Harry Potter as High fantasy

The Uses of High Fantasy in J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter Series

Harry Potter som High Fantasy
J.K. Rowlings användande av High Fantasy i Harry Potter-böckerna.

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Introduction

J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series is one of the world's fastest selling of all time. By now, it has sold more than 450 million copies, warranting the series the title of being one of our history's bestselling series ever. The story of Harry and his friends has become a world-wide phenomenon, creating several incredibly popular movies, video games, merchandize and more. Simply put, *Harry Potter* is a milestone in the fantasy novel. Yet, there is also something noteworthy about the series in terms of the genre it belongs to. The saga display traits of high-fantasy norms, a sub-genre of fantasy, yet Rowling has cleverly pushed the boundaries of these norms and thus made *Harry Potter* a highly original high-fantasy series. These alterations to the high-fantasy norms can be seen as a contributing factor to why Harry Potter has become such a global phenomenon. This essay will show the ways in which *Harry Potter* elaborates on the high-fantasy norms by analyzing its narrative elements (setting, narrative structure, characters, and language). The first part will be a brief introduction to high-fantasy and its norms while the second part will be an analysis of the novels in terms of these norms.

High Fantasy Norms

I will start by discussing the norms needed for high-fantasy in the following order: settings, narrative structure, characters and language.

Setting

High Fantasy (or Epic Fantasy) is a sub-genre of the fantasy genre. The most important aspect of High Fantasy is its setting: the novels are often set in fictive worlds unrelated to our own, or in secondary worlds that run parallel with our own. High Fantasy can be divided into three sub-types. The first of these sub-types according to Nikki Gamble, author of *Exploring Children's Literature*, is: "A world completely made of fiction with no relations to our world (e.g. *The Lord of the Rings*, *A Song of Ice and Fire*)" (121). This sub-type often has original and creative worlds. As a compliment to these fictional worlds, authors would create detailed maps of each world to create an illusion for the reader. This was done to make it easier for readers to believe in these worlds. In the prologue for *The Lord of The Rings*, Tolkien provided the reader with a detailed historical and geographical background which compliments the main story, further improving this fictional world's authenticity. However, it is worth mentioning that although these fictional worlds are indeed entirely fictional, they are based on features from the real world. Tolkien's Middle-Earth is based on a Middle England "lost in time" and the Shire can easily be identified as rural Oxfordshire (Gamble 121). The second sub-type is "A secondary world that can only be reached through a portal (e.g. *Alice in Wonderland*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*)"(Gamble 122). In this sub-type, the primary world is based on our world while the fictional world that can be reached

through the portal often has symbols and artifacts that can be found in the primary world. *Alice in Wonderland* had a huge impact on the fantasy genre with its clever usage of a parallel world and can be seen as one of the grandfathers of the high-fantasy genre. Finally, the third sub-type is "[w]hen the two worlds co-exist with each other with a physical barrier/boundary separating them. (e.g. *The Secrets of the Immortal Nicholas Flamel*)" (Gamble 122). Portals exist in this third sub-type, but they are not necessary to reach the other world which can in many cases be reached by walking (Much like in Neil Gaiman's *Stardust*). When the primary world co-exists with the parallel world, the people living in the primary (non-fictional) world live without any knowledge of the parallel world. Only a selected amount of these "normal" people are informed about the fictional world, but some purists argue that by involving the real world with the fictional world in such a manner would somehow break the "rules" of high-fantasy and therefore should not be labeled as such.

The setting is important in high-fantasy because how it amplifies the mood and adds a sensation of wonder and curiosity to the reader while also serving as a reminder to why we find familiar settings more comfortable. Philip Martin states in *A Guide to Fantasy Literature* that "In fantasy, this persuasive power of place is elevated to a high art. If drawn fully, a magical place will bend characters to it with great gravitational force" (Martin 89). When the setting can be seen as "real" for the reader, that is when setting affects the reader the most. In fact, one can even argue that a well realized setting is more important than fantastical characters or how well the writer writes. What matters is how well a reader can feel how wild, strange or charming that particular setting is (Moorcock 43). Most often, the setting and story includes basic traits of fantasy such as elves, fairies, dwarves, dragons, demons, magic and/or sorcery and wizards/magicians.

