yet no measures prove effective, with the exception that several occurrences do happen to assist him in his struggles. In effect, his subconscious desire does wield some power in fending off injustices.

Not far into his journey, the protagonist learns that rules may be bent and violations forgiven if doing so serves a greater good—in one case, sports. In Book 1, after a bone-breaking accident, Professor McGonagall must escort a student to the hospital. She explicitly states that no students are to ride their brooms upon penalty of expulsion.

Seeing an injustice about to be done (Malfoy is stealing away with a valuable possession of another, and will break it unless Harry intervenes), Harry takes off on a broomstick and saves the item, getting caught just as he saves the stolen property from being broken. While he fears the worst, the result is that his actions demonstrate him to be an athletic student capable of helping their house Quidditch team. McGonagall even notes, “I shall speak to Professor Dumbledore and see if we can’t bend the first-year rule” (152). Another rule is being “bent” by an adult. Notably, Harry’s action of saving the other student’s heirloom was not observed or mentioned by the professor, nor is it mentioned in their meeting where she pardons his actions. She also adds: “I want to hear you’re training hard, Potter, or I may change my mind about punishing you” (152). Rules may not only be broken, but despite the presumably joking manner of McGonagall, the inconsistency of law enforcement also becomes evident. Granted, it was not a serious crime and would be equated to perhaps an infraction rather than a misdemeanor or felony; nevertheless, the reader observes that rules can be broken when necessary, even for something as trivial as *sports*—although some may not consider sports trivial.

Weapons of Justice

Within the fictive world, the vigilant hero must learn to enact justice individually, and whereas eighteenth-century Scottish heroes may wield a claymore and America’s nineteenth-century Western type mavericks may carry a revolver, in the fantastical world of *Harry Potter*, a wand is the weapon of choice. In Book 1, upon entering the wizardry world, one of Harry’s first missions is to receive his wand. Accompanied by an adult (Hagrid), Harry receives the equivalent of a modern-day firearm. Whilst some may equate it to parents offering children a BB gun during their childhood years, the wand differs in that its potential is deadly—provided the operator masters the skills necessary to cast lethal spells. Rules, however, are set in place, for Hagrid warns that “yer not ter use magic in the Muggle world except in very special circumstances” (80). Despite that, the wand can be misused by choice, lapses in judgment, or when anger overtakes one’s control. Likewise, equipping youths with wands (guns) appears crucial for self-defense as their antagonists have done the same, a fact which is known, but has not changed the system. Even the dealer admits knowledge of such nefarious uses coming from his transactions when he notices the scar caused by a weapon he formally sold: “I’m sorry to say I sold the wand that did it …Powerful wand, very powerful, and in the wrong hands …well, if I’d known what that wand was going out into the world to do” (83). His speech ends there, but readers can infer that had he known how the wand would be used, he would not have been willing to sell it. The problem is he apparently now does know; he knows and continues to sell wands, as if to supply those wishing to offset the maligned individuals by arming the well-intended, equipping both with equal weapons. The importance is that these people are not being armed within a military; they are not part of a societal entity, but rather solo citizens making independent judicial decisions, based on whatever training they have or have not had at such points in their lives.

The wand differs from a traditional firearm because knowledge is necessary for successful usage, indicating that the hero must base his reasoning on wisdom rather than brute force alone. Whereas a gun needs to be simply aimed at the target and the trigger pulled, the wand must be aimed, with the proper incantation known and the mental capacity fulfilled. Be that as it may, this does not suggest that such "wisdom" will bring about justice, for the villains are free to use wands for unjust purposes.

Another observation about the wands is how Harry's scar was left as a result of a spell from a misused wand, perhaps illustrating knowledge preventing injustice from occurring. The area protected was his brain, the prime location for wisdom and knowledge, although admittedly, this occurred during his infancy, long before any real knowledge was acquired. One would have to explore further and witness how it was the mother's love that protected the child, offering the idea that love, too, can prevent injustice—if strong enough. This would suffice, but for the fact that Voldemort's attacks were merely postponed and not halted completely. Perhaps love may delay injustice, but only the individual hero can put a final stop to aberrant behavior.

