

DISENCHANTMENT AND WITCHCRAFT:
HARRY POTTER AND THE LEGACY OF EARLY MODERN MAGIC

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by

Aislyn Fredsall

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I explore how ideas about early modern magic inform the magic and the function of magic in the Harry Potter Universe (HPU). I begin by arguing that Rowling engages with modern theories of disenchantment that trace the end of the widespread belief in magic to the early modern period and the Enlightenment. By creating an elaborate fantasy universe in which a world where disenchantment never occurred is embedded in, and coexists with, a version of our own disenchanted world, Rowling produces an alternative historical narrative of the relationship of magic to the rational world. Rather than taking a nostalgic turn and “re-enchanting” the world by reuniting magic with the rational world, Rowling, I argue, keeps these worlds separate to show that neither magic nor science can solve all problems for humanity. Finally, I read archival texts from the early modern period against the Harry Potter series and its companion texts to demonstrate how Rowling adapts early modern notions of witchcraft to create her own conceptions of magic within the Harry Potter Universe in order to reframe the metaphysical fight between good and evil that is at the heart of the Harry Potter series.

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NOTE ON THE TEXT

I have retained the capitalization practices that J.K. Rowling established in the Harry Potter series for terms originally coined by her (e.g. Muggles, Quidditch, etc.) as well as terms she capitalized due to the specific nature of their use (e.g. Dark wizards, Potions class, etc.).

When quoting from early modern texts, I have also retained the spelling and grammar found in the original documents.

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Disenchantment and Witchcraft: Harry Potter and the Legacy of Early Modern Magic

In 1692, America experienced arguably the most infamous witch-hunt epidemic in history, the Salem witch trials. What started as two young girls suffering from an unknown illness quickly spiraled into a web of accusations, paranoia, and fear. When all was said and done, legal action had been taken against at least 144 people. 54 people confessed to witchcraft, 20 people were executed, and four people died while in custody (Norton 3-4).

Also in 1692, within the fictional world of J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series, the International Confederation of Wizards put the International Statute of Secrecy into effect, thus sending the Wizarding world officially into hiding from the Muggle, that is non-magic, world. From this point forward, witches and wizards "formed their own small communities within a community" (*Deathly Hallows* 318-319) and it became a crime for a witch or wizard to expose the existence of the Wizarding world to a Muggle, whether by performing magic in front of Muggles, showing them a magical creature, or simply telling them of the existence of magic and the Wizarding world.

Working in explicit reference to the Salem witch trials, in recent stories on *Pottermore*, a website where Rowling publishes previously unreleased writings on the world of Harry Potter, Rowling writes that "a number of the dead were indeed witches, though utterly innocent of the crimes for which they had been arrested. Others were merely No-Majs [non-magical people] who had the misfortune to be caught up in the general hysteria and bloodlust" ("History of Magic in North America"). As with our own history, this was not the first time in Rowling's imagined world that witches and wizards had been prosecuted, although often they were able to use their magic to escape harm:

On the rare occasion that they did catch a real witch or wizard, burning had no effect whatsoever. The witch or wizard would perform a basic Flame Freezing Charm and then pretend to shriek with pain while enjoying a gentle, tickling sensation. Indeed, Wendelin the Weird enjoyed being burned so much that she allowed herself to be caught no less than forty-seven times in various disguises. (*Prisoner of Azkaban* 2)

Not all witches and wizards were so fortunate, though, as demonstrated by the Salem executions and the story of “Sir Nicholas de Mimsy-Popington (a wizard at the Royal Court in his lifetime, and in his death-time, ghost of Gryffindor Tower) [who] was stripped of his wand before being locked in a dungeon, and was unable to magic himself out of his execution” (*Beedle the Bard* 12).

Through details such as these, J.K. Rowling establishes that our historical world and the elaborate world of Harry Potter are connected, with her works offering an extension of or elaboration on the world and history that we know. Within the novels, therefore, the early modern period is the last time the non-magic world knowingly interacted with the magic community and had first-hand knowledge about witchcraft. While there are many studies that examine the various historical influences on Rowling’s creation of the Harry Potter Universe, there are few that look at the early modern period specifically.

In this thesis, I explore how ideas about early modern magic inform the magic and the function of magic in the Harry Potter Universe. I begin with an examination of how Rowling’s elaborate fantasy world is embedded within a fictionalized version of our world, arguing that by using this strategy Rowling engages with the concept of disenchantment through juxtaposing our world against a world where disenchantment never occurred. However, rather than taking a nostalgic turn and “re-enchanting” the world by reuniting magic with the rational, Muggle world, Rowling, I argue, keeps these worlds separate to show that neither magic nor science can solve

all problems for humanity. Finally, I then turn to real texts from the early modern period, reading the Harry Potter series and its companion texts against the ideas that these early modern texts advance, arguing that Rowling adapts these early modern notions of witchcraft when creating her own conceptions of magic within the Harry Potter Universe in order to portray magic as neither inherently good nor bad. By examining the complex ways that Rowling's series and fictional universe engage with the diverse legacies of early modern magic, it becomes clear that Rowling's works are more than children's books telling the tale of a boy wizard; they are instead a series of intricate works that draw from history in order to engage theories of disenchantment and reconsider what could have happened if magic and science had remained entwined.

Secondary Worlds, Worldbuilding, and the Harry Potter Universe

In his seminal essay about the fantasy genre entitled "On Fairy-Stories," J.R.R. Tolkien introduces the terms "Primary World" and "Secondary World" to distinguish between the real world and a fantasy world, respectively, describing how

...the story-maker proves a successful 'sub-creator'. He makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is 'true': it accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside. The moment disbelief arises, the spell is broken; the magic, or rather art, has failed. You are then out in the Primary World again, looking at the little abortive Secondary World from outside. (132)

In the Harry Potter Universe, the Secondary World is a part of the Primary World. While this may seem like a simple statement, it deserves to be examined in more detail to understand how the ways in which Rowling's worldbuilding deviates from other fantasy worlds illuminate her strategies of social commentary on our own society. In many fantasy stories, authors create an entirely new Secondary World that may in some ways resemble our world but is unambiguously

a fictional world. The world created by George R.R. Martin in the *A Song of Ice and Fire* series, which contains its own unique geography, history, religions, and culture, is a famous example of this type of worldbuilding.

Another tactic for fantasy writers is to bring oft-used fantastical elements such as magic or dragons into our world and present them as real. Although the world of Middle-earth seems irreconcilably different from our world, and indeed Tolkien creates original and distinctive cultures, languages, and histories for Middle-earth, Tolkien imagined the Secondary World of Middle-earth to be a part of the Primary World, explaining that the stories of Middle-earth are a forgotten part of Earth's history. In fact, Tolkien was a medievalist and based many aspects of Middle-earth on Anglo-Saxon culture and history from the Middle Ages, a tradition that has continued in modern fantasy. This strategy is related to, but significantly different from, the subgenre of alternate history, the concept "that some event in the past did not occur as we know it did, and thus the present has changed" (Hellekson 2). In other words, alternate histories explore the idea of what our present world would be like if some event in the past happened differently, such as *The Man in the High Castle* by Philip K. Dick, which explores the notion of the Axis Powers winning World War II instead of the Allied Powers. When locating his Secondary World within the history of the Primary World, though, Tolkien is not then investigating how this new history changes the Primary World; Tolkien is simply inserting new stories into history that do not have an overall effect on the progression of history. The history of Middle-earth never interacts with that of the Middle Ages, or any known part of Earth's history for that matter; nor are the fantastical elements of Middle-earth kept apart from the society of humans. In this way his worldbuilding is reminiscent of the secret history, although this genre is often a nonfiction explanation of true, little-known events in history or a fictional explanation of

a true historical event, and Tolkien is certainly not suggesting that the events of his novels are true. In fact, in an interview Tolkien did with the BBC, an interviewer asked, “It seemed to me that Middle-earth was in a sense as you say this world we live in but at a different era,” and Tolkien responded, “No ... at a different stage of imagination, yes.” Here Tolkien is implying that the worlds are fundamentally different from each other and in fact are rather more akin to alternate realities.

Like Tolkien, Rowling creates a Secondary World located within the Primary World, but her worldbuilding takes a very different form. Tolkien presents Middle-earth as a past history of an alternate version of Earth that does not interact with our own history; Rowling, on the other hand, presents the Wizarding world as a vast society and history that is simply an unknown part of the Muggle world, which is a fictionalized version of our own world that often intersects with our known history. For example, she describes actual historical events and the secret involvement of the Wizarding world, such as when Newt Scamander in the film *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* reveals that he fought in World War I, but "worked mostly with dragons, Ukrainian Ironbellies – Eastern Front" (Scene 50). Similarly, many things that occur in the Muggle world are revealed to actually have magical explanations. For example, in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, former Minister of Magic Cornelius Fudge meets with the Muggle Prime Minister to explain that many natural disasters that had occurred that week were actually the result of attacks by Lord Voldemort, the main antagonist of the Harry Potter series, and his followers:

“So I suppose you’re going to tell me he [Lord Voldemort] caused the hurricane in the West Country too?” said the Prime Minister, his temper rising with every pace he took. It was infuriating to discover the reason for all these terrible disasters and not to be able to tell the public, almost worse than it being the government’s fault after all.