Narrative structure

The two narratives that commonly appear in High Fantasy are the quest and voyage/return (Gamble 122). The quest structure follows the story of the main hero/ine and his/her entourage on a grand adventure. He or she begins the story as a youngster or child. During this adventure, the party has to go through several trials, many of which can be near-death encounters. After each encounter, the party rests for a period of time to regain their strength while friendly characters tell them encouraging words to aid their quest. The storyline concludes in an epic showdown between the main hero and the Dark Lord, ending with the return to a normal lifestyle (McKillip 53). An example of this structure can be seen in *The Lord of The Rings*, where Frodo's journey follows a similar pattern. The selection of party members/companions serve a purpose as these companions hints at what kind of bonds will occur between the characters:

- The protagonist's entourage can be a randomly selected group of people with or without names;
- An alter-ego with loyalty as his/her main trait;
- An alter-ego that has traits that contrast with the protagonist;
- The protagonist's entourage all has specific characteristics that complement each other.

The Fellowship of the Ring is a great example of the fourth kind; Frodo's company represents the many different races that live in Middle-Earth (Gamble 122).

The voyage/return structure follows the story of a main hero/ine that ends up in the fictional/magical world without wanting to, much like how Alice in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* does. The protagonist's adventure starts on familiar ground before ending up in the magical realm. At first, the protagonist displays a lack of care for his/her situation and instead finds his/her newfound location pleasing and exciting. As the story progresses the protagonist's mentality changes as it becomes apparent that the exit is nowhere to be seen (Gamble 123).

High Fantasy narratives are generally very grand in tone and scope. Many stories start off with action to quickly draw the reader into the book. However, every story does not start in an action-packed manner. Instead, the story may start off at a slow pace in place for explaining and visualizing the setting and place while introducing the main character/s of the story. In this "slow paced introduction", the reader is still able to feel that something is wrong; something evil is lurking around (Martin 125). This is done to ease the reader into the following quest or voyage/return. Arguably, the ending of a high-fantasy story will always be about the good side's victory over the evil side (Martin 39). Martin's describes the prototypical plot as "a small band of heroes is pulled into the great struggle, often reluctantly, swept against their will into the raging current. These foolhardy and oddly matched characters chase about the countryside in search of powerful talismanic objects: rings and swords, books of enchantment, answers to riddles. Possession of these things will change the balance of power, causing the whole kingdoms to triumph or collapse" (Martin 125). High fantasy aimed at a younger audience generally uses serious themes accompanied by a cast of youngsters like in *The Lord of The Rings* where there are several serious themes like death, reason to act and love (Martin 40).

Characters

In High-Fantasy, characters are generally separated into two main groups, good and evil, while neutral characters fill up the minor roles. The main characters have hero-like traits that may or may not be apparent from start and is in many cases not "normal"; he/she is most likely a sibling with a unique trait or is capable of grander things, such as magic or excels in combat. Furthermore, the protagonist is

accompanied by or meets a quirky or mystical mentor of sorts, like Gandalf in *The Lord of The Rings*. Martin states that the heroes/heroines of high-fantasy are based on what we, the readers, want: "Not surprisingly, they want what we want: to be loved and respected, to triumph over fears, to do the right thing, to be true to friends and to ourselves. Especially in fantasy, this may include a desire to be part of something of great or noble purpose – a quest for a holy grail or a defense of home against zombies at the door" (103)**.** Co-existing with the good characters are the evil characters, which in many cases are just as mystical as the mentors. Leading this troop of evil is a Dark Lord, set on world domination and annihilating the main hero. The Dark Lord is usually a powerful wizard/sorcerer or a demon god. This evil being is always feared by the good characters. An example of a Dark lord is Sauron from *The Lord of The Rings*.