The scales of justice are balanced by the power of the wand. In a fistfight or wrestling match, one's body size and strength offer great advantage, although in regards to both, speed and quickness may negate size; however, almost all boxing and wrestling matches have participants placed into matching weight groups to maintain fairness. The advantage of size and strength is amplified during childhood and adolescence as just a short year of time can separate body sizes by a large degree. Adding to that is the fact that some people are just naturally smaller or bigger than others. The reason for this distinction is because schoolyard justice may differ greatly than "adult" justice. On the playground, it may be the alpha male or female in control, leaving no opportunity for others to balance out or rectify injustices. With the wand, the antagonist's size is immediately negated, allowing speed and knowledge to come back into play. In Book 1, Harry and Malfoy are soon agreeing to a duel with wands, a duel requiring a "second," should the primary dueler die in combat (154). Ron does explain that their limited experience and knowledge will most likely prevent any such occurrence, yet it does not change the fact that the intent to harm the other is still present—only the degree of harm is lessened. Later, the wand allows defeat of a 12-foot troll. Like a gun, size does not matter; if anything, the target has only increased. Like guns, these wands may level almost any playing field, but there are caveats.

In a system where external items such as wands are needed to solve problems, the hero may become impotent when the item is removed. In Book 5, Harry's summer adversary, Dudley, becomes well aware of this as he proclaims, "You haven't got the guts to take me on without that thing, have you?" (14). He is perhaps right, and Harry is savvy enough not to refute this statement. A moment later, Dudley points out that Harry's bravado is gone at night when he sleeps. He refers to Harry's nightmares, but it also may remind the reader that the protective wand is useless when a person sleeps. The person is in a completely defenseless and vulnerable position. A wand may not be used in that case. Such an example demonstrates that individual justice has strong limitations, whereas societal justice does not rely on the sleeping patterns of individual citizens and is always functioning. Given both, the security of the latter option appears to be a much safer alternative.

Adding to that, another problem with individual justice is that it is open to rash, impulsive behavior. Dudley's goading and teasing of Harry and his nightmares stir Harry to enough anger to pull out his wand and point it at Dudley's heart. While it may be a feigned threat to quiet Dudley, the author adds, “Harry could feel fourteen years’ hatred of Dudley pounding in his veins” (15). Dumbledore himself later points out that “even the best wizards cannot always control their emotions” (149). It is a frightening thought that justice may become subject to uncontrollable feelings.

Even when dealing with smaller matters, control is demonstrated to be important. In Book 5, Harry feels compelled to proclaim the truth to other students about Cedric’s death: “‘It was murder,’ said Harry. He could feel himself shaking” (245). Readers can observe that emotions are beginning to overpower Harry. Shortly after, the text states, “He felt so angry he did not care what happened next” (246). After being sent to Professor McGonagall’s office, she warns Harry: “Do you really think this is about truth or lies? It’s about keeping your head down and your temper under control!” (249). The lesson is important. Humans are susceptible to emotional behavior and when situations are fueled by vigilantism, the idea of justice may become fraught with feelings of rage, anger, or revenge, something less problematic in a structured courtroom setting, where the facts are laws are designed to replace rash emotions.

In Regards to the Outsider

In most societies, there usually exists a group of people on the inside—those who belong—and those remaining outside of that—the outsiders. The *Harry Potter* series contains exactly that. Such classifications need not necessarily be negative, for even different towns and cities in the same country have their own citizens and communities. What remains important to consider is how people treat the outsiders. Giselle Liza Anatol notes, “I was perturbed by the way that the postgraduate careers of Bill and Charlie

Weasley after they leave Hogwarts seem to echo the British imperial enterprise" (164). If justice is found in truth and reason, and that truth is tied to nature, then people may conclude that those truths should be shared with others—all around the world. Obviously, there remains a large difference in sharing information and forcing it upon other communities or countries; however, the matter is controversial. When men and women are following what they believe to be true and intended by God, then, by default, those following different paths are following what is false. A natural or humane inclination would be to help steer the others to the truth. One rationale is that each community may have its own interpretation or source of truth, but even that presents a dilemma: if truth stems from nature or one God, then it should be universal for all societies. If it varies from country to country, then it may vary from city to city, thereby making laws and justice even more difficult to determine—hence the importance of society's individuals to reexamine the system and rules and ensure proper functionality.