“That was no hurricane,” said Fudge miserably.

“Excuse me!” barked the Prime Minister, now positively stamping up and down. “Trees uprooted, roofs ripped off, lampposts bent, horrible injuries—”

“It was the Death Eaters,” said Fudge. “He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named’s followers. And... we suspect giant involvement.” (12-13)

Of course, in engaging with real history Rowling is not trying to assert her stories as true. To the disappointment of readers around the world who are still waiting for their Hogwarts acceptance letter, these works are fiction and Rowling is not claiming otherwise. Rather, she is building a world that is in every way, including history, identical to ours except for the inclusion of this magical hidden community. The fact that this fantasy world doesn’t have a specific alternative name such as Middle-earth furthers the illusion of a hidden world within our world. I will refer to this fantasy world that Rowling has created as “the Harry Potter Universe,” or “HPU” for short, which is comprised of “the Wizarding world” and “the Muggle world,” as they are referred to within the Harry Potter series. The HPU has also now been extended beyond the original seven-book series to include what I will refer to as “the companion texts”—such as other books set within the HPU, posts on *Pottermore*, a play script, movie scripts, Rowling’s tweets, and so on—that are not directly related or limited to the particular adventures of Harry Potter the character.

This close adherence to the features of our world and the intertwining of our true history with this fictional history is key to understanding how Rowling’s worldbuilding is different from that of Tolkien. The Wizarding world of the HPU is a hidden world that directly engages with a fictionalized version of our world and its history, whereas Tolkien’s Middle-earth does not. Of course, Rowling is neither the first nor the last person to have created a fantasy world that is hidden within our own world. If we look to classic fantasy, such as C.S. Lewis’s Narnia, or even other modern, bestselling YA fantasy, such as Cassandra Clare’s world of Shadowhunters, there are many examples of fictional worlds embedded within a fictionalized version of our own

world. Some would call these hidden fantasy worlds a “parallel world,” or even a “parallel universe,” but I want to reconsider the aptness of these specific terms and instead propose the term “embedded world” for this concept. Parallel implies that the worlds are side-by-side but never intersecting, whereas in the Harry Potter Universe, the Wizarding world is entrenched within the Muggle world and these distinct worlds often do interact, even though the Muggles have no knowledge of it.

The terms “parallel world” and “parallel universe” are also often, although not exclusively, used to imply an alternate reality. Karen Hellekson defines a parallel world story as “a kind of alternate history, but one in which a number of alternate histories exist simultaneously. Characters, by means of sophisticated machines or bizarre accident, can move from one alternate history to another” (Hellekson 3). This concept is explored within the HPU in the new play *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* by Jack Thorne, based on a story by Thorne, J.K. Rowling, and John Tiffany. In the play, Harry Potter’s son, Albus, along with Draco Malfoy’s son, Scorpius, use a Time-Turner to change events in the past. Each change they make in the past drastically changes their present, bringing them into a new alternate reality, or parallel world, that explores what would have happened if events from the original Harry Potter series, such as Cedric Diggory’s death, had never occurred. To avoid this confusion with alternate realities, I am instead going to refer to Rowling’s worldbuilding strategy as an “embedded world.” Rowling’s use of an embedded world when creating the Harry Potter Universe allows her to put a world of magic next to our own world, which, as I will demonstrate in the next section, is crucial to understanding the ways in which the HPU interacts with science and technology.

Disenchantment, Technology, and Magic

To understand why Rowling uses an embedded world in the Harry Potter series and its companion texts, it is helpful to introduce the concept of what German sociologist Max Weber termed “*Entzauberung der Welt*,” or, as it is often translated into English, the “disenchantment of the world.” The average person today thinks of magic as either impossible, pure fantasy and myth, or a sleight-of-hand trick. However, up through the early modern period, magic was a part of everyday life with real explanatory power. As James Sharpe argues in *Instruments of Darkness: Witchcraft in Early Modern England*, in the past, “people believed in witchcraft because it gave them a means of explaining the inexplicable, and also an approach to understanding human relations” (11-12). This explanatory power goes beyond resorting to magic as a reason for extreme weather or mysterious illness; magic was used to understand the entire natural world. Keith Thomas writes in *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, “in the absence of any rival system of scientific explanation... there was no other existing body of thought, religion apart, which even began to offer so all-embracing an explanation for the baffling variousness of human affairs” (384). Magic, then, was the science of the past, making comprehensive sense of the mysteries of the world. Indeed, the relationship between magic and science was fluid, with subjects such as alchemy embodying the prevalent amalgam of the two. With the rise of the Enlightenment at the end of the early modern period, however, scholars began to depend more on reason and less on magic in their pursuit of science as they discovered new and various methods for studying and explaining natural phenomenon. This, in short, is the disenchantment of the world: when rationality began replacing magic, separating the worlds of magic and science and shaping the world we have today.

Weber often used this concept of disenchantment to explore the intersection of religion and economy. In his influential work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber writes, “The overarching process in the history of religion—the elimination of magic from the world’s occurrences (*Entzauberung der Welt*)—found here, with the doctrine of predestination, its final stage... There were not only no magical means that would turn God’s grace toward believers He decided to condemn, but no means of any kind” (107). In other words, as Protestantism embraced the ideals of the Enlightenment that precipitated disenchantment, the idea of predestination gained authority. Weber posits that those who believed in predestination also believed that wealth and prosperity were a sign from God that they were among those predestined for salvation. It was their drive to achieve this wealth and prosperity that contributed to the rise of capitalism during this time.

While Weber was ambivalent as to whether disenchantment was fundamentally positive or negative, German Frankfurt School philosophers Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno contend that disenchantment when taken to its fullest extent enabled the horrors of modernity and thus the Enlightenment was ultimately a failure. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment* they write, “The program of the Enlightenment was the disenchantment of the world: the dissolution of myths and the substitution of knowledge for fancy” (3) and that “the disenchantment of the world is the extirpation of animism” (5). They argue that the Enlightenment caused humans to attempt to master nature and subject it to rationality, which actually distanced them from a true understanding of nature and created a desire to subject others to domination and oppression. Thus, Horkheimer and Adorno, writing after the Second World War, suggest that the Enlightenment allowed for the rise of fascism. While they are not arguing for a widespread

genuine belief in magic again, they see the general movement towards rationality started by the Enlightenment as ultimately culminating in a world that could foster the rise of the Nazi regime.

Other scholars, political thinkers, and critics, while not directly citing Weber's work as Horkheimer and Adorno do, nor using the exact terminology of "disenchantment," have similarly pointed to the Enlightenment as a point in history when thinking fundamentally changed. For example, T.S. Eliot in "The Metaphysical Poets" sees this time as pivotal for explaining a change in poetry: "In the seventeenth century a dissociation of sensibility set in, from which we have never recovered" (247). More precisely, the poets who came after the Metaphysical poets disconnected their emotions from intellectual thought in an effort to be more objective. To Eliot, these poets lost some of the "magic" of poetry.

Reading the Harry Potter series and its companion texts against the notion of disenchantment makes it clear that Rowling's embedded world is directly engaging with the idea of disenchantment, a concept that is particularly relevant to the HPU because the history of the embedded world locates the separation of the Wizarding world from the Muggle world in the same time period as this disenchantment. In the article "Harry Potter and the Disenchantment of the World," Michael Ostling applies the concept of disenchantment to the first four books of the Harry Potter series, arguing that "Harry Potter's magic is 'disenchanted' in part, because of [its] total reliability, its universal applicability which implies that the magical causes of an event are always discoverable and replicable" (9). While I agree with his reading of "parallels between magical and technological items" (12), I think Rowling, in creating the Wizarding world as an embedded world, has in fact created a society where the disenchantment never occurred. In the early modern period, magic and science were connected and this remains true in the Wizarding world. Because science and magic have continued to be intertwined in the Wizarding world and

thus science has not progressed in the same way it has in our world, witches and wizards have an aversion to Muggle technology, even technologies as simple as spiral bound notebooks and ballpoint pens (the students at Hogwarts still write on parchment with quills and ink). While the first books were written in the early days of the Internet and cell phones, and while there have obviously been vast technological developments since then, the most advanced technology that the magic community utilizes is the radio: for example, Harry and the Weasleys sit down and gather around a “large wooden wireless set” (*Half-Blood Prince* 330) to listen to Mrs. Weasley’s favorite singer, Celestina Warbeck, on Christmas. Even ignoring the existence of cell phones, the telephone in general proves to be a challenge for wizards as Ron Weasley demonstrates when he attempts to use a phone for the first time to call Harry at the Dursley’s, his Muggle relatives, house and “yell[ed] so loudly that Uncle Vernon jumped and held the receiver a foot away from his ear, staring at it with an expression of mingled fury and alarm” (*Prisoner of Azkaban* 4). And while televisions are mentioned throughout the series when Harry is home with the Dursleys, there is no mention of witches or wizards sitting down to watch television. Rowling has written on the subject of wizards and television in the post “Technology” on *Pottermore*, explaining that

some members of the magical community are amused by Muggle television, and a few firebrand wizards even went so far, in the early eighties, as to start a British Wizarding Broadcasting Corporation, in the hope that they would be able to have their own television channel. The project foundered at an early stage, as the Ministry of Magic refused to countenance the broadcasting of wizarding material on a Muggle device, which would (it was felt) almost guarantee serious breaches of the International Statute of Secrecy. (“Technology”)

Even when the wizarding community tried to adapt modern Muggle technology, they had reasons and motives for remaining technology-free.

