

## CO-CREATING HARRY POTTER: LOCAL EXPRESSIONS OF A GLOBAL PHENOMENON

CONTESSA SMALL

Since the first release of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, in 1997, Rowling's popular series has sold in excess of 300 million copies in 63 languages ("Global Potter" 2005). Harry Potter has been referred to as "the biggest children's publishing and merchandising phenomena of modern times" (Heilman 2003:1). Known popularly as "Pottermania" (Turner-Vorbeck 2003:14), Rowling's books have prompted a massive global commercial and cultural industry (Whited 2002:2). Beyond the seven-volume series, Harry Potter has inspired numerous feature films produced by Warner Brothers and available on VHS and DVD, a barrage of books, movie soundtracks, wall calendars, trading cards, carrying cases, video and board games, a Harry Potter iPod, magic sets, watches, action figures, candy, embossed furniture, clothing and costumes, linens and home decorations, and a huge variety of other merchandising paraphernalia (Turner-Vorbeck 2003:17). Corporate consumerism surrounding Harry Potter has moved beyond all previous commercialization of children's literature, television, and movie images, including Superman, Spiderman, Power Rangers and Pokémon (Teare 2002:331), all of which have prompted their own massive merchandising campaigns. Spanning the world and dominating the market, the Harry Potter series has quite simply become a global phenomenon, a global phenomenon that children's literary critic Jack Zipes describes as the "Harry Potter phenomena" (2000:170-89). He writes that the word "phenomena":

...generally refers to some kind of *occurrence*, change, or fact that is directly perceived; quite often the event is striking... Whether an occurrence or a person, there is something incredible about the phenomenon that draws our attention. We hesitate to believe in the event or person we perceive, for a transformation has unexpectedly taken place. One of the reasons we cannot believe our senses is because the phenomenon defies rational explanation. There seems to be no logical cause or clear explanation for the sudden appearance or transformation. Yet it is there, visible and palpable. The ordinary becomes extraordinary, and we are taken by the phenomena that we admire, worship, and idolize it without grasping it fully why we regard it with so much reverence and awe except to say that so many others regard it as a phenomenon and, therefore, it must be a phenomenon. (2000:173)

A number of scholars have critiqued the corporate construction of children's popular culture arguing, as does Douglas Kellner, that children's traditional artifacts are being replaced and manipulated by "media culture objects" (1997:85). Tammy Turner-Vorbeck writes, "Corporate consumerism's mass marketing of manufactured cultural products... involves exercising control over the imaginations of children robb[ing them] of the free use of their own minds" (2003:19). The proliferation of Potter commercial productions and mass marketing is, however, only a small part of the Pottermania story. While merchandising companies certainly target, exploit and manipulate children's popular culture, it is, however, problematic to see all

contemporary children's culture as simply a product of corporate interests. In fact, Potter fans participate in a wide range of local activities including Potter theme parties, book launch parties, movie parties, Internet fan clubs, fan fiction, fan-art, fan poetry, reading circles, chat sessions, discussion boards, rumours in anticipation of new volumes and homemade costumes (Borah 2002:344).

This paper provides a local ethnography exploring children's participation in the Harry Potter phenomenon in an attempt to understand how children are affected by global commodified culture and processes. Harris M. Berger defines these global processes as "ones that spread over large geographical areas without regard for national governments or their borders and institutions" (2003:xviii). Most importantly, this paper will address how children individually and locally manipulate mass corporate phenomena as an active means of taking ownership of their vernacular cultural expressions.

Primary data for this analysis is based on interviews with seven children. The first interview took place at Mary Queen of Peace School, a local Roman Catholic elementary school in St. John's, Newfoundland. I interviewed five Grade three (age eight) children who are self-proclaimed Harry Potter fans. Permission was given by the parents of the children, the teacher of the class, and the principal of the school. (However, given the ages of the children, I have withheld their names and assigned synonyms.) This interview took place on October 31, at which time the children were dressed in their Halloween costumes (four dressed as Harry Potter characters, one was not.) I spoke with the children in a group and held the interview in a separate classroom, directly across the hall from their teacher's classroom. In addition, I interviewed one Grade two (age 7) boy and his family in St. John's, and also spoke with my nephew (age 12) from Corner Brook, Newfoundland. This paper is based on the interviews with these children and one family, along with scholarly and online research.

### CORPORATE VIEWS OF CHILDREN

Due to the intense corporate interests in Pottermania, children have continually been treated in the scholarly literature as passive receptors of the commercial construction of Harry Potter. Turner-Vorbeck, for example, asserts, "It is no longer safe to assume that children are able to generate purely their own reflections upon items of child culture such as literature for children" (2003:19).

This falls in line with many other scholars who survey children's culture such as Zipes. Zipes credits the influence of commodity consumption and global corporations as dictating children's tastes. Referring specifically to the Harry Potter phenomena, Zipes writes:

Phenomena such as the Harry Potter books are driven by commodity consumption that at the same time sets the parameters of reading and aesthetic taste. Today the experience of reading for the young is mediated through the mass media and marketing so that the pleasure and meaning of a book will often be prescribed or dictated by convention. What readers passionately devour and enjoy may be, like many Disney film or Barbie doll, a phenomenal experience and have personal significance, but it is also an *induced* experienced calculated to conform to a cultural convention of amusement and distraction. (2000:172).

To help understand why scholars have taken this stance, I turn to Shirley R. Steinberg and Joe L. Kincheloe and their view of the contemporary crisis of childhood. They write:

New times have ushered in a new era of childhood. ...the information explosion so characteristic of our contemporary era has played a central role in undermining traditional notions of childhood. Those who have shaped, directed, and used the information technology of the late twentieth century have played an exaggerated role in the reformulation of childhood. Childhood is a social and historical artifact, not simply a biological entity. (1997:1)

Steinberg and Kincheloe continue to explain that childhood, as a creation of society, is subject to change whenever major social transformations take place (1997:2). For example, traditional childhood lasted from about 1850 to 1950 when children were removed from factories and placed in schools. The modern family thus developed and brought with it adult accountability for children's welfare: "By 1900 many believed that childhood was a birthright — a perspective that eventuated in a biological, not a cultural definition of childhood" (Steinberg and Kincheloe 1997:2). It was during this era that the protected child, and modern child psychology was constructed.