The wizard world's actions outside of its community suggest a parallel with England colonial ambitions of the past. Anatol points out that the readers learns about Charlie studying dragons in Romania, but that in itself does not appear offensive or wrong. With the other brother, Anatol notes, "Bill is employed by the Egyptian branch of Gringotts Wizarding Bank. The latter's official job title is Charm Breaker; he attempts to circumvent the spells that ancient Egyptian wizards put on tombs in order to discourage raiders" (164). At this point, potential problems arise. Circumventing security does not imply just actions. In Book 4, Bill states, "Mum, no one at the bank gives a damn how I dress as long as I bring home plenty of treasure" (62). Justice appears to be violated since treasure is being taken, though whether the rightful owners are around remains questionable. Furthermore, Rowling may or may not be suggesting Bill's actions (and those of the Gringott's Wizarding Bank) are acceptable. Whether or not it is an ironic point of view is up to the reader to decide; having these debatable elements present only enhances the learning experience for the adolescent undergoing his or her initiation.

Handling Bigger Problems

As the series progresses, the depictions of justice advance into more complex situations and settings, allowing Harry to become inducted into a judicial system that more closely resembles the real world. One such detailed instance occurs in Book 5, where Harry undergoes a courtroom jury to face consequences of prior actions. While courtrooms have lightly been utilized in Rowling's prior novels (before the fifth book), she now places the protagonist directly into a setting where his actions are being evaluated. Threats of legal recourse had been made in the past, but he now faces disciplinary repercussions from a tribunal.

While the inversion of justice with the individual taking matters into his own hands had been more permitted and overlooked hitherto, now Harry finds himself facing legal proceedings for a minor or trivial offense. He was not on trial for someone's death, but simply for using a magical spell outside of Hogwarts, and being underage at the time. The situation in this manner may be more beneficial to young readers because it removes many of the more fantastical elements from the proceedings, offering a truer illustration of children eventually having to enter into adult justice; and, whereas real life children would never find themselves being tried for casting magical spells, they may be brought into a courthouse for inappropriate and illegal underage activities, such as consuming alcohol. Analyzing the scene, one finds very little fantastical elements present. Despite being a dungeon, the location is described as a "courtroom" (137). While the defendant's chair does have magical restraint chains, the chains do not trap Harry during the trial. Overall, aside from Dumbledore's spell of creating a chair for himself, almost no magic is present during the hearing. The scene is somber and realistic, perhaps suggesting the serious nature and consequences that a courtroom contains.

This courtroom proceeding occurs in chapter eight, adequately entitled "The Hearing," a fact which may involve extra meaning for children. Adults may immediately think of the judicial meaning of a hearing to be a court session taking place, whereas the semantics of the word may be simpler for a child: he or she may simply take the gerund at its base or infinitive meaning: to hear. This may lead him or her to question how this "hearing" comes into play within a courtroom. A parent lacking a textbook definition may reply with a logical response: the people in the courtroom are there to listen to what happened—and the assumption is that justice will be based on what is said and heard. If listening is an agreed upon factor for determining justice, children may observe inadequacies in justice if such an agreement is not upheld by both parties—something which comes about in the chapter, for it is only through Dumbledore's insistence that Harry's explanations are heard.

Children who identify closely with Harry may feel an extra sense of isolation as he enters alone and appears to be facing a trial with no counsel, legal assistance, or protection. Being under 18, a standard courtroom would require a child to have a legal guardian and proper counsel. Likewise, the judicial system in many countries would also allow for special considerations due to age, allowing children to be judged and penalized differently than adults (with exceptions being permitted). Nevertheless, Harry finds himself alone at the trial's beginning. This arrangement echoes what a child might feel when engaging justice or the judicial system—a feeling of aloneness, that the "law" can be aloof and insensitive to one's own conception of fairness. What is important to consider is that Harry's actions result from self-defense, as well as from protecting another human being from harm, *one of the key reasons for having an established judicial system*.