Rowling gives these in-world explanations for why witches and wizards do not often, if ever, use technology. For one, technology cannot be used at Hogwarts specifically because, as

Hermione, explains, “All those substitutes for magic Muggles use — electricity, computers, and radar, and all those things — they all go haywire around Hogwarts, there’s too much magic in the air” (*Goblet of Fire* 548). However, most witches and wizards live in close proximity to Muggles, so this explanation is only specific to Hogwarts. Therefore, Rowling has offered other reasons why wizards don’t use modern technology. On *Pottermore* Rowling writes,

When you can summon any book, instrument or animal with a wave of the wand and the word *Accio!*; when you can communicate with friends and acquaintances by means of owl, fire, Patronus, Howler, enchanted objects such as coins, or Apparate to visit them in person; when your newspaper has moving pictures and everyday objects sometimes talk to you, then the internet does not seem a particularly exciting place. This is not to say that you will never find a witch or wizard surfing the net; merely that they will generally be doing so out of slightly condescending curiosity, or else doing research in the field of Muggle Studies. (“Technology”)

This reasoning appeals to the more sentimental feelings of wonder towards magic, tapping into the awe that readers, as people living in a disenchanting society, feel at the thought of true magic. However, Rowling also offers a cultural, less sentimental explanation: “The magical community prides itself on the fact that it does not need the many (admittedly ingenious) devices that Muggles have created to enable them to do what can be so easily done by magic. To fill one’s house with tumble dryers and telephones would be seen as an admission of magical inadequacy” (“Technology”). This account acknowledges the connection between magic and technology that Hermione makes in the first quote, recognizing that magic often replaces technology in the Wizarding world, or rather that technology was developed as a substitute for magic in the Muggle world. It also hints at the feelings of superiority towards Muggles that pervade wizarding culture and that when taken to the extreme manifest in Dark wizards, such as Gellert Grindelwald and Lord Voldemort, promoting magic-supremacy. The average witch or wizard in the HPU does not support the philosophies of these Dark wizards, but they do still believe in the

superiority of magic over Muggle technology. Muggles have forced the Wizarding world into hiding, so witches and wizards wish to remain as separate from the Muggle world as possible. They are proud of their magical abilities and traditions and wish to preserve their culture.

Of course, this viewpoint is not shared by all witches and wizards. The prime example of affection for Muggle ingenuity is Arthur Weasley, who loves Muggle technology and is fascinated by the science behind it. As his son Fred explains, “Dad’s crazy about everything to do with Muggles; our shed’s full of Muggle stuff. He takes it apart, puts spells on it, and puts it back together again” (*Chamber of Secrets* 31). Arthur often does not understand Muggle science, but he lets his curiosity lead him: he’s ecstatic to receive a “gift of fuse-wire and screwdrivers” (*Order of the Phoenix* 506), his greatest ambition is “to find out how airplanes stay up” (*Half-Blood Prince* 86), and he also decides to experiment with Muggle medicine after he sustains a magical injury, as he tries to explain to his wife Molly:

“Well—now don’t get upset, Molly, but Augustus Pye has an idea.... He’s the Trainee Healer, you know, lovely young chap and very interested in.... um.... complementary medicine.... I mean, some of these old Muggle remedies.... well, they’re called *stitches*, Molly, and they work very well on—on Muggle wounds—”

Mrs. Weasley let out an ominous noise somewhere between a shriek and a snarl...

“Do you mean to tell me,” said Mrs. Weasley, her voice growing louder with every word and apparently unaware that her fellow visitors were scurrying for cover, “that you have been messing about with Muggle remedies?”

“Not messing about, Molly, dear,” said Mr. Weasley imploringly. It was just—just something Pye and I thought we’d try—only, most unfortunately—well, with these particular kinds of wounds—it doesn’t seem to work as well as we’d hope—”

“*Meaning?*”

“Well.... well, I don’t know whether you know what—what stitches are?”

“It sounds as though you’ve been trying to sew your skin back together,” said Mrs. Weasley with a snort of mirthless laughter, “but even you, Arthur, wouldn’t be *that* stupid—” (*Order of the Phoenix* 506-507)

Molly is very indulgent of Arthur's fascination with Muggle science, but even she thinks that trying to actually use the science, rather than simply learning about it, is "stupid" and even dangerous. Arthur's love of Muggle technology is simply seen as a quirk since the majority of witches and wizards in the HPU believe that magic is far superior to Muggle technology.

Many readers have commented on this marked lack of technology throughout the original series and felt that there was interpretive significance to it beyond Rowling's official explanations. Nicholas Sheltroun in his article "Harry Potter's World as Morality Tale of Technology and Media" writes,

Rowling's segregation of the wizarding world from regular technologies is critical in that it throws our dependency on these technologies into sharp relief. If one has a hard time remembering life before the Internet, texting, GPS systems, and cell phones, pick up one of the Harry Potter books and enjoy how the characters solve problems and develop relationships outside the context of many technologies basic to the Muggle world. (57)

In addition to proposing this moral lesson, Sheltroun also argues that Muggle technology is replaced by magic technology, such as wands and Sneakoscopes,¹ and that Harry's discipline of knowing when to use and not use magic is a lesson for Muggles to learn when to use technology and when to put it down. In their article "Magic, Science, and the Ethics of Technology," Benjamin J. Bruxvoort Lipscomb and W. Christopher Stewart also explore the ethics behind the use of technology and make a similar argument, contending that "the use and abuse of magic in Rowling's books is a close analogue for the use and abuse of applied science—technology—in our world" (77). Both articles interpret the absence of technology as meant to teach a message about the benefits of a reduction in the use of and dependency on technology.

¹ A Sneakoscope is a magical device that detects when someone is being untrustworthy.

However, the scarcity of modern science and technology can also be understood through the concept of disenchantment and Rowling's embedded world. The Wizarding world within the Harry Potter Universe is a world where disenchantment never happened and science was never separated from magic. In this world, magic *is* science. As Shelton points out, the Wizarding world has invented their own technologies that are powered by magic rather than Muggle science. The Muggle world, on the other hand, is a fictionalized version of our own world, and thus a world where disenchantment has taken over. In the Muggle world, science and technology explain the forces of nature and solve problems. Magic is no longer visible in this world, and the Wizarding world observes that Muggles will "go to any lengths to ignore magic, even if it's staring them in the face" (*Chamber of Secrets* 38). Rowling's creation of an embedded world rather than simply an entirely new and separate Secondary World allows for these worlds to be juxtaposed with each other. While many have argued that disenchantment had a negative effect on the world, Rowling is demonstrating that a world like the Wizarding world where disenchantment did not occur still has many similar problems to our world, represented in the HPU by the Muggle world. Horkheimer and Adorno proposed that disenchantment helped contribute to the rise of Nazism. However, Rowling shows that a world with magic does not end abuse of power; in the Wizarding world, Dark wizards like Lord Voldemort were still able to take power and start fascist regimes. In fact, many readers, such as Nancy R. Reagan in "Was Voldemort a Nazi?: Death Eater Ideology and National Socialism," have noted that Voldemort's regime has clear parallels to the Nazi regime, such as the focus on blood status, or ancestry, and the use of the Dark Mark symbol to represent their group, similar to the Nazi use of the swastika. The German Dark wizard Gellert Grindelwald, too, has clear parallels with Hitler: both were defeated in 1945 and Grindelwald was imprisoned in Nurmengard, a prison which shares a

similar name to Nuremberg, the city where the war crime trials against the Nazis were held after the war.

In putting these enchanted and disenchanting worlds side by side, Rowling is arguing that neither magic nor science can prevent atrocities or stem the darkness that exists within human society. Rather, it is only people and their willingness to stand up for humanity who can do that. Harry faces off against dark forces in each book and is ultimately willing to sacrifice himself in order to defeat Voldemort, indicating that the battle between good and evil is the main theme of the novels. This theme has continued into the new *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* film series, which was revealed to actually be documenting the story of the fight against Grindelwald rather than simply the adventures of magizoologist Newt Scamander, as was originally assumed by fans when the film was first announced. Throughout her works, Rowling rejects the notion supported by some theorists of disenchantment that rationality, modern science, and technology are the source of our world's problems and that magic marked a time before the destructive privileging of reason and rationality. By contrast, she does not glorify magic, but rather demonstrates how it is a technology similar to our modern technologies and consequently can be abused in similar fashion. There is quite literally no "magic" solution to solving the world's most terrible problems, but this should not discourage readers. In Harry's defeat of Voldemort, Rowling shows that we only need humanity's best qualities, such as kindness, compassion, and a willingness to fight for goodness, in order to make our world better.