The set-up of good and evil characters is, of course, here because it is one of the most common concepts in High Fantasy (Shippey 120). In fact, the concept of some kind of prime evil is very important to High Fantasy novel (McCullough), such as Sauron in *The Lord of The Rings*. Evil is personified and the man/woman/being leading the evil side is often relentless in his/her attacks against the good side (Martin 39). The characters are divided up into groups or given the choice to pick which alignment they will pledge to, which is necessary since they will risk their lives fighting for their cause. However, these choices are not set in stone; characters may change sides or somehow become unsure of their decision. One could almost argue for that it almost serves as the divider between Fantasy and High Fantasy; the struggle between righteousness versus evil paradigm is set in stone. Many High Fantasy novels use this concept as the plots driving force; the conflict can be interwoven with the main character's traits. *The Lord of The Rings* showcases this; the conflict between Frodo and the forces of evil helps in establishing his character and morals. However, lately this concept has been altered. In A Song of Ice and Fire, the conflict between good and evil has been cast aside and instead focuses about political issues and factions versus factions. Another norm is that the Dark Lord will in some way try to persuade the main hero to change sides or that he is not fighting the "good fight".

Language

The language used in high-fantasy is rather of great importance: if it does not portray or convey the novel's authenticity, the reader will not be able to suspend their disbelief**.** Consider **t**he Orc in Tolkien's world**.** Its language consists of grunts and incredibly broken English, a norm that must be followed to portray these creatures as authentic**.** As Geer Gilman sums it up, "Works of fantasy can make unusual narrative demands. Their writers may need to call forth spirits from the vasty deep; or convincingly record a dialogue of dragons; or invent the tongues of angels and of orcs. Yet we know those cadences: they are the language of madness and of vengeance, of courtiers and witcheds, Puck

and Prospero; the language of ghosts" (Gilman 136). To aid in suspending this disbelief authors sometimes create their own languages for their fictional worlds. The creation of a fictional language is a nice touch, but what is important is the way the author uses language so that it fits the novel. It has to be able to support the novels many elements, like the setting, characters, story and theme. What this means is that the language must be able to properly convey the novel's setting in a manner that suits it, it has to "fit" (Gamble 124). An example of this is the language used in *The Lord of The Rings*, where Tolkien opted for a more epic language to convey the feeling of "epic" to the reader.

Harry Potter and High-fantasy

I will abbreviate the titles of each Harry Potter novel quoted by using one word from each entry's title: *The Philosopher's Stone* = *Stone*, *Chamber of Secrets* = *Chamber*, *Prisoner of Azkaban* = *Azkaban*, *The Goblet of Fire* = *Goblet*, *The Order of the Phoenix* = *Order*, *The half-blood prince* = *Prince*

Setting

To showcase how Rowling expands on the high-fantasy norms, one will have to look at each one in turn to determine which norms she expands on and which she does not. The first and most important area to investigate is the Setting, and in particular the sub-type the *Harry Potter* series fits. For many other fantasy novels, deciding the sub-type is fairly easy, each sub-type being clearly differentiated from the others, yet, in this case, Rowling has pushed the boundaries by implementing features from all the sub-types.

As stated earlier, High-fantasy has three sub-types: (1) A fictional world functioning as the primary world; (2) A primary world with a portal to the fictional world, and (3) a setting where both fictional and primary worlds co-exist. At first glance (3) seem to fit *Harry Potter* the best, since the magical world and the Muggles' world co-exist. In the first chapter of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, Mr.Dursley spots several wizards walking around in his town (Rowling, *Stone* 8-9). This implies that the ordinary inhabitants of the primary world can see the inhabitants of the fictional world, meaning that both worlds are intertwined. In fact, these magicians are casually talking to each other, disregarding the fact that their appearance makes it very obvious that they are not "normal". Yet, Dursley believes that this is just something that youngsters do and does not find it to be odd at all (Rowling, *Stone* 9). This suggests that since Mr.Dursley is a Muggle, he has no knowledge about the magical world or its inhabitants.