The courtroom setting offered by Rowling also illustrates what children are faced with in regards to society's legal systems, that this unknown ever-present force has the power to affect a child's life and future. The chapter begins by reminding the viewer that it was the place where "he had watched the Lestranges sentenced to life imprisonment in Azkaban" (137). While younger children may not be aware of a court's options, older children may become cognizant that they can be removed from a home or family, or even placed into prison (e.g., juvenile hall) for a long period of time. Faced with such serious consequences, a young boy or girl in a courtroom would likely have a great deal of anxiety over the proceedings. Compounding this is the fact that legal counsel would provide knowledge of how to battle adversity; yet, when a child is unschooled in civil or criminal law, his ability to defend himself becomes severely diminished. Even an adult with knowledge of the world and life experience is expected to have adequate counsel when facing a trial. Adding to Harry's situation is that he needed to break the law of resisting magical usage to save himself and another, but now must rely on the law alone, receiving no benefit or testimony from the very person he risked his life to save. Suffice it to say, magical force or "brute strength" cannot save him now, only fair judgment can. His wand is now powerless in effecting justice.

Rowling's example serves to show the necessity of individual human intervention for societal justice to function. Had Dumbledore not arrived, Harry would have likely been found guilty and expelled from school. Harry is saved by savvy and persuasive arguments from Professor Dumbledore, his strongest being that their law does provide an exception for self-defense, which applies to Harry's situation. This observation would have gone unknown and become overlooked had not Dumbledore brought it into consideration. Thus, in this situation, the laws themselves seem intact, but the curators of them are arguably in need of an overhaul. Again, the reader may learn to help fix laws or evaluate the jobs being performed by those in charge.

Several other subtle, but interesting, items appear to comment on the depiction of justice in the world of *Harry Potter*. At the very beginning of chapter eight, there lies a short description: "The large dungeon he had entered was horribly familiar" (137). Justice will be taking place inside of a *dungeon*, a location usually signifying a place of isolation, captivity, or despair. Observe how Hogwarts has the Slytherin house in a dungeon. Many of its members such as Draco, Pansy, Crabbe, and Goyle demonstrate unfairness and prejudice behavior, concepts in opposition to justice. In addition, the serpent in the Biblical sense is also known for treachery and deceit. Considering those aspects, dungeons do not appear to be ideal locations for bringing about justice. As well, the archetypal hero often faces his lowest point on his or her adventure after descending into places such as dungeons—further indicating Harry's precarious situation. Whereas the idea of true justice would often be thought as coming from the heavens above, here it occurs in the depths below.

Another colorful illustration is Dumbledore's aversion to eye contact with Harry, which primarily stems from his desire to avoid a connection with Voldemort (something which can occur by a mental connection heightened by eye-contact), yet symbolically another message is present. The situation is seen here: "He wanted to catch Dumbledore's eye, but Dumbledore was not looking his way; he was continuing to look up at the obviously flustered Fudge" (139). Due to a corruptive nature permeating the wizard-world legal system, Dumbledore remains the only character capable of bringing about a just argument for the accused. Avoiding eye contact with Harry re-creates a notion of the common motif suggesting justice to be blind. Friendships and personal feelings must be put aside, for only facts need be present. Fortunately, due to Dumbledore's persistence to bring all evidence to light, events turn out in Harry's favor, but problems remain: Harry should not have been tried without proper counsel, and personal agendas seem to have infiltrated the court system. Dumbledore states, "Why, in the few short weeks since I was asked to leave the Wizengamot, it has already become the practice to hold a full criminal trial to deal with a simple matter of underage magic!" (149). Abuse of the judicial system appears to be present. In other words, the system is not infallible. This is exactly the lesson the child must learn to complete his initiation: there will always be faults and imperfections in the adult judicial world. The individual's task must not be to circumnavigate societal law, but to seek to correct it, either by campaigning for change, alerting others, voting, etc.