"Living in an historical period of great change and social upheaval, critical observers are just beginning to notice changing social and cultural conditions in relation to this view of childhood" (Steinberg and Kincheloe 1997:2). For example, Steinberg and Kincheloe cite that in the 1950s, 80 percent of children lived in homes in which the two biological parents were married to one another; however, in the 1980s this percentage fell to 12 percent (1997:2). As examples, what we have here are changing notions of childhood affected by social, economic, cultural and technological factors. "Changing economic realities coupled with children's access to information about the adult world have drastically changed childhood. The traditional childhood genie is out of the bottle and is unable to return" (Steinberg and Kincheloe 1997:3).

Scholar Kellner also cites media culture a new influence on childhood development. He writes:

Traditionally, young people were educated through fairy tales, folk traditions, and children's literature, as well as through institutions like family, school, and church. In our times, media culture has replaced traditional institutions as major instruments of socialization, and young people often receive role models and materials for identity from media corporations rather than their parents or teachers. (1997:85)

In their attempt to analyze the corporate production of popular kinderculture and its impact on children, Steinberg and Kincheloe explain "the idea that education takes place in a variety of social sites including but not limited to schooling. Pedagogical sites are those places where power is organized and deployed, including libraries, TV, movies, newspapers, magazines, toys, advertisements, video games, books, sports, and so on" (1997:3-4). As well, Kellner adds:

Moreover, a commercially produced and dominated youth culture has replaced traditional artifacts of children's culture. In this media youth culture, popular music, television, film

and video and computer games create new idols, aspirations, and artifacts that profoundly influence the thought and behavior of contemporary youth. (1997:85)

Steinberg and Kincheloe explain that the organizations that create this cultural curriculum are not educational agencies but rather commercial corporations that operate (not for social good) but for individual gain.

Replacing traditional classroom lectures and seatwork with dolls with a history, magic kingdoms, animated fantasies, interactive videos, virtual realities, kick-boxing TV heroes, spine-tingling horror books, and an entire array of entertainment forms produced ostensibly for adults but eagerly consumed by children, corporate America has revolutionized childhood (1997:4).

Not only have corporations revolutionized childhood, but corporate advertisers have also produced worldviews that “to some degree always let children know that the most exciting things life can provide are produced by your friends in corporate America” (Steinberg and Kincheloe 1997:4). Keeping this in mind, along with the fact that major global organizations in large part have free reign to produce almost any kinderculture that is profitable (Steinberg and Kincheloe 1997:13), there is little doubt about the affects of the Harry Potter phenomena on children. Indeed, interviews with all children, revealed that they each bought some Potter merchandise, including DVDs, Playstation videos games, lego sets, game boards, posters, a Quidditch designed birthday cake, Tom Riddle’s diary, action figures, pajamas, glasses, wands and other official costume pieces. As well, when I asked Nicholas why he considered someone he knew to be a bigger fan than himself, he answered with an eyebrow raising response. The following interview excerpt illustrates both the power and prestige of manufactured goods to a child.

- Contessa: What do all of your friends think about Harry Potter?  
 Nicholas: Cool.  
 Contessa: They think it’s cool? And are you the biggest Harry Potter fan?  
 Nicholas: Yeah.  
 Contessa: Or do you know anybody who is a bigger Harry Potter fan than you?  
 Nicholas: Yeah.  
 Contessa: Who?  
 Nicholas: Somebody named Sophie.  
 Contessa: Oh, somebody you know? Why is she a bigger Harry Potter fan than you?  
 Nicholas: Every Halloween she bes Harry Potter.  
 Contessa: Oh, she dresses up as Harry Potter? I see.  
 Nicholas: And her friends, her, last Halloween her friends were suppose to dress up as Ron and Hermione, with her, but they never, they dressed up as vampires.  
 Contessa: Harry doesn’t hang out with vampires, does he?  
 Nicholas: No.  
 Contessa: And why would she be a bigger Harry Potter fan than you?  
 Nicholas: She has more stuff.  
 Contessa: Would you say that’s why she’s a bigger fan?  
 Nicholas: Yeah. (N. Turner 2005)

In this case, Nicholas equates fandom with product ownership, as does my nephew Theodore Strickland in his interview. When asked why he indicated a certain boy to be a Harry Potter fan, Theodore responded by saying, "Because he has all those Harry Potter shirts and books and costumes" (2006). For both Nicholas and Theodore, the biggest or most easily recognized fans are those who best display their fandom through products and merchandise, which no doubt illustrates and expose what Steinberg and Kincheloe call the "footprints of power left by the corporate producers of kinderculture and their effects on the psyches of our children" (1997:7). However, throughout their work, Steinberg and Kincheloe fail to see children as anything but passive receptors to corporate culture, unable to navigate through the changing world of commercialization on their own. To some extent this is may be true; for example, according to Rebecca Sutherland Borah, it would be a mistake to assume mass marketing equates to fan-friendliness, as endeavors by both fans and scholars have been discouraged by global corporate interests.

According to the corporations, young fans should consume as much as possible, but woe to fans of any ages who would like to make any corporate-owned property their own.

Even more so than adult fans, young fans are discouraged from creating their own texts and making their own objects in favour of buying "genuine" goods and joining "official" fan clubs. Rather than being encouraged to connect with other readers/viewers and to participate in shared communal activities (which don't directly benefit a company), youngsters are treated as possible consumers, ready to accept whatever is hailed as the newest fad to be viewed and collected. (2002:349)

While my personal local research proves children to be anything but passively receptive, probably the best example of this corporate possessiveness occurred when Warner Brothers bought the rights to produce the Harry Potter films. In doing so, Warner Brothers also directly bought the rights to "all things Potter" (Whited 2002:11), including ownership of more than one hundred Potter-related domain names (Borah 2002:353). In essence, this marked the beginning of mass marketing and commercialization of Harry Potter worldwide, which also brought with it the global take-over of previously-existing Harry Potter fan based websites.