Early Modern Debates on Magic

I turn now from modern theories of the transition of the early modern period into modernity to examine how the Harry Potter series and its companion texts reconsider and

reimagine the early modern period and its legacy. In the remainder of this thesis, I read the Harry Potter series and its companion texts against literature from the early modern period, including pamphlets, books, and plays, to demonstrate how Rowling used the real pre-modern world as a basis upon which she creates her fantasy. My argument does not rely on Rowling having read these specific texts. The texts I chose simply represent larger ideas that were prevalent during the early modern period. Reading the Harry Potter novels and the companion texts through the beliefs of this period illuminates connections between the two, demonstrating that Rowling often used and adapted these ideas to remain connected to historic representations of magic while simultaneously separating magic from the negative connotations of the early modern period, portraying magic as neither inherently good nor evil and enabling the reading of disenchantment.

I concentrate on early modern conceptions of witchcraft specifically because, due to the witch-hunts, this is the representation of magic that has most influenced our current perceptions of magic. However, there were many other understandings of magic prevalent during the early modern period, and I will briefly discuss these differing views before focusing on witchcraft specifically. While witchcraft was associated with maleficium, natural magic was the category of magic that was influential to emergence of the New Science. Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, a famous occult writer of the early modern period, was a proponent of natural magic, describing how “a Magician doth not amongst learned men signifie a sorcerer, or one that is superstitious or divellish [devilish]; but a wise man, a priest, a prophet” (Agrippa, *To the Reader*). Proponents of natural magic studied the forces of nature and attempted to master those forces in order to gain a better understanding of the world. Thus, it was seen as a scholarly pursuit rather than an act of evil. Rowling acknowledges this branch of magic, and its long history, when she briefly includes Agrippa in the HPU: Ron Weasley mentions that the candy “Chocolate Frogs have cards inside

them, you know, to collect—famous witches and wizards. I’ve got about five hundred, but I haven’t got Agrippa or Ptolemy” (*Sorcerer’s Stone* 102).

Rowling also draws from this type of magic in constructing the Harry Potter Universe with her references to such natural magic subjects as alchemy and astrology. Many readers, including Don Keck DuPree in “Nicolas Flamel: The Alchemist Who Lived,” have noted the obvious connections between the world of Harry Potter and alchemy, such as the presence of the legendary alchemist Nicolas Flamel, the Philosopher’s Stone, and the Elixir of Life in the first book of the series, as well as passing reference to other alchemists such as Paracelsus, or the similarity of the Hogwarts subject Potions to alchemy.

Astrology and astronomy are also featured throughout the Harry Potter series. James VI and I, then King of Scotland and soon-to-be King of England, provides this explanation of the difference between astronomy and astrology in his work *Daemonologie*, a treatise on magic in the form of a Socratic dialogue published in 1597:

There are two thinges which the learned haue obserued from the beginning, in the science of the Heauenlie Creatures, the Planets, Starres, and such like: The one is their course and ordinary motiones, which for that cause is called *Astronomia*... that is to say, the law of the Starres: And this arte indeed is one of the members of the *Mathematicques*, & not onelie lawful, but most necessarie and commendable. The other is called *Astrologia*... which is to say, the word, and preaching of the starres: Which is deuided in two partes: The first by knowing thereby the powers of simples, and sickenesses, the course of the seasons and the weather, being ruled by their influence; which part depending vpon the former, although it be not of it selfe a parte of *Mathematicques*: yet it is not unlawful, being moderatlie vsed, suppose not so necessarie and commendable as the former. The second part is to truste so much to their influences, as thereby to fore-tell what common-weales shall florish or decay: what persones shall be fortunate or vnfortunate... This parte now is vtterlie vnlawful to be trusted in, or practized amongst Christians. (13-14)

In this quote, King James associates astronomy with “Mathematicques,” distinguishing it as an intellectual subject that is “most necessarie and commendable.” Astrology, on the other hand, is

not viewed as positively, although King James refrains from completely condemning it. He describes part of astrology as a protoscience aiming to learn “the course of the seasons and the weather, being ruled by their influence,” or to better understand the influence of the stars on the world. Although not as useful or commendable as astronomy, King James approves of this academic pursuit. However, the part of astrology that is used for fortune-telling is unreservedly condemned. King James praises the exploration for scientific knowledge but condemns the use of magic. Interestingly, Astronomy is a required subject at Hogwarts while astrology is simply a unit within the optional subject of Divination. It is interesting that Astronomy, of the two the subject with no clear magical implications, is not only taught at Hogwarts, but a required subject. I would suggest that Rowling is not only including Astronomy because of its connection back to the early modern period and the concepts of natural magic, but more importantly that she is integrating magic and science as it was during the early modern period. Although she keeps magic and modern science apart by keeping the Wizarding world and the Muggle world apart, astronomy was an established science with a clear magical counterpart during the early modern period and thus feels appropriate in this enchanted world.

Unlike witchcraft, natural magic was a scholarly pursuit, and thus was dominated by men, especially men of learned classes in positions of power. This status combined with their gender often protected these men from accusations of witchcraft. For example, John Dee, an advisor to Queen Elizabeth I, was a philosopher, astrologer, and general practitioner of natural magic, often performing experiments where he claimed to communicate with angels. When Meric Casaubon published Dee’s transcripts of his experiments and conversations with the angels, Casaubon condemns Dee’s actions but not Dee himself, writing “his only (but great and dreadful) error being, that he mistook false lying Spirits for Angels of Light, the Divel of Hell (as

we commonly term him) for the God of Heaven” (Casaubon, Preface). Casaubon believes that Dee was communicating with evil spirits rather than angels, but because Dee thought they were angels and was “a zealous worshipper of God, and a very free and sincere Christian” (Casaubon, Preface), Casaubon refuses to condemn him. Dee was simply pursuing knowledge, and thus this natural magic is not reviled in the same way witchcraft was. However, there were those who condemned even this learned magic, such as James VI and I who proposed that advanced education coupled with ambition was a temptation to continue that education into learning dark magic:

For divers men having attained to a great perfection in learning... finding all natural things common... to vindicate vnto them a greater name, by not onlie knowing the course of things heavenlie, but likewise to clim to the knowledge of things to come thereby... and so mounting from degree to degree, vpon the slipperie and vncertaine seale of curiositie; they are at last entised, that were lawfull artes or sciences failes, to satisfie their restles minds, even to seeke to that black and vnlawfull science of Magie. (10)

However, for King James, all magic, even natural magic, was connected to the devil and therefore dark and a danger that should be avoided.

Another form of magic not condemned as witchcraft was what Keith Thomas has referred to as “popular” magic, a kind of folk magic thought to be wielded by the working classes. People would often go to a “cunning man,” as these magicians were known, for paid services such as finding lost or stolen property, healing, or fortune-telling. This was considered quite different from the erudite natural magic: “By this period popular magic and intellectual magic were essentially two different activities, overlapping at certain points, but to a large extent carried out in virtual independence of each other” (Thomas 271). This type of magic was considered different from witchcraft, although it is closely related because these “cunning” men and women had the potential to be accused of witchcraft. Thomas explains, “Prosecutions of black witches

suspected of doing harm to other people were numerous enough. But the records of assizes and quarter sessions suggest that their white counterparts were unlikely to find themselves in the courts unless their activities had been fraudulent or otherwise harmful” (Thomas 292). In other words, if the magic seemed to be helping the townspeople who went to the cunning men or women, then it was thought of as popular magic; however, once someone was suspected of using the magic to harm others, the magic was then labeled as witchcraft and subsumed all of the connotations of that label.

Despite, or perhaps because of, all of the different types of magic written about and “practiced” in the early modern period, it was not universally accepted that witchcraft and magic actually existed. For example, Reginald Scot wrote a popular skeptical treatise entitled *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* published in 1584, which attempted to use reason to disprove the existence of witches. Furthermore, Scot also saw the witch-hunts as tools for unfairly prosecuting women, writing “if more ridiculous or abominable crimes could have been invented, these poor women (whose chief fault is that they are scolds) should have been charged with them” (19). In the HPU, Rowling imagines a disenchanting Muggle world in which magic is no longer in evidence, not because men like Scot disproved the existence of magic, but rather because persecution forced witches and wizards underground. Her fiction opens the door into this secret society, which Rowling creates by drawing from and adapting the beliefs of witchcraft that shaped this persecution. One such belief that I will delve into in the next section is that witchcraft and its associated power is derived from the devil.

Religion and Power

In order to represent magic as neither intrinsically good nor evil, Rowling must contend with the early modern belief that the power of witchcraft is inextricably linked to the devil. Because people during the early modern period believed that the power of magic came from the devil, witchcraft was thought of as wicked. Indeed, there are still those, such as some Fundamental Evangelical Christian groups, who believe the Harry Potter books are sinful and wrong because of a continuing association between magic and the devil. Interestingly, though, there are contemporary defenders of the books who argue that the series adheres to Christian principles and ideals. For example, Peter Ciaccio in “Harry Potter and Christian Theology” performs a “theological analysis” (33) of the series, examining the different themes of the novels and comparing them to Christian morals, seeking to create a “positive Christian understanding of Harry Potter” (33). Thus, the religious discussion surrounding Harry Potter features strong proponents on both sides of the magic debate in terms that owe much to early modern conceptions of witchcraft.