With Dumbledore and his sound reasoning in the courtroom, Harry's trial ends in justice, demonstrating how individuals are still necessary in courtroom proceedings; however, there are caveats to that situation. If a person can steer a tribunal or jury with persuasive arguments into doing what is right, then the reverse should also be true. Unfortunately, this remains a necessary pitfall of legal systems both past and present. Moreover, it is something which has troubled philosophers for thousands of years—rhetoric and powerful oratories can perhaps demonstrate two opposing viewpoints.

Increasing Injustices

Despite the positive outcome of the trial, the depictions of perceived injustice occur frequently throughout Harry's fifth year of school, suggesting that as he nears adulthood, he will be facing these issues more frequently. When scolded for having to miss the Quidditch tryouts and accused of "deciding" not to be there, the following lines are seen: "'I didn't decide not to be there!' said Harry, stung by the injustice of these words" (263). The frustrations grow soon after with Harry responding to having points taken away from his house, for he becomes "furious at this injustice" (319). Once again, the word is used. Adding to that is his complaint to Ron: "'She's taken points off Gryffindor because I'm having my hand sliced open every night! How is that fair, *how*?" (319). He appears to be yearning for earlier childhood, where life is supposed to be fair; however, another example of unfairness is seen later. When Ron tries to enter the girls' dormitory, an invisible spell repulses him down the stairs. He responds with, "It's not fair!" (353) as he complains how girls are allowed in the boys' dorms, but not vice versa. Hermione then explains that it is "an old-fashioned rule" (353) because "the founders thought boys were less trustworthy than girls" (353). The reader sees another example of old laws possibly needing changing, though again, the wisdom of time may prove the rule to be just whereas it seems wrong at the immediate moment. Having the ability to change laws delayed until adulthood offers more time for analysis and evaluation. By that time, the offended party might come to the conclusion that females may be somewhat safer having boys restricted from entering their bedrooms. The author even includes a certain commentary on this type of mindset when she has a former teacher exclaim in Book 5, "Young people are so infernally convinced that they are absolutely right about everything" (495-96). Certainly some may argue that to keep things fair, the girls should be restricted from the boys' dorms too, but the origin of the rule (as in the case of many laws) is to prevent a potential problem, not simply to offer *fair* solutions to appease those in disagreement with protocol. Whereas a young man may be put off by the rule, an older man with a young daughter in the school may welcome such a regulation.

Such are the decisions that must be made. Each book illustrates justice and injustice, fairness and unfairness, allowing the reader to take it all in and weigh not only what should be changed, but also what can be changed. While example after example depicts the solo hero with his wand seeking to bring about justice, the only true solution in the real world, free from passion and thoughts of revenge, is having society make those choices—with laws in place and closely evaluated individuals (such as policemen, lawmakers, lawyers, judges, juries) to carry out justice for all.

Chapter 5

Summary

The Duplicity of the Hero

The Hero's Privilege

Throughout the seven *Harry Potter* books and their thousands of pages, the ideas of fairness and justice come up repeatedly. A person looking specifically for those words would probably discover that they appear more frequently than expected. Each book offers ample opportunity to explore judicial issues and aspects of right and wrong. Just the title character alone provides a strong example of judicial values as Harry seeks to fulfill his pre-appointed destiny.

Within the series, as in many adventure books, the hero become the arbitrator of justice as Harry battles it out with Voldemort, the epitome of evil, using wands in place of swords or guns to provide a solution for all. As in the case of many other adventures featuring a war or battle, Harry must be willing to give his life, furthering the idea that the individual sacrifice is often necessary to better society. For Harry, the final battle occurs near the end of his journey, but where did it all begin?

For Harry Potter, and the young reader, the voyage began at the call to adventure, adolescence being the vehicle for the latter. One learns to start asking more and more questions and to start analyzing the established system of justice. From there, he or she learns to identify or look for any problems, be they problems in the law itself or problems with those in charge of carrying out the laws. Afterwards, a key difference is found. Within the fantasy world, the solution to the problems remains with the individual, whereas in the real world, the problems must be taken to society. This is where the reader and the hero must part ways and take completely opposite paths, even though both seek the same solutions. Fortunately, even in the inverted example of fantasy literature, there sometimes remains true-to-life illustrations, for Hermione does offer a realistic depiction of how changes can be made when she carries out her campaign to stop the enslavement of house-elves. This difference in approaches may lead one to wonder why the heroic approach is so common and effective in literature if the complete opposite is not only taught, but expected in adult society. A few good reasons exist for such being the case.