For example, in December 2000, a fifteen-year-old British girl named Claire Field who maintained a fan site called *The Boy Who Lived* received what a *Boston Globe* editorial termed "a terse, pro-forma copyright protection letter" from attorneys at Warner Brothers... Warner Brothers' letter, according to the *Globe*, asked Field to turn over her domain name ([www.harrypotterguide.co.uk](http://www.harrypotterguide.co.uk)) because it could "cause consumer confusion or dilutions of the intellectual property." Youngsters with similar sites and similar letters were said by the *Globe* to be "scared to death." (Whited 2002:11)

An online community immediately emerged in support of the young webmasters who received similar letters, creating a group called "The Defense Against the Dark Arts Project" (DADA). This group was "jointly spearheaded by two webmasters who did not receive Warner Brothers letters: sixteen-year-old Heather Lawyer of Reston, Virginia, and Alastair Alexander, thirty-three, of London" (Whited 2002:11). According to the website ([www.dprophet.com/data](http://www.dprophet.com/data)), Lawyer and Alexander called for a complete boycott of Warner Brothers, including Harry Potter tie-in merchandise and the film *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*:

In February 2001, Lawyer sent press releases about the DADA project to national media organizations in the United States and the United Kingdom. According to Alexander's website ([www.PotterWar.org.uk](http://www.PotterWar.org.uk)), by mid-March, Warner Brothers announced that it would take no further action against Claire Field or anyone else who had received a letter. Alexander says that Warner Brothers did not expediently clarify this position to all the young webmasters that they previously targeted and that one young man permanently lost his domain name. (Whited 2002:11)

It has been said that, "Rowling herself appears to be very seriously attempting a literary achievement, but recent actions by her promoters could actually undermine her efforts." (Whited 2002:11). This is certainly illustrated by a discussion-board comment I found on the online forum [forums.harrypotterportal.com](http://forums.harrypotterportal.com), a Harry Potter Portal Message board about Harry Potter spoofs. Quotes are given as they appeared online.

Trh391: Why doesn't someone make a spoof on Harry Potter?  
 AceDozer: just wait. Maybe there'll be one later.  
 Slytherin~Fangirl: They probably haven't made one yet, because they are scared JK will sue them!! (Trh391 2002; AceDozer 2002; Slytherin~Fangirl 2002)

In this case, Slytherin~Fangirl makes known her keen awareness of the tension between fans and corporate interests involved in the official world of Harry Potter. And as illustrated in the case of Claire Field, who essentially won her case over Warner Brothers (however, not all webmasters did) children possess a particular type of individual power over global corporations. Fearing bad publicity, Warner Brothers took the boycott threat seriously and "managed to smooth over the most serious problems in the press. However, their heavy-handed legal tactics did have some negative consequences such as creating an adversarial relationship with parts of the fan community" (Borah 2002:355). As well, some fans interviewed by Borah predicted trouble ahead if Rowling and Warner Brothers chose to strictly enforce copyrights. Borah cites some fans as saying, "I don't think they realize what a mess being heavy-handed with these children will cause," and "I wouldn't want millions of kids toting heavy books after me. But, seriously it's like that old cliché, they'll be cutting off their nose to spite their face" (Borah 2002:358).

Emphasized in these quotes is the fact that while children may be obvious targets for commercializers, when placed in the spotlight of the media, however, children have a special kind of power over corporations. Being a child means holding a power card that can sometimes be played when publicly threatened. So while children can indeed at times be passive to commercialization and merchandising, they can also be aggressive and powerful if crossed, refusing to let global corporations infringe on their personal and local enjoyments of literature. This topic of individual power is of particular importance to the following section in which I address how children locally manipulate a global phenomenon.

#### LOCAL EXPRESSIONS OF A GLOBAL PHENOMENON

Regarding popular music and the effects of mass media on local styles, Berger writes:

Updating an earlier generation's fears about the homogenizing effects of mass media, some critics of globalization have warned that the transnational proliferation of (often Western) popular music will lead to a "graying out" of local musical styles. More recent work, however, emphasizes that globalization may also produce new musical styles, and such research seeks to understand the distinctive social and cultural formations (such as hybridized ethnic musics or continent-spanning music subcultures) that emerge from the shifting demographics, mobile populations, and proliferating media technologies of globalization. (2003:xvii)

If the media technologies and global conventions Berger speaks of can be used by individuals to produce local musical styles, then the same can be applied to the Potter phenomena. What follows is evidence of how Harry Potter global commercial saturation can also produce localized Harry Potter interpretation and expressions.

As previously mentioned, intense corporate interests in Pottermania has resulted in children being continually been treated in the scholarly literature as the metaphorical "sitting ducks." However, Peter Narváez writes, that the fan "is not necessarily a helpless pawn or the victim of mass entertainment industries" (1987:38). In fact, my personal research and interviews with children suggests that children have developed their own ways of generating meaning from and celebrating the series. For example, rather than passively buying into corporate mediated texts, these children participate in character impersonation through role-playing and costuming, manipulate the series to create their own games, and illustrate resistance through parody. As well, my online research also revealed a unique ownership of the Harry Potter series in which children extended narratives beyond Rowling's novels creating new literary forms and artwork shared through peer groups and a significant role for theme-based clubs and subgroups. In essence, my research on what Kathleen McDonnell (1994) calls "kid culture" reveals children are not simply robotic receptors of commercial culture, nor are they less knowledgeable than adults.

### IMAGINATION AND MAGIC

While commodity consumption may indeed set reading and aesthetic tastes in terms of what books are produced and available to children for reading, we cannot forget that it is children themselves who hold the power to create and support literature popularity.