Religion is never explicitly discussed in the Harry Potter series. The ideas of good versus evil, as well as death and the afterlife, are central themes of the series, but no characters ever discuss God. The Wizarding world, however, does seem to be pseudo-Christian. Witches and wizards in the Harry Potter series celebrate Christian holidays such as Easter and Christmas, with Sirius Black even singing a magic-inspired version of a famous Christmas carol: “God Rest You, Merrye Hippogriffs.” It is, of course, possible that wizards celebrate these holidays without any religious connection. Maria Nikolajeva suggests in her article “Harry Potter and the Secrets of Children’s Literature” that “perhaps some official at the Ministry of Magic considered the festivities worth importing from the Muggle world” (Nikolajeva 239). However, there are other

clues that wizarding society is based on Christian values. For example, Harry sees scripture on the grave headstones of witches and wizards, although the quotes are not explicitly marked as such. He sees the quote of Matthew 6:21, “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (*Deathly Hallows* 325), on the grave of Kendra and Ariana Dumbledore and 1 Corinthians 15:26, “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (*Deathly Hallows* 328), on James and Lily Potter’s grave. Additionally, Harry Potter himself is often considered a Christ figure. He is miraculously saved by the power of love and a prophecy speaks of his coming to do good and protect others from evil. His willingness to sacrifice himself in order to save others from malevolent forces makes this series a Christian allegory.

Despite the absence of explicit religious dogma in the Harry Potter books, reading the series against the beliefs of witchcraft that were inspired by religion illuminates some distinctive features of Rowling’s imaginary world that separate her conception of witchcraft from that of the early modern period. Since many people during the early modern period believed that magic came from the devil and that to become a witch you had to “make a League and Covenant with the Devill” (Stearne 12), one view of magic was that it is not a power that is inherent in a witch; instead, the power of witchcraft comes from the devil. In Harry Potter, on the other hand, magic is an innate ability in a person. In fact, magic often bursts out of children in unexpected ways because they have not yet learned how to control their power, as demonstrated by the zoo scene in *Sorcerer’s Stone* when Harry unknowingly makes the glass of the snake tank disappear. This idea is further developed and connected to the early modern period in the new movie *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, which introduced the idea of the human Obscurial and its parasitic Obscurus:

NEWT

There used to be more of them but they still exist. Before wizards went underground, when we were still being hunted by Muggles, young wizards and witches sometimes tried to suppress their magic to avoid persecution. Instead of learning to harness or to control their power, they developed what was called an Obscurus.

TINA

(off Jacob's confusion)

It's an unstable, uncontrollable Dark force that busts out and—and attacks... and then vanishes...

...

TINA

(to Newt)

Obscurials can't survive long, can they?

NEWT

There's no documented case of any Obscurial surviving past the age of ten.
(Scene 61)

The Obscurial and Obscurus are sobering demonstrations of the fact that magic is an innate ability in witches and wizards that can only be suppressed with dangerous consequences in the Harry Potter Universe. Although it is clear that magic is innate, it is unclear whether magic is an inherited characteristic. It appears to be a genetic trait since witches and wizards usually have magical children, but magic might not be strictly inheritable as demonstrated by the existence of Squibs, who are non-magic people born to wizards, and Muggle-borns, who are witches and wizards born to Muggle parents. Rowling writes on the topic,

As intensive studies in the Department of Mysteries demonstrated as far back as 1672, wizards and witches are born, not created. While the “rogue” ability to perform magic sometimes appears in those of apparent non-magical descent (though several later studies suggested that there will have been a witch or wizard somewhere on the family tree), Muggles cannot perform magic. (*Beedle the Bard* 83)

Here Rowling suggests that magic is inherited and that it can be a recessive trait that manifests in the children of Muggles many generations after their magical ancestor, or conversely become dormant in the children of witches and wizards in the case of Squibs. It is definitive, though, that

a Muggle cannot become a witch, as was the belief in the early modern period, making magic a trait rather than a choice. By imagining magic as a result of genetics with no relationship to the devil, Rowling creates a magic that is fundamentally neither good nor bad. This is in contrast to early modern conceptions of magic that regarded witchcraft as essentially wicked. By conceiving of a full magical inheritance rather than letting everyone have the ability to become a witch if they simply choose to do so, Rowling is able to create a plot that focuses on not only the clash between good and evil but also on fighting a type of prejudice based on who is born with magical ability and who is not.

Although Rowling's conception of magic does not have overt religious connotations, in the HPU goodness and love can overpower Dark magic similar to the early modern belief that faith in God could protect someone from witchcraft. "The Apprehension and confession of three notorious Witches," a pamphlet published in 1589 that recounts three witchcraft cases, describes a witch attempting to harm a neighbor via her familiar "but they could not, and the cause why they could not, as the saide sprites tolde her, was because they had at their comming a strong faith in God, and had inuocated and called vpon him, that they could doo them no harme" ("three notorious Witches"). "A Confirmation and Discovery of Witch-craft" concurs that "Historie likewise tells us, where the Gospel came among the heathen, there the hellish power of Devils and spirits greatly diminished" (Stearne 2). *The Witch of Edmonton* by William Rowley, Thomas Dekker and John Ford also presents this idea of protection from witchcraft—although this time the protection stems from an inherent goodness rather than a belief in God, which truthfully could have been thought of as mutually exclusive at the time—when Mother Sawyer's familiar explains to her:

Though we have power, know, it is circumscribed

... Now men
 That, as he, love goodness, though in smallest measure,
 Live without compass of our reach. His cattle
 And corn I'll kill and mildew. But his life,
 ... I have no power to touch. (II.i.158-166)

Because the power of witches comes from the devil and his power cannot match God's power, many thought it only logical that they could be protected by God from harmful witchcraft. In other words, God's love and a belief in His power can create a protection that renders magic ineffective.

Simple protection spells are quite common in the Harry Potter series, but there is actually a much more significant connection between this idea of protection and the Harry Potter series. This concept is similar to the protection that was given to Harry when his mother, Lily, sacrificed her life for his. As Dumbledore explains to Harry, the protection was born of "the fact that your mother died to save you. She gave you a lingering protection he [Voldemort] never expected, a protection that flows in your veins to this day" (*Order of the Phoenix* 836). Voldemort tries to murder Harry, but his magic is rendered useless because of the power of Lily Potter's love and the protection that it cast over Harry. In creating this magical shield, Rowling has further separated the magic of the HPU from the negative connotations of the early modern period.

Through these details Rowling constructs a magic that is neither good nor bad, but can be used for both purposes. Even though witchcraft was associated with the devil, many pre-Enlightenment people did still hold the belief that there could be good witches who practiced popular magic. However, not everyone agreed with the idea of good witches; in fact, most witch-hunters believed all witches should be punished: "But yet I say all Witches be bad, and ought to suffer alike, being both in league with the Devill; for so is the good, so untruly called, aswell as the other, either open or implicit" (Stearne 8). In their eyes, there can be no good witches

because all witchcraft comes from the devil. Therefore, even if the witch is using magic for good purposes such as healing, it is still unnatural and wicked. Of course, in the Harry Potter Universe there are both good witches and bad witches; as I've discussed, the whole series is fundamentally about good witches and wizards fighting against bad witches and wizards. Rowling separates the magic of the HPU from associations with the devil and creates a system of magic that is fundamentally neither good nor bad, but rather an instrument that can be used for either. In the HPU, magic is neither the problem it is represented as in early modern texts nor the nostalgic solution to solving the problems of the world.

Learning and Using Magic

Since witchcraft in the early modern period derived from the devil rather than an innate power as in the Harry Potter series, there are many differences between the early modern and HPU ideas about the uses and learning of magic that make the magic of the HPU appear less threatening and actually more akin to technology. Although there is much writing about the learned occult arts, early modern witches did not necessarily even need to learn how to use magic since their familiars were the ones that performed the magic. Instead, they learned how to summon and command their familiars. There are descriptions of the devil teaching witches how to use certain objects for specific ends, such as the following narrative that James IV and I provides, but he is quick to mention that these objects do not actually have any power themselves:

To some others at these times hee teacheth, how to make Pictures of waxe or clay: That by the roasting thereof, the persones that they beare the name of, may be continuallie melted or dried awaie by continuall sicknesse. To some hee giues such stones or poulders, as will helpe to cure or cast on diseases: And to some he teacheth kindes of vncouthe poysons... not that anie of these meanes which

heeteacheth them... can of themselues helpe anything to these turns, that they are employed in. (44)

These objects, then, function more like symbols from the devil and familiars by which they teach the witch to express her desires. This moment of “learning” is also the moment where the person makes their transition into becoming a witch. For example, in “The Apprehension and confession of three notorious Witches,” accused-witch Joan Cunny explains how she became a witch after “she learned this her [here] knowledge in the same, of one mother Humfrye of Maplested” (“three notorious Witches”).