Yet there are also traces of sub-group (2) in the form of portals. A real, properly functioning portal between worlds does not exist in *Harry Potter.* In both *Narnia* and *Alice* a single

portal appears at the beginning and end of the novels, like the wardrobe in Narnia that function as a frame for the first Narnia book, whose adventure takes place beyond this portal. Instead a number of portals exist throughout the *Harry Potter* series, which is uncommon in high fantasy. Here are some examples of these portals in Rowling's magical world: (i) By passing through the stone pillar at King's cross to get to platform nine and three-quarters (Rowling, *Stone* 101); (ii) By tapping the wall in a London pub to open the path to Diagon Alley (Rowling, *Stone* 78); (iii) By flying with an enchanted object or with a broom (Kronzek 26-27); (iv) Using floo powder, a powder wizards use to teleport between fireplaces (Rowling, *Chamber* 57). This means that *Harry Potter's* portals are not typical sub-type 2, since portals in this sub-type are used as gateways to an entirely new world, which is not the case. So Rowling expands on the high fantasy norm by implementing several types of portals instead of just one, and these portals are modes of transportation within the secondary world rather than a means of getting to it from the primary world. The users of these portals are all magicians (or at least led by one), yet the portals exist in the Muggle world. The inhabitants of the magical world have free access to all the portals and technically, they are not "portals" but instead merely means of traveling across the world, much like how the car or boat functions in the primary world. The portal in King's cross, for example, is only available when the train to Hogwarts is there, which means that it is a timed portal because it serves no other purpose than transferring students to the Hogwarts Express.

Each world also differs greatly. The requirement of sub-type 3 is that they are intertwined and share the same world, but in Harry Potter, these two worlds seem to live in different time-periods. Since the primary world is based on the real world, cars and any other modern contrivances exist. It seems to be set sometime around 1980-1990 (smoking is allowed in pubs, which was prohibited in 1997, as seen in *The Philosopher's Stone*) (*Stone* 78). Yet in the secondary, wizardry world, there are no computers or any kind of present-day gadgets (not even telephones), and by and large seem to operate in a much earlier, pre-technological society, with some added modern features such as the magical buss used for transportation. Houses and society at large look incredibly outdated and their technology is old-fashioned (Rowling, *Chamber* 39). Even the students at Hogwarts use feather pens and write on parchments instead of papers (Rowling, *Chamber* 152).

Muggles cannot see the magical world they have no knowledge of it, yet they can still run into it. If a Muggle were to stumble across Hogwarts, their eyes would show them a rundown castle (Rowling, *Goblet* 185). There is nothing in Harry Potter that prevents a Muggle from entering the castle. Furthermore, if a Muggle (like the primary world's prime minister) wants to enter the magical realm, they would need to be granted access or be informed about the existence of the magical realm by a magician. This implies that their world, the primary world, is to them set in sub-type 2 because

technically, the magician that grants the Muggle access to the magical world would function as a portal. Thus, the magicians are the portals in the Muggle's world.

The Wizards in the Harry Potter universe, on the other hand, are not transferring to a different world, since to them both worlds are unified and thus they never leave one world when they enter a portal, they merely travel within the world. In fact, to them the sub-group would be (1) since there is only the one single world, a world to which the Muggles have only partial access. For that reason there cannot be a primary portal that functions as entrance and exit between the primary and secondary world: it is all primary to them. To the Muggle readers of these novels, however, the two worlds exist side by side, while most Muggles within the novels have no idea that there is anything beyond the primary world, and when they do find out, a special group within the ministry of magic has as its job to erase all such memories. All of this expands on the established rules of high-fantasy since a work should belong to a specific sub-group, in the same way that the portal normally functions as a solidary, single entry. One could argue that Rowling makes it harder to draw clear boundaries between the primary and secondary worlds, and that she manages to forge the two worlds together in an exciting and original way.

Harry Potter has an incredible amount of unique settings. Generally, high- fantasy settings are meant to evoke emotions with both the reader and the novel's characters. Innovation and originality is important, but each feat must be made while fulfilling a certain amount of authenticity. A setting can be innovative and original but still feel unrealistic and thus deemed not fit for high-fantasy. The main theme in Harry Potter is *magic.* This theme can be seen throughout the story and affects almost every setting in Harry Potter. However, since Harry Potter is a story with two worlds that share the same planet with one population that cannot enter the magical realm, each setting must be believable. A setting found in the Muggle world should be appropriately perceived and not have any magical objects so that it does not break the underlying authenticity. High-fantasy settings must be coherent while still being original and should portray the entirety of Harry Potter's world properly. This is the reason to why Little Whinging, the home of the Dursleys, is portrayed as a normal town (Rowling, *Stone* 7-15). Since it lies in the Muggle's world, there exists no magic. This does not imply that magic cannot be used, but since the rules of the magical realm are that the usage of magic is prohibited in the Muggle world, the lack of magic creates authenticity and cohesion. By doing so, Harry Potter displays two very distinct worlds. The magical realm and its settings are infused with magic and are therefore very fantastic. However, instead of making the magical world different, Rowling has made each world feel very familiar. A house found in the Muggle world does not differ too much to a house found in the