The popularity of Harry Potter emerged with the schoolyard chatter, not with marketing hype. Today, two-thirds of kids ages 8 to 18 have read at least one in author J.K. Rowling's series of Potter books—properties that initially arrived with comparatively little of the fanfare we've come to associate with new book titles. A generation that has been marketed to its entire life birthed its own buzz, took ownership of the Potter brand and declared it genuine. Until now, virtually everything marketed to kids has been saturated by hype, and they're hyped out. *Harry* grew organically, and it is the purity of these origins that has created real equity for the brand. (Lynch 2001:26)

If this is true, writes Suman Gupta,

...then the Harry Potter books are worth examining for one special reason: they should give, more than any other recent book, adults some indication of that magical thing — the kinds of textual qualities that grab children. What is the factor X that gets Harry Potter books an extraordinary endorsement from children? (2003:9)

I believe that Gupta hints at the answer in the very wording of his own question. While searching for that “that magical thing,” the X-factor may very well be the magic itself. No doubt, Harry Potter is a world of magic and fantasy — a world of flying broomsticks, charmed candy, magic spells, potions and wands, powerful creatures, and magical quests and journeys. As Deborah O’Keefe writes, “Reading fantasy is not so much an escape *from* something as a liberation *into* something, into openness and possibility and coherence” (2003:1). As well, illustrated in the transcript below, when I posed the question as to why they liked Harry Potter, each child unanimously responded with the word “magic.”

- Contessa: Why are you a Harry Potter fan?  
 Lucas: I just love him. [Laughter]  
 Contessa: Why?  
 Lucas: He’s cute. [All laugh]  
 Contessa: What is it that you like about Harry Potter? What is it about the stories that you like?  
 Lucas: He’s a real person.  
 Britney: No, he’s not. [Laughter]  
 Contessa: Why do you like Harry Potter?  
 Britney: I just like the magic.  
 Contessa: You like the magic?  
 Lucas: And I like the flying on the broomsticks.  
 Contessa: How about everybody else? What do you like about Harry Potter?  
 Scott: I like flying, I like the broomsticks, the magic and all the characters.  
 Lyndsay: Yes, so do I, except for Snape.  
 Amber: I like most of the characters, I like when they fly on the broomsticks and the magic.  
 Contessa: How about you?  
 Lyndsay: I’m a big reader so I love magic books and really thick books. So, I really love the magic and Quidditch.  
 Lucas: I like Quidditch too. (Shears 2005; McInnis 2005; Snook 2005)

My interview with Theodore also reveals his attraction to magic, “I like how they fly on brooms, and their magic wands, and how they levitate stuff” (2006). If magic is indeed the X-factor then this is something that the corporations cannot specifically sell, for magic lies in the imagination of each individual child. I am sure that if corporations could bottle potions and sell flying broomsticks they would; however, this is left up to the child to create and control. Therefore, when using their imaginations to conjure magic spells, children demonstrate their power to understand, interpret and re-appropriate. Rather than passively purchasing “official items” and playing with them in a dictated fashion, children selectively manipulate, devise and create their own Harry Potter world. For example, Nicholas’s mom, Sherry Turner, describes Nicholas’s magic potions.

- Sherry: He does experiments. Concoctions, toothpaste, water, shampoo. Harry Potter potions.  
Contessa: Tell me about your Harry Potter potions?  
Nicholas: I usually make them to clean the carpet. [Laughter] (N. Turner 2005; S. Turner 2005)

Mrs. Turner provides further detail:

I had a bottle, some garlic-oil came in it, when we used to buy garlic-oil. It's a nice little, like a potion bottle. And I go up there, and there's toothpaste and shampoo — my expensive shampoo! — squeezing in there, with toothpaste and water. And a few days later you'd find these bottles tucked away under the bed and stuff, right? "That's my potions, don't pour them out, that's my potions!" (S. Turner 2005)

Another good example occurred when I challenged the group of children with issues of good versus evil, stating that I liked Snape (a Hogwarts professor known to torment Harry). I suddenly found myself being threatened by the children with a magical curse. They took great pleasure in punishing me for my comment, and while talking to one particular child, they orchestrated a group magic spell on me. This took place while they were doing impressions and talking about their favorite character.

- Contessa: And is Ron your favorite character?  
Lucas: No, I like Harry, ahm, most of the Defense against the Dark Arts, ahm, Dumbledore, Harry.  
Britney: You already said Harry.  
Lucas: Yeah, I know. Pretty much all of them except Snape. Pretty much, but, yeah, yeah.  
Contessa: I like Snape.  
Scott: No, he's, he's evil.  
Lyndsay: [To Contessa] Oh, you never!  
Contessa: I do!  
Lucas: He's mean to Neville, he's mean to Neville.  
Scott: He helps Voldemort.  
[While talking over each other, as Lyndsay quietly tells everyone to put their wands up]  
Lyndsay: [To the others] Okay, wands up.  
Contessa: So, why did you put your wands up?  
[Lyndsay laughs loudly]  
Lucas: He's baddddd! [Laughter]  
Contessa: Okay, I just have to ask one more question first... why did you put your wands up though?  
Lyndsay: To kill you.  
Britney: Because you like Snape!  
Contessa: Well maybe I do, maybe I don't.  
Lucas: Snape's evil and he's mean to most of the Gryffindors.  
Lyndsay: Snape's ugly that's why I don't like him.

Lucas: He's mean to most of them. (Gardner 2005; McInnis 2005; Shears 2005; Snook 2005)

This interview excerpt further illustrates their motivation for casting spells:

Contessa: So, do you ever do these spells to people in real life, just playing and stuff?  
 ALL: Yeah.  
 Contessa: Like, when would you do it?  
 Amber: When we're outside.  
 Scott: I do it on my friends and my sister.  
 Contessa: When your anger at them or what?  
 Scott: Yeah. Sometimes when Dad says he's in Slytherin.  
 Lucas: On the computer, ahm, like I play this little game and I pretend I'm killing Snape. Cause, like, Harry has his wand and he's going all around trying to get these thingys. And then, ahm, when somebody shows up, I pretend to sleep and I try to kill them.  
 Contessa: And how about you? When do you do these spells?  
 Lyndsay: When I get really mad at my sister and she annoys me very much, I use the killing curse. (Gardner 2005; McInnis 2005; Moores 2005; Shears 2005; Snook 2005)

Not only are the children attracted to the concept of casting magical spells, but as demonstrated in their spell against me, the children explain how they use their magic spells on their friends – pesky brothers and sisters, even parents. When someone bothers them, children re-appropriate the spells to create meaning for themselves and demonstrate their annoyance with those around them (including me!). Scott illustrates this fact quite clearly in the following quote: “Whenever I put on my costume I feel like fighting Voldemort because my sister, she bes mean to, she starts being mean to me so I pretend she’s the Death Eater and I chase after her around the house with my wand” (Gardner 2005). However, for Nicholas, who is a year younger than the grade three group, he says his spells are often directed “Usually at the monsters [that] are hiding” (N. Turner 2005). Therefore, not only do children playfully perform and direct their spells at friends and family, but spells can also be cast defensively as an imaginary means of warding of potential evil lurking in frightening spaces.