Learning is, of course, foundational to the Harry Potter series, in which each novel follows each year of Harry’s magical education. In the wizarding community, you cannot legally use magic until you become of age, with the implication that you will have completed your schooling and therefore have received extensive magical training by or soon after you have become of age. In this way Rowling describes “witchcraft and wizardry” as an ability that requires learning and skill to both master and control it rather than something given to you by a supernatural being.

In the HPU, the uses of magic are inherently different from those of the early modern period as well. In the early modern period, witches who were prosecuted were often accused of doing magic that harmed others, especially their neighbors and fellow townspeople. Witches were often blamed for illnesses or untimely deaths of people they had quarreled with, but sometimes their accused crimes were more creative: sending familiars to “ouerthrowe” a “great stack of Logges in his [a neighbor’s] yarde” (“three notorious Witches”) or “spoile her drinke which was then in brewing” (“three notorious Witches”), or even being responsible for “a mighty Oke-tree... [that] blew vp by the roots: and no winde at all stirring at this time” (“three notorious

Witches”). In all of these cases, the familiars and their magic are used to inflict some sort of harm, ranging from annoying to life-threatening, on a bothersome neighbor. This is obviously much different from the Wizarding world, where the described uses of witchcraft extend beyond attacks on neighbors. There are never early modern reports of witches employing their familiars to clean their houses the way that “[Mrs. Weasley] flicked her wand casually at the dishes in the sink, which began to clean themselves, clinking gently in the background” (*Chamber of Secrets* 34).² In this way Rowling expands upon the possibilities of magic, but instead of making this expansion worrisome, as those in the early modern period would have seen it, the expansion works to make the magic more mundane. The idea of magic being mundane may seem incongruous, but for these witches and wizards, where magic is an everyday part of life, it would certainly become a bit mundane, just as much modern technology has become mundane in our world. There are without a doubt many types of magic in the Wizarding world that are truly horrible—any of the Unforgivable Curses,³ *Sectumsempra*,⁴ Horcruxes.⁵ There are even vast opportunities for using magic to prank people who annoy you, such as the Bat-Bogey Hex,⁶ *Tarantallegra*,⁷ or any of the many pranks orchestrated by Fred and George Weasley. However, the majority of magic is used for more commonplace purposes, highlighting its connection with modern inventions and technology. As I argued earlier, Rowling disputes the idea that magic can

² I will concede that a pamphlet with the intention of being shocking and entertaining probably would not have found household chores worth reporting.

³ The Unforgivable Curses are the Imperius Curse, which allows the caster to forcibly control the castee, the Cruciatus Curse, or the torture curse, and *Avada Kedavra*, the killing curse.

⁴ *Sectumsempra* is a curse invented by Severus Snape that inflicts potentially fatal wounds “as though [the castee] had been slashed with an invisible sword” (*Half-Blood Prince* 522).

⁵ A Horcrux is an object in which a Dark witch or wizard has hidden a piece of their soul with the purpose of remaining alive should their physical body be destroyed. In order to split the soul for creation of a Horcrux, one must commit a murder. Horcruxes are considered one of the darkest types of magic and thus the average witch or wizard does not even know of their existence.

⁶ This spell turns the target’s mucus, or “bogeys,” into large bats that crawl and fly out of their nose.

⁷ *Tarantallegra*, or the Dancing Feet Spell, causes a person’s legs to dance uncontrollably.

solve all of the problems of the world and these varied uses of magic emphasize the choice that every witch and wizard must make between using magic for good or evil.

Another iconic use of magic is flying, specifically on broomsticks. This was a belief during the early modern period, although some witch-hunters “utterly deny[e] that confession of a With [sic], when she confesseth any improbability, impossibility, as *flying in the ayre, riding on a broom, &c.*” (Hopkins 7; emphasis original). Flying on brooms is, of course, a common but integral part of the world of Harry Potter. Flying on broomsticks, like driving cars, is used as a mode of transportation in addition to its use as a leisure activity, including in the magical sport Quidditch. Rowling invented an in-world history for why witches and wizards ride brooms specifically: “If they were to keep a means of flight in their houses, it would necessarily be something discreet, something easy to hide. The broomstick was ideal for this purpose; it required no explanation, no excuse if found by Muggles, it was easily portable and inexpensive” (*Quidditch Through the Ages* 2). Witches riding broomsticks is a classic, popular image, but many modern fantasy stories that feature witches include no such detail. Rowling, on the other hand, kept this detail of witchcraft in order to reference this historical belief while simultaneously making it less menacing. By creating a system of learning around magic and making its average uses more pedestrian than maleficent, Rowling makes general magic less wicked, separating it from the Dark Arts, so that she can portray magic as more akin to the technology of our world, enabling my interpretation of her engagement with disenchantment.

Gender and Status

Rowling further challenges early modern legacies of witchcraft by offering a critique of the gendered notions of witchcraft. The majority of scholars who have studied witchcraft have

noted the disproportionate number of women accused of witchcraft as compared to men. Many people naturally see this imbalance as a sign of the sexism and misogyny that was pervasive at the time and as a way of controlling women. Even early modern witch-hunters noticed that “of Witches in generall, there be commonly more women then men” (Stearne 10). However, their explanations for this phenomenon are often quite different from the explanations of modern scholars, and not simply because the witch-hunters genuinely believed these women to be actual witches. They often attributed the higher number of accusations to the natural faults of women: “The reason is easie, for as that sexe is frailer then man is, so is it easier to be intrapped in these grosse snarcs of the Deuill, as was ouer well proued to be true, by the Serpents deceiuing of *Eua* [Eve] at the beginning, which makes him the homelier with that sexe” (James 43-44). John Stearne in *A Confirmation and Discovery of Witch-craft*, even though declaring he “will not say” why there are more female witches, provides multiple reasons:

Now, why it should be that women exceed men in this kind, I will not say, that Satans setting upon these rather then man is, or like to be, because of this unhappy onset and prevailing with Eve; or their more credulous nature, and apt to bee misled, for that they be commonly impatient, and being displeased more malicious, and so more apt to revenge according to their power, and thereby more fit instruments for the Devill; or that, because they be more ready to be teachers of Witchcraft to others, and to leave it to Children, servants, or to some others (but that you shall finde to be a great inducement thereto by their Confessions) or that, because, where they can command they are more fierce in their rule, and revengefull in setting such on worke whom they can command, wherefore the Devill laboureth most to make them Witches. (11-12)

Both James VI and I and Stearne reference the natural inferiority of women stemming from Eve in the Garden of Eden that makes them more susceptible to the devil, but Stearne is also able to provide a list of other flaws accounting for their susceptibility, including impatience and a tendency to be “malicious” when displeased. When reading texts like this, it is easy to see why it is a popular belief that witchcraft accusations stem from sexism.

Certain types of women were more susceptible to witchcraft accusations as well, such as those who were poor and uneducated. In *The Witch of Edmonton*, Mother Sawyer, before she even turns to witchcraft, laments the fact that her fellow townspeople treat her so poorly and accuse her of witchcraft:

“And why me? Why should the envious world
 Throw all their scandalous malice upon me?
 ‘Cause I am *poor, deformed, and ignorant*,
 ... Some call me witch;
 And being ignorant of myself, they go
 About to teach me how to be one: urging
 That my bad tongue (by their bad usage made so)
 Forespeaks their cattle, doth bewitch their corn,
 Themselves, their servants, and their babes at nurse.” (II.i.1-13; italics mine)

Thus Dekker, Rowley, and Ford point out that she was being prosecuted because of her social status. Other types of social outcasts were also liable to witchcraft accusations, such as women with damaged reputations. For example, “This Ioane Cunny, liuing very lewdly, hauing two lewde Daughters, no better then naughty packs, had two Bastard Children” (“three notorious witches”). This pamphlet makes sure to mention that Cunny has illegitimate children and that her daughters are “lewde,” presumably a reflection of her own behavior. These facts were meant to prove her immorality and her likeliness of making a pact with the devil, in addition to the fact of simply being a woman, which already made her more vulnerable to the devil’s influence. This is not to say that there were no men accused of witchcraft. George Burroughs, a former minister of Salem, was one of the more high profile men to be tried, convicted, and executed for witchcraft during the Salem witch trials. However, there was a clear gender imbalance when it came to the accused. Indeed, the fact that the word “witches” has a female connotation is proof of this imbalance and manifests in Rowling’s respective use of the terms “witches” and “wizards” instead of a gender-neutral term, such as “magicians.”