magical world. The difference is that magic has been applied to the objects in the magical world, such as how frying pans in the magical realm can cook their own food. A household set in the magical realm is generally very much like a house found in the Muggle world, which is why The Burrow looks like an old pigsty (Rowling, *Chamber* 39). The only difference is the actions, such as doing the chores which in a normal house could be doing the dishes while in the magical realm a chore could be something like *de-gnoming* the garden (Rowling, *Chamber* 42). It is different, but it is still a chore.

By using objects that can be found in both worlds, the setting can still be coherent while also being original. A great example of this can be seen in the introduction of the Diagon Alley: "The sun shone brightly on a stack of cauldrons outside the nearest shop. *Cauldrons – All Sizes – Copper, Brass, Pewter, Silver – Self-stirring – collapsible* said a sign hanging over them" (Rowling, *Stone* 82). This description shows that the Diagon Alley is a magical place that can still feel familiar to the reader. Cauldrons are items that can be found in the Muggle world, but they are not used for the same purpose in the magical world. By including "familiarity" in the setting, Harry Potter's world is easy to imagine and easy to divide into two worlds. Two worlds that feels familiar to the reader yet very distinct. High-fantasy settings are generally very cohesive and the settings are meant to complement each other to create a world that is vivid and interesting throughout the entire novel.

Characters

The characters in in Harry Potter follow the same pattern found in high-fantasy, two groups with different moral alignments, with Muggles being neutral, minor characters**.** The good side includes Harry and his companions and most of Hogwart's teachers; the evil side includes Voldemort and his group of death eaters**.** There are some characters among the Muggles that have certain functions in the story (such as The Dursleys), but their impact on the overall story is not big enough to warrant them a different label. However, high-fantasy characters needs to follow a certain structure to fit the epic proportions of its novel (Martin 103). There are several roles that must be included in Harry Potter if its characters are to fulfill the high-fantasy requirements, such as a hero, helper, companions and dark lord. However, as with the Setting, Rowling expands on a few of these roles**.**

The Hero and protagonist is Harry Potter, with his heroic traits. His main companions are Hermione Granger and Ron Weasley, because they are the ones that follow him throughout the entirety of his quest. There are of course more companions that could be included, such as Neville and the rest of the Weasleys, but even though they do help Harry with his quest and are in the good side, they are not always with him. The Hero's helper is Dumbledore, for he is the one that is always there when Harry is in need and does aid Harry both in combat and by giving him both information and

comfort. This role, however, is shared by many other characters: Hagrid functions as the Hero's Helper in the beginning of *The Philosopher's Stone* while Sirius Black shares this function in *The Prisoner of Azkaban* (74). However, neither Hagrid nor Sirius portray the role of the Hero's Helper as consistently as Dumbledore does, such as in *The Philosopher's Stone* when Harry is having issues with the Mirror of Erised (243) and in *The Chamber of Secrets* Dumbledore tells Harry that he does not believe that he is a murderer (226). Rowling's take on the hero's helper is different. Generally, the hero's helper is meant to be there throughout the entirety of the quest. If said helper dies, it would be during the hero's most daunting task. Yet, in *Harry Potter,* Dumbledore is killed by Snape before Harry sets out to confront Voldemort. The Hero's helper is in fact a very original role in *Harry Potter*. Snape, who kills Dumbledore (Rowling, *Prince* 608), is also the hero's helper and could in many ways fit the role more than Dumbledore. Snape's actions as the hero's helper can be seen throughout the entire series but Rowling opts to disguise Snape's true role. In books 1-6, Snape is seen as Voldemorts henchman, and his true role is not revealed until the seventh book.