## COSTUMING

While it would be wrong to suggest that children are not receptive to the lure of advertised products, they do not always use products as prescribed. Instead, children often combine elements of merchandise with homemade “found” items. Because I interviewed one group of children on Halloween, while they were wearing their costumes, I was able to witness this occurrence.

Amber as Hermione, wore a store-bought robe only, and said that she found her wand out on the ground — literally a “found” object. “I’m wearing the robe and I have the wand. I found it outside on the ground, and don’t know where it came from. And it’s a bit broken right there” (Moores 2005).

Scott as Harry Potter, had a store-bought robe, glasses and wand. But also wore an invisibility cloak that his mother made for him, as well as a cosmetically-applied scar. His comments reveal that he bought the cloak, glasses and wand all at the same time.

Scott: I like the robes and that, I have one of the robes and my mom made an invisibility cloak.  
 Contessa: And you're wearing glasses too.  
 Scott: I bought that with the robe and I bought the wand with them too. (Gardner 2005)

As Harry Potter, Lucas's manufactured costume pieces included an official Hogwarts School robe and glasses merchandise. He made his own wand and painted on his own lightning-bolt scar. As well, in the following quote when Lucas is interrupted by Lyndsay, it illustrates another important feature of costuming — the imagination. It is not so important to the children that they have an official Harry Potter wand, but what is really important is the specific imaginary feather inside it. Here, Lyndsay also provides a description of her Hermione costume.

Lucas: I really like the robes.  
 Contessa: So is this a homemade robe, or a bought robe?  
 Lucas: It's a bought robe. I just like the symbol, yeah, and...  
 Contessa: With your glasses?  
 Lucas: Yeah.  
 Contessa: You bought those?  
 Lucas: Yeah.  
 Lyndsay: I fixed them for him because he broke them.  
 Lucas: I made this wand.  
 Contessa: Did you make it yourself?  
 Lucas: Yeah, out of wood. A dog tried to chew it up. Evil!  
 Contessa: And you have the glasses, the robe...  
 Lucas: Yeah.  
 Contessa: ...and the wand  
 Lyndsay: [Interrupting] What kind of feather do you have in here? Do you have a feather or hair in it?  
 Lucas: You told me today.  
 Lyndsay: Yeah, I forget what you...she has a Veela hair, what do you have?  
 Lucas: Oh, I don't know.  
 Contessa: Is it a hair of the phoenix?  
 Lucas: No, I think she has it.  
 Lyndsay: I have the phoenix, cause you can get all kinds, so...  
 Contessa: So, let's, you tell me about what you're wearing today.  
 Lyndsay: Ahm, I don't know where I got this [holding out her robe] because my Aunt Krista wore it and so did my sister, and so did my mom. So, I don't really know where it came from. And I got my scarf because my uncle, I think he went to Brother Rice or some other school where this was part of their uniform, so he let me borrow it.  
 Contessa: Oh, cool, it looks just like the colors of Gryffindor right?  
 Lyndsay: It is.

- Contessa: Okay, your, your dress was from your mom, and it got passed down to you, which is like a robe, I thought it looked just like a robe, and your scarf, and what about your wand?
- Lyndsay: I got that at Chapters when the new one, when the new book was coming out. I was one of the first ones there to get the new book at midnight, except I went to Coles instead. (Shears 2005; Snook 2005)

With Lyndsay's costume description, we see two things happening. First, out of the whole group Lyndsay was the self-proclaimed "biggest fan" having read the books many times over, and taking her fandom of Harry Potter very seriously. However, she explains that her dress was handed down to her from her mom, aunt and sister. As well, her scarf was also passed onto her by her Uncle. So here we have clothing being passed on in a traditional, vernacular manner, by vertical transmission from one generation to the next, in order to meet a particular global costume ideal. Lyndsay, as the biggest fan, had no problem wearing "unofficial" homemade costume pieces; rather it is her attention to detail and knowledge of the Harry Potter world with which she is most concerned. For example, besides actively correcting the other children on their Harry Potter facts, she carries a voice of authority in the following interview excerpt.

I don't really write my own. But have you heard of *Quidditch Through the Ages*? That's in the first book, when they're getting nervous about their flying lesson, I have that book at home, and I keep reading it over and over again. And I learned that the Golden Snitch was actually a real bird once except their getting extinct, so they had to get another one, like actually invent a new one. It was called the Golden Snidget. (Snook 2005)

As well, although her costume was largely homemade, Lyndsay's wand was not. Her comments also demonstrate an element of pride regarding how she acquired her store-bought wand, like a badge of honor or "war wound" for staying up late and wading through the crowds at midnight in order to get a copy of the first released books.

Because I interviewed Nicholas with most of his family present, I was able to get a better impression of costume making in terms of family contribution. Only Nicholas's signature Harry Potter glasses were purchased, while everything else was handmade by his parents. This being the third Halloween dressing up as Harry Potter, Nicholas owns two homemade robes — a blue Hogwarts School robe (which his mother said he had long outgrown) and a Quidditch robe both made by his mother. His mother also made a Hogwarts scarf "He's [husband] in the wand department and I'm in the costume department," laughed Mrs. Turner (S. Turner 2005). To make the crest of the robe, Nicholas and his mother used a Hogwarts school magnet that came in a package of Harry Potter Valentines. As for the Quidditch robes, mother, brother and aunt contributed in some fashion.