Of course, the Harry Potter series does indeed feature both witches and wizards. In fact, it seems significant that the title character is a male, as are many of the main characters, including Dumbledore and Voldemort. Instead of having a disproportionate amount of females, there are actually a disproportionate amount of males. Elizabeth E. Heilman and Trevor Donaldson in “From Sexist to (sort-of) Feminist: Representations of Gender in the Harry Potter Series” write that “the Harry Potter books are dominated by male characters... By the end of the series... among characters with some role (as opposed to characters mentioned in passing or historically without developing the plot) there are 115 females to 201 males mentioned in the series as a whole” (141). While Heilman and Donaldson see this inequality as undesirable, I suggest that it is the result of Rowling actively trying to counteract the sexism that is associated with early modern witchcraft. Witch trials were so often about persecuting women, and by making the main magical character, and many other main characters, a male, Rowling separates magic from this context and its negative connotations about women. Rowling also appears to counteract this sexism by creating strong female characters, such as Hermione, whose intelligence and quick thinking often save the day, allowing her to become more than just a witch but a magical scholar similar to the male scholars of learned magic in the early modern period. In fact, many scholars find the works to be empowering of women, such as Mimi R. Gladstein who writes in her essay “Feminism and Equal Opportunity: Hermione and the Women of Hogwarts” that “J.K. Rowling depicts a world where equal opportunity among the sexes is a given” (Gladstein 49). Indeed, *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* reveals that the Magical Congress of the United States of America had a female president during the 1920s, when Muggle American women were just succeeding in gaining the right to vote. The Harry Potter series and its companion texts actively

attempt to counteract the sexism that helped spark witchcraft accusations in the early modern period and to revise the connotations of witchcraft that stem from these accusations.

The Marked Body

Another feature Rowling borrows and revises from the early modern literature on witchcraft is the magical marking of the body. One of the most prevalent methods for discovering a witch during the early modern period in England and its colonies was the witch's mark, a concept that Rowling adapts to mark her hero and his connection to the antagonist of the series. Witch's marks were marks found on the body of an accused witch that "proved" that the accused was indeed a witch. All women who had these marks were considered to be witches, although not all witches had these marks. Stearne claims that a confessed witch explained the witch's mark to him in *A Confirmation and Discovery of Witch-craft*, saying, "they that be found with these markes that I am found withall, are without question Witches, yet said, that there might be some Witches which had not those markes; but affirmed it over and over again, that all those that had those markes were Witches" (Stearne 16). The marks were thought to be the result of a familiar sucking the blood of the witch, and so these marks are often described as looking like a "teat." This fact demonstrates how connected womanhood and witchcraft were in the minds of many early modern people, but it is important to recognize that men also had these marks. Stearne describes many such cases, such as "John Wynnich [who] confest... he [the familiar] demanded bloud, and he bade him take it, so he skipped on his shoulder, and fetched bloud with his claw, on the side of his head, which marke was seen as his Tryall; Then he confessed, there appeared two more... and so those sucked on the three marks I found on him" (Stearne 21). There does seem to be something inherently bizarre about a man possessing a

witch's mark that resembles a "teat" since men cannot breastfeed. However, the familiars did not suck blood for sustenance. Instead, it was to continuously "seale, or confirme the Covenant or agreement" (Stearne 16) with the devil. Moreover, witch's marks did not always look like teats. For example, "sometimes they be like a blue spot" (Stearne 44) and "sometimes the flesh is sunk in a hollow" (Stearne 45) because witch-hunters believed that the witches could remove, disguise, or heal their marks. This allowed for just about any mark on the human body to be called a witch's mark.

Any mark on the body, including a distinctive lightning-shaped scar. The witches and wizards of the world of Harry Potter do not have witch's marks. However, it does not seem like a coincidence that the title character has a very peculiar scar. As a young boy growing up in the Muggle world, a lightning-shaped scar on his forehead would certainly mark Harry as different from his surroundings. To put it simply, Harry Potter's scar is a modern witch's mark. The lightning shape specifically seems significant as an embodiment of the power within Harry rather than a mark of a blood oath. Of course, Harry's mark has no affiliation with familiars or the devil. Hagrid explains to Harry, "that's what yeh get when a powerful, evil curse touches yeh..." (*Sorcerer's Stone* 55). However, Dumbledore suggests that this scar means more than one might originally think when he jokes, "Scars can come in handy. I have one myself above my left knee that is a perfect map of the London Underground" (*Sorcerer's Stone* 15). Dumbledore is hinting to what no one else yet knew: that the scar is symbolic of Harry's connection with Voldemort. Dumbledore confirms this later, saying, "I guessed, fifteen years ago... when I saw the scar upon your forehead, what it might mean. I guessed that it might be the sign of a connection forged between you and Voldemort" (*Order of the Phoenix* 827). Just as the witch's mark represented

the link between the witch and the devil, Harry's mark represents the link between him and the man who gave him the scar.

Another common feature of the witch's mark is that these marks cannot feel pain, and this characteristic was often used as a test to distinguish a witch's mark from a normal bodily mark, such as a mole or dry skin. Hopkins writes that "they are most commonly insensible, and feele neither pin, needle, aule, &c. thrust through them" (Hopkins 4), and James VI and I concurs that the marks are "euer insensible, how soeuer it be nipped or pricked" (33), although he does also mention an "intolerable dolour that they feele in that place, where he hath marked them" (33). Harry's mark, on the other hand, does feel pain, and in fact this ability is quite significant. Dumbledore explains, "your scar was giving you warnings when Voldemort was close to you, or else feeling powerful emotion" (*Order of the Phoenix* 827). So, the pain of Harry's scar is significant in that it further symbolizes the connection between Harry and Voldemort.

Since religion is so important to the early modern understanding of witchcraft, there are multiple marks from the Bible that would have been a reference for the reading of the marked body. Early modern people did indeed see a connection between the witch's mark and the marks of the Bible: "This is not to be doubted of; it is the devils custom to mark his: God will have his mark for her, Ezek. 9. Rev. 7. the Beast will have his mark, Rev.13. So the devil himself will have his mark" (Stearne 42). More important than these marks, though, is the mark of Cain. As the Bible explains, the mark of Cain has dual purposes:

- 11 And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand;
- 12 When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.
- 13 And Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear.

14 Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.

15 And the Lord said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.” (Genesis 4.11-15)

Just as the mark of Cain is a symbol of both a curse and a protection, so is Harry’s lightning-shaped scar. The curse is that Harry is inextricably linked to Voldemort and that, as the prophecy states, “either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives” (*Order of the Phoenix* 841). The protection is that of his mother’s love which was placed on him when his mother died for him. Dumbledore explains, “Your mother died to save you... He [Voldemort] didn’t realize that love as powerful as your mother’s for you leaves its own mark. Not a scar, no visible sign... to have been loved so deeply, even though the person who loved us is gone, will give us some protection forever” (*Sorcerer’s Stone* 299). Harry’s mark, his lightning-shaped scar, is neither the curse nor the protection; however, it symbolizes both since the mark, the curse, and the protection were all created in that moment when Voldemort tried to kill Harry. Harry’s scar can also be associated with different Biblical markings: stigmata. The lightning-shaped scar on his forehead is reminiscent of the wounds Christ received on his forehead from the crown of thorns. Harry also receives scars on his hand in *Order of the Phoenix* when Dolores Umbridge punishes him for “telling lies” even though he is actually telling the truth. This connection to stigmata further establishes Harry as a Christ figure destined to save the Wizarding world from the evil forces of Voldemort.

The only other person in the Harry Potter series to have a clearly marked body is Voldemort, although his is not so much a single mark as a total deformation. Although Voldemort was born looking like a normal, even handsome, boy known as Tom Riddle, he “sank

so deeply into the Dark Arts, consorted with the very worst of our kind, underwent so many dangerous, magical transformations, that when he resurfaced as Lord Voldemort, he was barely recognizable” (*Chamber of Secrets* 329). Indeed, when he comes out of hiding and recreates his body, which was destroyed when the curse he tried to use to kill Harry rebounded onto himself, his body is rather frightening: “whiter than a skull, with wide, livid scarlet eyes and a nose that was flat as a snake’s with slits for nostrils” (*Goblet of Fire* 643). Voldemort’s body marks him as not only magical, but a practitioner of the Dark Arts. It is of course significant that only Harry and Voldemort have marked bodies. As mortal enemies who are similar in many superficial ways—both orphans raised in the Muggle world with no knowledge of the Wizarding world—this mark symbolizes their interconnectedness and status as literary foils who have chosen the opposite paths of good and evil. The trajectories of these characters show that magic is neither a corrupting influence nor a redeeming force on its own. Magic is only what it is made by those who wield it. Rowling clearly adapted the idea of the witch’s mark to mark her protagonist, her antagonist, and the connection between the two.

Familiars

In addition to the witch’s mark, Rowling also modifies the concept of familiars in order to show the Wizarding world’s connection with nature. In Horkheimer and Adorno’s critique of disenchantment, they describe how the Enlightenment distanced humanity from a true understanding of nature. Through the inclusion of these many magical animals, Rowling shows that the Wizarding world where disenchantment never occurred is still indeed connected with nature. In the early modern period, a familiar was a spirit or devil that appeared to a witch usually in the shape of an animal. Stearne describes how

We may learne there [Gen.3] the Devill may enter into a dumb creature, & come out of the same, utter a voice intelligible, & offer conference (if any will hearken) to deceive as our Witches now a dayes confesse, and that he chooseth the subtillest creature to deceive by, and the weaker vessell to confer with, but by the confessions of Witches now lately detected, he chooseth such creatures as they themselves are most addicted to. (Stearne 6)

Here Stearne is suggesting that the serpent⁸ in the Garden of Eden is the inspiration for familiars, although they appeared in a variety of animals, shapes, and sizes. Most often, though, familiars were more ordinary, less fantastical animals, such as “a white kitling” (Hopkins 2), “a black Rabbet” (Hopkins 2), “black Frogges” (“three notorious witches”), “mice,/ Rats, ferrets, weasels” (II.i.102-103), “a dog, a Catte, and Ape, or such-like other beast” (James VI and I 19)—in short, any animal that wouldn’t look too conspicuous as a companion.