Having the hero undergo a final duel or battle against his adversaries serves as a highly entertaining element of action. Having the *Harry Potter* series end in a long courtroom procession probably would have not excited readers and made for dull literature. This is not to say that such a plot device cannot work, for courtroom suspense dramas often make successful use of that very motif. Despite that, the genre of the hero's adventure usually requires a strong stand by the hero, for even the old fairy tales did not have an army of soldiers defeating an evil dragon. Far more common is the idea of one knight rescuing the princess.

The Hero's Restrictions

It might be argued that the hero must go outside the law to defeat his adversary, who also operates outside the law; however, such a rationalization does not stand in real society. Criminals, by definition, are already outside the law, yet people do expect the established judicial system to be in charge of providing solutions. Again, society expects vigilantes to stop after calling the authorities and reporting a crime or pressing charges.

While some societies, such as the United States, do allow for individuals to make a "citizen's arrest," it is not commonly done and not highly recommended whenever it can be avoided. As well, such actions can be risky for the Good Samaritan, for charges may be filed against him should he detain a suspect too long.

Also, as noted earlier, the individual is subject to emotions and character flaws, though hopefully none too severe. Adding to that is that individuals will often sacrifice their own moral well-being to serve the greater good. Witness in Book 1 how Hermione lies in order to defend Harry and Ron after they defeat the troll: "Ron dropped his wand. Hermione Granger, telling a downright lie to a teacher" (177). Justice needs to remain separate from a person's feelings and reactions to situations. Otherwise, what is professed to be true alters from each situation presented.

One strong argument for the literary need of the solo hero is simply the idea of catharsis, an idea even articulated by Aristotle over 2,000 years ago. According to the *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, "Some commentators have interpreted the term in a medical sense, as a purgative that flushes out the audience's unwieldy emotion; others see it in terms of moral purification" (88). Since readers cannot go out and enact individual justice, they must rely on their heroes and literary characters doing just that. It is a safe and effective alternative often offering a satisfying solution to the injustices found in everyday life.

The Failure to Acquire Proper Judicial Techniques

Finding acceptable solutions to injustices is vital for not only the individual, but society as well. Within the young adult novel, the hero often reaches acceptable means to acquire justice, through legal or illegal means; however, the importance remains in differentiating what is and what is not allowed in the real world. A failure to find certifiable answers may adversely affect both young adults in the liminal phase and adults who have passed through that period, but not acquired the skills necessary to handle adversity in the challenging adult world. On April 20, 1999, two students at Columbine High School murdered 12 other students and one teacher before taking their own lives. While individuals resorting to such extreme, drastic measures is uncommon, any such occurrences warrant exhaustive research and investigation into just why such action was felt necessary by the two attackers. Though not uncommon in a high school environment, feelings of unfairness and injustice were present for both, perhaps causing them to feel outside of society. According to Karen Michaelis, “As social outsiders, they were in a position to observe the differences in the way they were treated by their peers and teachers than the way social insiders, particularly athletes, were treated by peers and teachers” (7). Again, unfairness during the liminal phase is by no means unusual or perhaps even avoidable. Responding to an earlier court case against the shooters, Michaelis goes on to note, “The court’s deferential treatment of athletes struck Harris and Klebold as unfair which, in turn, caused Harris and Klebold to more readily notice the special privileges as well as the special exemptions athletes received at school” (4). Parents and teachers should make efforts to eliminate teasing, bullying, preferential treatment inside and outside of schools, but such efforts can only go so far. Adding to that is the ever-increasing necessity of adults being cognizant of students demonstrating an inclination of seeking self-justice.

Expecting young adult literature to somehow remove all feelings of rage and injustice would also be ineffective as liminoid models have limitations of effective remedy. Some argue that video games (similar to the revenge tragedy) offer a way to release aggressive feelings from an unjust society, whereas others feel the opposite is true. According to a BBC article published shortly after the killings,

> Relatives of people killed in the Columbine massacre are seeking damages from computer game makers, claiming their products helped bring about the killings. The group filing the lawsuit say [sic] investigations into the tragedy revealed the influence violent computer games had on the two teenagers who carried out the shootings. (Ward)

Even the effects of cathartic entertainment are questionable as people take differing views on whether they hinder or help society. In addition, the Columbine tragedy brought gun-control issues back into the spotlight.