- Nicholas: She just copied this, and put red material; then Ned told her how to do the gold material around the [edge.]
- Contessa: How did you know how to make it Mom?
- Sherry: You know this red material, my aunt, she had this bag of it given to her, so I said, "That'd make a good Quidditch robe. Just the right material for this." (N. Turner 2005; S. Turner 2005)

As well, Nicholas's twin sister Sarah drew his scar on his forehead with a lip-liner pencil, and the father capped off the family involvement by making a finely crafted wand from wood work, "I'm after making so many now, I don't need a picture" (J. Turner 2005). Investigating how this family came together, each contributing to the production of Nicholas's Harry Potter costume, reveals their unique, local family dynamic and identity. As well, because Nicholas wore his costume everyday, for an entire summer, it also gave him a neighborhood identity. Although sporting an almost entirely homemade costume, Nicholas came to be known locally by his neighbours as Harry Potter. As Mrs. Turner explains: "Oh yeah, everybody on the street knows... But the robe, like I said, but he's, and, ah.... The neighbours, I'll be out looking for him and, where'd he go, and they say, 'Harry Potter's up at the top of the street,' or 'Harry Potter's over in this one's back yard.' Right? And I don't know if they even know his name" (2005).

### IMITATION, PERFORMANCE AND PLAY

Not only are costumes made, but with a little imagination, everyday household items become magical objects. Ellen Seiter writes that children "are creative in their appropriation of consumer goods and media, and the meanings they make with these materials are not necessarily and not completely in line with a materialist ethos" (1993:10).

Here, corporations take a backseat to the child's imagination. For Nicholas, a Quidditch lover, all that's required in playing this magical game is a golf ball for the golden snitch; two baseballs for the bludgers; and a basketball for the quaffle. Using a baseball bat, and playing with his brother Ned, Quidditch regularly takes place in the Turner household.

- Contessa: Do you ever make things like a golden snitch?  
 Nicholas: Yeah, I usually use a golf ball for that.  
 Contessa: What else?  
 Nicholas: In Quidditch, two bludgers and one quaffle.  
 Contessa: What do you use for that?  
 Nicholas: I use a basketball for the quaffle, and two baseballs for the bludgers. ...I just take red gloves and cut the fingers out (N. Turner 2005)

When playing Harry Potter dress-up with his friend, Bradley, the children further adapt to their local surroundings by using a bathrobe for Bradley's Hogwarts robe, and blankets for invisibility cloaks.

As well, many of the children I spoke with participate in some form of Harry Potter imitation, performance, role-play and/or mimicry. For Nicholas, who possesses very little corporate merchandise but a wealth of imagination, his bed becomes the Weasley's flying car, the living-room couch becomes the Hogwart's Express, and the Turner family stairwell becomes Hogwarts grand moving staircase. Ordinary, everyday items become extraordinary magical objects, providing the props Nicholas and his Mends can play with. Their everyday, home environment becomes a state where the children act out scenes from the movies as well as create their own scenarios. For many children like Nicholas, the Harry Potter series becomes a springboard for their own particular interests and creations. Like fan-fiction, such dramatic Harry Potter play illustrates that children "...have forged their own paths through the mire, finding ways

to link theft experiences with the characters and situations from the series in a format that allows them to also connect with other readers of *Harry Potter*" (Bond and Michelson 2003:113).

Scott explains one of his particular play make-believe scenarios: "Me and my friend who lives across the street, we use my cloaks, my robes, and we put them on and pretend we're chasing after Dementors and werewolves, and pretend we're using spells on them.... We just make it up in our own mind" (Gardner 2005).

Scott even refers to his Harry Potter creations as a "play":

- Scott: When I'm at home I pretend I'm Harry Potter and just make up a little play.  
 Contessa: So you create your own little story?  
 Scott: Yes.  
 Contessa: Do you write it down or act it out?  
 Scott: Act it out.  
 Contessa: What do you act out?  
 Scott: I act out like when Harry Potter is learning Defense Against the Dark Arts, broomstick practice or Quidditch, or doing something like that. (Gardner 2005)

Amber also describes how she and her friends play Harry Potter, "My friends, we play Harry Potter, and one of my friends are Professor McGonagall, and I'm Hermione, and she's asking me questions to see if I know them. And I really like doing that. It's fun" (Moore 2005).

The children also demonstrated for me a very complex form of imitation and re-enactment. This happened in groups of two, Lyndsay and Lucas, and then followed by Amber and Scott. Each child performed a spell on the other, while the other responded to the spell. For example, when Amber recited her spell, Scott gave a bodily response to it (either with an imaginary jolt to his body, leaping backwards, jumping into the air, or writhing on the floor). What was interesting about this performance was the collaborative effort involved in perception, response and execution. Like a form of dance, the children demonstrate their understanding of what the spells mean, and illustrate their skill in responding to the spell cast at them by their partner. In fact, Amber and Scott were particularly excited to show me their display as they said they had practiced for the school talent show but were unable to perform on stage.

### DIALECT IMITATION

Another way children partake in their play performance of Harry Potter is through dialect imitation. Obviously influenced by the Harry Potter films where each character is played by a British actor, these children mimic their favorite Harry Potter characters by reciting lines and spells in an English accent.

- Contessa: Who is your favorite character in Harry Potter?  
 Amber: Hermonie.  
 Scott: Harry, Harry, Ron and Hermonie.  
 Amber: I like all three of them too.  
 Lyndsay: Hermonie. I can even do an impression.  
 Contessa: Oh, do you want to do it for us?  
 Lyndsay: Okay. [In English dialect] "Oh move over. Alohomora." It's from the first movie.  
 Contessa: That's very good. Anyone else do impressions?

- Amber: Ahm, I can do it like, [English dialect] "It's not Wingardium Leviosa, its Wingardium Leviosa"
- Contessa: That's good, that's really good. And how about you?
- Lucas: I can do a Ron one. [English dialect] "We're done for!" (Gardner 2005; Moores 2005; Shears 2005; Snook 2005)

As for Nicholas, Mrs. Turner said, "He used to speak normal English, like with the accent, and he didn't realize he was doing it. Then he'd watch Coronation Street and say, 'Oh, that's like Harry Potter'" (S. Turner 2005).