The Dark Lord and antagonist is Voldemort, who displays all the traits found in the Dark Lord role. His main goal is world domination and he has his own army as well, the Death Eaters. Throughout the story, Voldemort tries to persuade people from the good side into joining the Dark side or killing someone (Rowling, *Order* 897), another trait found in High-fantasy dark lords. Rowling's take on the Dark Lord role is interesting. One of the norms of high-fantasy is that Evil is personified. This means that evil has a face and is in many cases one single, solid being. In *Harry Potter*, Voldemort acts as the Dark Lord in several ways. In *The Philosopher's Stone*, Voldemort's spirit is the main antagonist. By doing so, Voldemort as a character and Dark Lord is split up into two characters that together creates the prime evil. The spirit Voldemort is not as daunting and terrifying as the human Voldemort. This helps in establishing how dangerous Voldemort was and is. If his spirit is enough to turn people mad, then who knows what he can do as a human.

By having the characters split-up into different moral alignments, the concept of good versus evil can be applied. The concept of good versus evil is arguably the main theme in Harry Potter. In each book, Harry faces some kind of evil being/person. All of these evil entities have ties to the Dark Lord, Voldemort. This clash against evil affects the good side and is vital to many of the main events of the story. The general look at the story is that the good side is fighting against the evil Dark lord with an epic conclusion where Harry beats Voldemort in mortal combat. However, Rowling has altered the concept in every book. In *The Philosopher's Stone*, the main evil is Professor Quirell because in that book, Voldemort is weak and poses no real threat to Harry (although one could argue that Voldemort still is the main evil since he is the one that causes Quirell to become evil) (Rowling, *Stone* 314). In *The*

Chamber of Secrets, the main evil is Tom Riddle, Voldemort's younger self (Rowling, *Chamber* 332). The concept of good versus evil has been altered while keeping a focus on having one single Dark Lord with the exception that Voldemort does not become the true Dark Lord until the end of *The Goblet of Fire* (Rowling, *Goblet* 696).

The good/evil concept means that the characters must fit their side properly. The paradigms are all in Harry Potter, from the heroic traits of the good side to the evil side's desire to take over the world. The concept could be seen as the mainframe of the book, with character, story and setting functioning as building blocks that complete the frame. Evil is represented by one man, thus personifying evil while having an army. General norms of this concept are also included; characters are divided, they fight against each other, characters may or may not change their alignment and so on. Characters are built up with this in mind (the heroic traits of Harry, the evil traits of Voldemort), settings are established based on location and mood (IE the dark forest next to Hogwarts has an evil mood while Hogwarts has a lighter mood). The paradigm is not completely untouched. Snape's character as a whole fits the evil side but his actions fit the good side.

In general, the concept of good versus evil is meant to be a clash between two sides, the hero versus the dark lord. However, the concept is not always apparent in Harry Potter. Instead, Rowling "masks" the concept by changing the main plots. This makes every book feel like a new adventure, the books are not always about Harry's battle against Voldemort. In *The Prisoner of Azkaban*, the main plot concerns Harry's godfather, Sirius Black. Voldemort is still present but not vital to the overall plot. In *The Goblet of Fire*, Voldemort regains his body and becomes a vital point to the story and the concept (Rowling, *Goblet* 696). The real battle starts now and the focus shifts from being a story that has Voldemort as an underlying entity to the main focus and displays the battle between good versus evil at its fullest. An example of this is in The Goblet of Fire when the Death Eaters uses a spell to show their mark (Rowling, *Goblet* 144).

The concept is also included in the spells that the magicians cast, further improving on the distinction between both sides. "Expecto Patronum" is a spell that creates an embodiment of the caster's most positive feelings and is a spell that properly represents the good side. In contrast to the Patronum spell, the evil side has the spell "Avada Kedavra", a spell that causes instant-death to whomever it strikes, again fitting the theme of being an evil spell. There are more spells that have been divided into alignments as well, but the main difference is that the good side's spells does not kill while the evil side's spells somehow causes either harm or death (Wikipedia, "Spells in Harry Potter").

Rowling's implementation of personified spells is a nice touch and helps in displaying her own idea of the concept of good versus evil.