In the Harry Potter series, it is not unusual for wizards to have an animal companion. In the Hogwarts acceptance letter, it is stated that students are allowed to bring “an owl OR a cat OR a toad” (*Sorcerer’s Stone* 67)⁹ to school with them. While owls serve the function of sending and delivering mail, cats and toads do not serve much of a function to students besides as pets. Because they do not have any apparent function to the students, I believe Rowling included them as an explicit nod to familiars. Despite this perceived lack of function, these animals demonstrate a bond between witches and wizards and animals, and the desire of witches and wizards to live in proximity to animals. These animal companions are not limited to students and their owls, cats, or toads, either. Many adults have animal companions, such as Dumbledore’s phoenix, Fawkes, Voldemort’s snake, Nagini, and Hagrid’s dog, Fang. Additionally, many of these animal

⁸ Here the series draws inspiration from the Bible for “serpents are often used in the worst kinds of Dark Magic” (*Goblet of Fire* 612).

⁹ While not an owl, a cat, nor a toad, presumably Ron Weasley had permission to bring his pet rat, Scabbers, to Hogwarts. Although, as everyone learns in *Prisoner of Azkaban*, Scabbers is not actually a rat, but a wizard Animagi in hiding.

companions show remarkable signs of unusual intelligence. Harry's owl Hedwig, and indeed all of the owls, display amazing amounts of awareness and intelligence when they deliver letters and packages to anyone, anywhere in the world, even if their location is secret. The Wizarding world is extremely dependent on these animals and thus has developed a special relationship with them. These animal companions are often also seen as true friends that have an unbreakable bond with their human counterparts, as shown by Harry sincerely mourning the death of Hedwig in *Deathly Hallows* and conversely Fawkes mourning the death of Dumbledore in *Half-Blood Prince*.

Additionally, there are witches and wizards known as Animagi that can "transform at will into animals" (*Prisoner of Azkaban* 108). Becoming an Animagus is considered an exceptionally advanced type of magic, but this skill further demonstrates the connection between witches and wizards and nature. Some witches and wizards, such as Peter Pettigrew and Sirius Black, have even lived for extended periods of time as animals, although both Pettigrew and Black, for different reasons, used their Animagi forms to go into hiding. The first time an Animagus is featured in the Harry Potter series is when Professor McGonagall is in her cat Animagus form awaiting the arrival of Dumbledore in the first chapter of *Sorcerer's Stone*. In this way, the Animagus can be seen as an adaptation of the familiar, where the witch or wizard is themselves the animal companion.

In addition to pets and Animagi, there is another category of special animals that are associated with witches and wizards: their Patronuses. Patronuses are "a kind of positive force, a projection of the very things the Dementor¹⁰ feeds upon—hope, happiness, the desire to survive" (*Prisoner of Azkaban* 237). Patronuses are basically a kind of protection spell, but the spell manifests as an animal and "each one is unique to the wizard who conjures it" (*Prisoner of*

¹⁰ Dementors are Dark creatures that have the ability to suck out a person's soul.

Azkaban 237), similar to the concept of a spirit or totem animal, suggesting a deep connection with the witch or wizard. For example, Harry's Patronus is a stag, which represents his father James's Animagus form. The shape of a Patronus can also change if there is a deep psychological change within the witch or wizard casting it, as happened to Nymphadora Tonks in the *Half-Blood Prince* when she fell in love with Remus Lupin. Interestingly, Patronuses can also be used to send messages. As a supernatural element that manifests as an animal and does a wizard's bidding, it seems that the Patronus could also be derived from the familiar. The psychological connection between the Patronus and a witch or wizard also demonstrates how linked the Wizarding world is to these magical representations of animals.

Not all familiars looked like normal animals, however. There are mentions of familiars looking either like deformed animals, such as "a fat Spaniel without any legs at all" (Hopkins 2), or strange combinations of animals, such as "a long-legg'd Greyhound, with an head like an Oxe, with a long taile and broad eyes" (Hopkins 2). These, too, have parallels in the world of Harry Potter. For example, there are magical animals that look like regular animals except for one distinguishing feature, such as the Crup, which "closely resembles a Jack Russell terrier, except for the forked tail" (*Fantastic Beasts* 8), or the fire crab, which "resembles a large tortoise with a heavily jewelled shell" (*Fantastic Beasts* 17). There are also a variety of magical animals that are more akin to mixtures of animals, such as the Hippogriff, which "has the head of a giant eagle and the body of a horse" (*Fantastic Beasts* 21), or the Chimaera, which has "a lion's head, a goat's body, and a dragon's tale" (*Fantastic Beasts* 7). Some of these animals are mythical creatures that Rowling borrows from legends that predate the concept of the familiar, but this only further demonstrates how Rowling adapts historic ideas for her uses. Interestingly, while familiars were often only visible to the early modern witch or whomever she wished to show the

familiar to, Rowling has a much easier explanation for why Muggles never report seeing these imaginary creatures: “Muggles... appear satisfied with the flimsiest non-magical explanation” (*Fantastic Beasts* xvii). Rowling’s creation of so many magical animals demonstrates how invested she was in making nature a part of the Wizarding world. These animals often play major roles in the stories, such as Fawkes saving Harry from the basilisk in *Chamber of Secrets* or Harry traveling through time to save Buckbeak the Hippogriff in *Prisoner of Azkaban*. Readers are meant to view these animals as characters and to have misgivings about the characters who mistreat animals, such as Draco Malfoy, demonstrating that Rowling, like Horkheimer and Adorno, views an understanding of nature as important to understanding the world in general. Whether the companion pets of witches and wizards, Animagi, Patronuses, or other magical beasts, it seems clear that Rowling took some inspiration from the concept of familiars and adapted them to her world, separating them from their original devil-based conception so that they instead function as more positive forces, such as pets or protective spells, in order to show a deep connection between magic and nature.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have explored the various ways that ideas about early modern magic inform the magic of the Harry Potter Universe. By examining Rowling in the context of both the modern notion of disenchantment and the theory and practice of magic described in the early modern archive, I have explored the diverse legacies of magic in her work. Rowling’s creation of an embedded world within a fictionalized version of our own world allows her to rewrite the modernist narrative of disenchantment by juxtaposing the Wizarding world, where disenchantment never occurred, and the Muggle world. Through this technique Rowling is able

to argue that disenchantment has not caused the problems of the modern world as Horkheimer and Adorno suggest, but neither does she propose magic as the way to heal history and the world. Furthermore, by reading the magic of the Harry Potter Universe against the magic described in early modern texts, I have demonstrated how Rowling adapted these early modern conceptions of witchcraft in order to enable this reading of disenchantment within her work. She portrays magic as neither inherently good nor inherently bad, but rather a tool that can be wielded for either purpose.

In the end, Rowling views neither magic nor science as the potential savior of humanity. Instead, she sees humanity as the root of abuses of power, but also as the only power that can fight these atrocities. Rowling uses her fantasy world to demonstrate that in this world as in our world, all forces—magic, rationality, science, etc.—can be channeled for both good and ill and so does not offer us a world of magic without including in it the same fundamental problems as our world. In both the Harry Potter Universe and the real universe, if we want change, we have to make it for ourselves.

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Historians of European magic and witchcraft have also engaged, sometimes overtly but often tacitly, with the themes Weber identified and encapsulated as disenchantment. Keith Thomas in particular, in his groundbreaking *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, made only passing reference to Weber directly but took up the essentially Weberian theme of the degree to which religion (of the more modern, reformed variety) displaced magic from European society. Far from eliminating all magic in the world, however, Thomas concluded that by eradicating the magical practices of the medieval church, Protestantism The book explores the appeal of demonology to early modern intellectuals by looking at the books they published on the subject during this period. After examining the linguistic foundations of their writings, the book shows how the writers' ideas about witchcraft (and about magic) complemented their other intellectual commitments — in particular, their conceptions of nature, history, religion, and politics. The result is much more than a history of demonology. It is a survey of wider intellectual and ideological purposes, and underlines just how far the nature of rationality is dependent ...

^ African History: BCE to 500CE. American History: pre-Columbian BCE to 500CE. Ancient Greek, Roman, and Early Christian Philosophy. Ancient Religions. Archaeology: Classical. Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix. Hogwarts was founded by two wizards and two witches. At some point in the tenth century, four of the greatest witches and wizards that ever lived founded Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Their names were Godric Gryffindor, Rowena Ravenclaw, Helga Hufflepuff and Salazar Slytherin. ^ Hogwarts has a long history of ancient magic, and Albus Dumbledore admitted that not even he knew all of its secrets. Indeed, much about the design and construction of Hogwarts remains a mystery. Did the founders implement the Anti-Disapparition Jinx? Where did the Room of Requirement come from? ^ Thus his legacy lives on with the Sword of Gryffindor, the relic that Harry Potter used to destroy Horcruxes. But he also endures through another object.