Not only does the English dialect become a performance feature, but it illustrates their understanding of and acceptance of another language dialect. Such willingness to embrace different cultural forms is not something Arthur A. Levine, the American translator for Scholastic, would probably agree with. Stating that they were only trying to give American kids the same literary experience that a British kid could have (Nel 2002:261), Levine and Scholastic changed terms like sherbert lemon to lemon drop; motorbike to motorcycle; chips to fries; jelly to Jell-O; jacket potato to baked potato; jumper to sweater; mum to mom; trolley to cart; loo to bathroom; rubbish to crap; and the biggest in changing the title of the first book from *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* to *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (Nel 2002:262).

However, this decision came under heavy criticism for several reasons. Not only did Levine's editing often times change the poetic nature of the words, but as Philip Nel writes:

In addition to highlighting America's disproportionate influence on global culture and effacing some of the book's Britishness, Scholastic's "translations" result in changes in meaning. Not only is "English muffin" different from "crumpet," but Sorcerer's Stone lacks reference to alchemy implied in Philosopher's Stone in the title of the British edition published by Bloomsbury in 1997. (2002:262)

Nel says that Scholastic's versions of the first three Potter novels are guilty of some degree of cultural imperialism (2002:263).

Ironically, regarding the word "rubbish," not only did the children I interviewed (who read the British/Canadian versions of the text) seem to understand the term but it was even used during the interview by two children. Although the second boy seems to have been copying the first boy, it is certainly a term well understood.

- Contessa: What do, what do most adults think about Harry Potter? Or like, your parents? What do they all think about Harry Potter?
- Lucas: Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh. My pop, he thinks it's *rubbish*. He just thinks the idea of flying cars and all this owl-sending and, he just thinks it's weird and nuts. Like, how did they do it?
- Contessa: Do you mean your dad or your grandfather?
- Lucas: Ahm, my dad likes it, my mom enjoys it, my sister is like, "Oh, please!"
- Contessa: Okay. How about you?
- Scott: My uncle, my uncle, my dad's brother, he hasn't seen any of it, but he says, "Ah, that's *rubbish* b'y." My dad, my sister and my mom love it. (Gardner 2005; Snook 2005)

Such vocabulary illustrates the educational and cultural value of keeping texts in their original form, as "...awareness of national and cultural differences expands the reader's knowledge of the world" (Nel 2002:282.) This is particularly important when such novels are said to broadcast a version of late-twentieth-century Britain that has been absorbed by millions, and by "replacing British vernacular with what Americans think of as British vernacular diminished the novels' realism" (Nel 2002:267). Nel asks, "Why shouldn't children know there are other countries where things are done differently?" (2002:271).

Although one can blame "the global arrogance of the American" (Nel 2002:261), the fact is that many of the translations are also tied into marketing motives. To Scholastic, "translation" and "marketing" are indistinguishable. For example, words like FIREBOLT are printed in the text as advertisement logos: "Without changing anything we could snip this description from the novel, attach it to a broom, and place it in a display window," writes Nel (2002:273). As well, Scholastic's book jackets all have Harry Potter's name in a font that, "complete with its lightning bolt 'P', can only be described as a logo. Indeed, the font has become a logo, appearing in this format on Warner Brothers' film." (Nel 2002:273). When considering such evidence, and considering of obvious understanding these Canadian children have of British vocabulary, as well as dialect, the real intentions of American translators becomes all too clear.

## GAMES

While many of the children said they purchased manufactured Harry Potter board and video games, and visited official online Harry Potter websites, they also referred to several games which were entirely made up by their own local groups, outside of the corporate industry. One such game often takes place during lunch hour at Mary Queen of Peace school. Lyndsay and Britney invented a knowledge game based on Harry Potter trivia. Lucas also regularly participates in this lunch-time game. By using the Harry Potter series as their text book to draw questions and answers from, the children create a homemade, non-manufactured game; however, there are, of course, many manufactured games based on Harry Potter trivia which children can buy. And, although it is a child-created game, Lucas's description reveals this game to be highly structure with rules and procedures.

- Contessa: Well, when you play your own quiz game, how do you get your questions? Do you pick them out yourself?
- Lucas: No, we look in a book everyday and we pick out questions and write them on a piece of paper, and we'll go over in the classroom in a little circle and you have to slap your lap when you have it. And then you get like, and people say like, This one will be two points, and this one will be ten or five.
- Britney: Once I had 30.
- Lucas: Once I had 95.
- Britney: Once I had 100.
- Lyndsay: No you got like 999, didn't you?
- Britney: Yeah.
- Contessa: So, who made up this game?
- Britney/
- Lucas: I did.
- Lyndsay: Me and Britney.

- Contessa: You did? So, did you make up the rules too?  
Lyndsay Me and Britney did, yeah.  
Contessa: Okay, so you get in a circle, right? And then somebody got to the book to get questions, and you assign points to the questions?  
ALL: Yes.  
Lucas: We'll make a schedule and then people will have to like, to say like, ahm, how do they get to school in the second Harry Potter book? They go by car, and then that one would probably be like two points, so you put two strokes under your name, like, and you keep going with points.  
Contessa: What happens with the winner?  
Lucas: They get to go next time probably.  
Contessa: And you play this at lunch-time?  
Lucas: Yeah. (McInnis 2005; Shears 2005; Snook 2005)

Both the group of children and Nicholas also reported playing the traditional folk game of "tag" and adapting it to include the Harry Potter characters. "It" therefore becomes an evil character like Snape or Voldemort, and the children pretend to fly around on broomsticks and use their powers as they chase and pursue each other.

### CHILDREN AS CO-CREATORS

My online research also revealed another unique ownership of the Harry Potter series in which children and adults extended narratives beyond Rowling's novels. Anchoring their stories in the Harry Potter world, some writers write themselves into the storyline, while others write existing characters into the realm of the romantic, subversive and forbidden. By writing fan-fiction or creating fan-art, children, in essence, become text producers and co-creators (Fiske 1989), taking part in a form of participatory literacy. Participatory literacy "describes the multiple ways readers take ownership of reading and writing to construct meaning situated within their own socio-cultural characteristics" (Bond and Michelson 2003:119). In this case, children as active readers interpret and discuss texts together, develop literary aesthetics and produce texts inspired by the original product (Jenkins 1992). As Jenkins notes, "Rather than being passive receivers of consumable texts fans are active participants who share their experiences and rework texts... the text becomes something more than it was before, not something less" (1992:52).