In the end, there are many different areas to explore and question. Possible issues are stopping bullying and teasing on the school grounds or otherwise, identifying potential troubled students, offering more counseling opportunities and acceptable solutions for troubled students, questioning the effects of violent videos games, and preventing access to guns and otherwise harmful weapons. What should be examined is not one, but all of the above solutions, and not by adults alone, but by young adults as well. Even Columbine was not an isolated incident, for another mass shooting occurred at Virginia Tech on April 16, 2007, killing 33 people (Johnston). What may shock some is the response offered by alarmed individuals seeking answers and solutions. According to a *Washington Post* article, many are suggesting students and teachers be allowed to arm themselves on campus and in classrooms. Legislation has stopped such acts, but according to the article, the idea is spreading via the Internet: “Students for Gun Free Schools has about 12,000 members on Facebook. The Concealed Carry group, with members in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, has more than 36,000” (Schulte). What is interesting is that the *Harry Potter* world seems to have the same idea: all wizards carry wands. Rules are established to prevent abuse, but the opportunity is there for anyone to harm or kill others.

While the above examples are extreme and tragic instances of misguided self-administered “justice,” they are by no means the only cases. As well, it is not just the large sensational occurrences of failed justice that need examining, but rather all occurrences where the individual, whether a youth or adult, appropriates the law and carries out justice according to his or her personal beliefs or emotions. Perhaps it is more permissible in fiction, but anytime violence is used in the real world, analysis needs to be performed to identify the cause and determine future preventative measures necessary to help prevent any further occurrences.

Final Thoughts

Young adult literature using the fantasy hero offers such catharsis as it helps teach the young adult to analyze assumptions, to question the effectiveness of laws, and to evaluate those in authority. Whereas some may be dismissive of the genre as having any serious merit or evaluation, others may see the importance and gravity behind this vital period in a person’s life. Once he or she enters adulthood, teachings in morality, fairness, and justice may become much more difficult, especially if the individual is not reading or actively involved in academic study. As in politics, people may gravitate towards one side or the other and close themselves off to listening to ideas and arguments from others. Even more alarming is the fact that they may never question the operations within their own group.

How far the reader will allow the individual to go is also subject to scrutiny. For the most part, the heroes are forgiven for violating rules and laws since it is for the greater good, but there are limits. Innocent folks should never be purposely harmed. Mean-spirited attacks are also frowned upon. Rowling also keeps Harry's action within acceptable limits, differing from the revenge tragedies so common in the Renaissance period. According to Stephen Greenblatt in regards to Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, "The hero takes matters into his own hands. Ironically, as he struggles to impose a just order upon his world, he loses his own moral bearings and even his sanity: the commonsensical standards of 'justice' upon which he has initially relied often come to seem either flawed or unreachable" (79). Luckily, for the readers of the *Harry Potter* series, the boundaries are not quite as extreme, and Harry is able to retain his sanity—though even he questions it at times. If someone considers the commandment of "Thou shalt not kill" resigned to the individual and not society, then society is the only acceptable solution for effacing villains. Nevertheless, Greenblatt's description illustrates a certain Catch-22 in justice: society is sometimes not *able* to offer justice, and yet the individual is not *allowed* to execute it. Despite that, something must give. Since the villain cannot be allowed to escape and continue harming others, the hero must be allowed to take his necessary steps.

Thus, literature has changed over the thousands of years, but in some ways, it has remained the same. In some respects, Harry Potter resembles Aeneas, a man chosen to lead, to fight—one called to save his people from adversity and injustice. Certainly, the real world will serve society via policemen, courtrooms, and armies instead of the one brave hero, but in fiction, the lone hero works best, from the Red Crosse Knight on his trusty horse to the bespeckled boy armed with a wand and several good spells. Either way, in the end, justice is served.

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