Narrative Structure

The narrative structure of Harry Potter does follow the high-fantasy norms**,** utilizing both the quest and the voyage. However, each book differs in structure, something Rowling has done to expand on the norms of the narrative structure. By having different structures (or different quests), each entry in the Harry Potter saga feels fresh. The first book, *The Philosopher's Stone,* can be seen both as Harry's quest for the stone or as his voyage to Hogwarts. *The Chamber of Secret* follows the quest structure, Harry and his friends' quest for the Chamber of Secrets. However**,** more importantly, the saga in its entirety follows the voyage/return structure. Harry's adventure starts off as a voyage into the life of a magician but is interrupted by Voldemort, who constantly causes abnormalities in Harry's life as a magician. Therefore, the voyage/return structure is Harry's need to return to a normal, magical life-style. Harry faces Voldemort in the first three books; Voldemort's presence is always there in the books but is never a vital point to the story of *The Philosopher's Stone, The Chamber of Secrets* and *The Prisoner of Azkaban*, the overall story of each of these books never uses Voldemort as an important character and is only mentioned as the former Dark Lord:

> Professor McGonagall's voice trembled as she went on. 'That's not all. They're saying that he tried to kill the Potters' son, Harry. But – he couldn't. No one knows why, or how, but they're saying that when he couldn't kill Harry Potter, Voldemort's power somehow broke – and that's why he's gone.' (Rowling, *Stone* 19)

This serves as a build-up for the impending battle between Harry and Voldemort, which is implied as the main story by the prophecy in *The Order of The Phoenix*,

> The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches… born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies… and the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not… and either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives… (Rowling, *Order* 924).

By looking at the saga's story as a whole, the clash between Harry and Voldemort is indeed apparent but never a vital point until Voldemort's resurrection in *The Goblet of Fire* (Rowling, *Goblet* 697).

Language

The language in *Harry Potter* is rather difficult to consider as high-fantasy. In comparison to *The lord of The Rings*, the style that *Harry Potter* uses does not convey the feeling of an epic

adventure. Instead, Rowling opts for a more casual style of language, which fits the targeted teenage audience. However, Rowling's use of a casual style complements the characters well and aids in creating mental pictures of the characters. Since the language is familiar, readers will be able to feel immersed easier as the language used is used by the readers themselves. The addition of parseltongue or the language of serpents is another trait found in high-fantasy but the language itself has been implemented as according to the norms.

Each setting and magical object is explained in a manner that is easy to understand without being too simplistic. A quick comparison between Harry Potter and *The Lord of The Rings* shows that both styles have been customized properly according to their targeted audience:

> When Mr. Bilbo Baggins of Bag End announced that he would shortly be celebrating his eleventy-first birthday with a party of special magnificence, there was much talk and excitement in Hobbiton. (Tolkien 22)

> They didn't think they could bear it if anyone found out about the Potters. (Rowling, *Stone* 7)

The issue with having such a casual tone is that the tone lends itself to several other genres. It becomes difficult to consider Harry Potter's language as high-fantasy because it does not convey the feeling of reading an epic tale like *The Lord of The Rings* does. However, one could also argue that by using a casual tone, Rowling has brilliantly customized the language as according to her audience and can then be considered as a high-fantasy. Another interesting aspect of the language is that it "matures" alongside the characters as the story progresses and the books audience. Many people that started to read Harry Potter in 1997 were approximately around Harry's age and grew up alongside him as they continued to read each new entry. The language is in a sense connected to the main characters. As each character grows, so does their vocabulary and their mentality changes too. In the first three books the amount of characters that die are low. However, as the story becomes darker and darker, more character die.

Conclusion

Rowling's take on high-fantasy is remarkable. The implementation and expansion of the high-fantasy traits have led to a very original and enticing story. Each trait, from the clever usage of sub-types and portals to the original takes on character roles successfully create a high-fantasy novel that expands creatively from the norms. Rowling's high-fantasy is elaborated and plays on the strengths of high-fantasy without pushing it too much, her own take is shaped with each norm in mind. The implementation of high-fantasy and expansions on it is clearly one of the main contributing factors

to *Harry* Potter's massive success. Each expansion on high-fantasy has turned *Harry Potter* into a highly original entry in the high-fantasy genre.

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