For example, in one fan-fiction story taken from the website [www.harrypotterfanfiction.com](http://www.harrypotterfanfiction.com), a fan (a.k.a sweat\_sizzler) writes about a romantic interlude between Draco Malfoy and Ginny Weasley. In this story, Harry and several other characters are punished by Dumbledore for fighting on the train with Draco Malfoy. Dumbledore locks the group up together to resolve their differences. Ginny discovers a magical game of spin the bottle (traditional folk game with magical elements) in which the matching couples must date each other for a year. Ginny is matched with Draco, and they sneak off into the bathroom where they make out, for example:

"Hey Ginny come here." Draco whispered in her ear.  
The two of them slipped into the bathroom while the bottle was still spinning.  
Draco locked the door.

“What is it Draco, are you ok?” Ginny asked, sifting down on the bathtub ledge.  
 “Yeah, its just.” He leaned in and kissed her, but instead of fighting him off she pulled him into the bathtub... She pulled his shirt off and he was undoing her top when they heard someone say “Hey guys where’s Draco and Ginny?”  
 “Oh crap, Harry and Ron are going to kill me.” Ginny said.  
 “It’s ok” Draco said pulling his shirt on as they began to bang on the door.  
 (sweat\_sizzler 2005)

Upon returning to Hogwarts they later learn that Dumbledore has also made the group room-mates, and must share a dorm together. Although the age of this writer is unknown, the innocent, yet sexually inquisitive nature of the story seems indicative to the interests of young, adolescent or teenage readers. Indeed, a survey of 33,000 archived fan-fiction stories on [www.harrypotterfanfiction.com](http://www.harrypotterfanfiction.com) (as of August 8, 2006) reveals the genres of most interest to Harry Potter fan-fiction writers including drama, horror/dark, humor, mystery, action/adventure, angst. and romance. Most importantly, romance tops charts with over 65% of archived stories (21,923 stories to date), in which readers can further customize their reading experience by selecting the romantic pairing of their choice such as Harry/Ginny, and Ron/Hermione. Founded in February 2001, this website now boasts 110 million visitors per month ([www.harrypotterfanfiction.com](http://www.harrypotterfanfiction.com) 2006).

Although thought to be predominantly a teenager’s domain, fan-fiction is also created by young children. For example, in 2001, after the first movie release, and as a pre-kindergarten child, Nicholas drew a Harry Potter adventure book. Before he was even old enough to write, Nicholas dictated his pictures and words to his mother, father and babysitter. His book is filled with movie-inspired images including the “Harry on his Broomstick,” “The Flying Car,” and “Harry has Tea at Hagrid’s Hut.” However, Nicholas’s collection also includes self-inspired pictures created on his own accord, such as “Pet Day at Hogwarts,” “The Magic Necklace” (a necklace shoots magic powers out of the locket), and my personal favorite, “Harry on a Snowboard.” In November 2005, Nicholas also drew some fan-art which included “Potter Puppet Pals Bothering Snape,” this time focusing more on the drawings than on story creation.

Bond and Michelson write that this work “signifies a breakdown of the borders that, as adults, many of us have accepted as natural” (2003:113). By writing fan-fiction, children and adolescents wrestle the text away from the commercializers through their own vernacular construction of the books, their characters, plot lines and magical worlds. Indeed, while sometimes compliant with, or complementary to global industry management of the tradition, children are also frequently resistant to corporate domination. They illustrate this through their fan-fiction, despite being discouraged by corporate groups representing writers such as Rowling and Anne Rice. Rice has even made pleas on her website to discourage fan fiction involving her characters (Borah 2002:353). According to Jenkins (1992), fan fiction rebels against a culture owned by dispassionate corporations and attempts to restore a folk culture in which key stories and characters belong to everyone. This rebellion, says Amy Harmon, marks “a return to the folk tradition of participatory storytelling” (1997:1).

## PARODY AS RESISTANCE

While a majority of academics suggest the global corporate world controls children’s experiences and minds, children have, however, long resisted global influence and corporate

domination through their cultural expressions. Besides creating fan-fiction, another way children extend, adapt and resist is through parody. As long as children have been buying into corporate culture, they have also been parodying it, and the Harry Potter phenomenon is no exception. In their book *One Potato, Two Potato: The Folklore of American Children*, Mary and Herbert Knapp, write:

Parodies are more than high-spirited entertainment. They are a way of asserting one's perceptiveness and independence. We adults parody proverbs to show that we aren't taken in — by traditional wisdom in general, and by romantics, snobs, bureaucrats, and the like... (1976:161-2)

As well, Simon J. Bronner writes about parody:

From nursery rhymes to television commercials, adults feed children messages. The barrage of repeated, adult-controlled messages is grist for the child's imaginative mill. Children are fond of parodying the standard and familiar, especially when in the process of doing so they can establish that they have a world of their own making. (1988:77)

In a discussion of children who parody ads and commercials (such as Pepsi, Coke, McDonalds, Blue Bonnet, Sani-Flush, and Oscar Mayer), the Knapps explain that "parody helps children's ability to defend themselves and fight against the intrusive, we-know-best-tone" (1976:165). In fact, the Knapps cite research paid and conducted by the advertising industry itself which confirms this supposition: "Second-graders are said to have a 'concrete distrust' of some commercials; by sixth grade the youngster's distrust is 'global' — they are suspicious of them all" (1976:162).

Although the Knapps specifically look at commercial parodies, I argue that this concrete distrust of imposing commercialism is also illustrated in children's Harry Potter parodies. Bronner writes, "Besides mocking nursery rhymes and television commercials, children are fond of parodying popular culture figures such as Tarzan and Superman, bringing them down to earth..." (1988:77). The Knapps also include examples of popular culture figures that children parody such as Robin Hood, Daniel Boone, the Addams Family, and Popeye. As well, my own research conducted in 1995 in a Grade three class at St. John Fisher Elementary School in Brampton, Ontario, revealed children's parody of Batman and Robin, Barney, and G.I. Joe. It is therefore no surprise that Harry Potter has been inducted into the parody hall of fame by children.

While conducting interviews, I discovered evidence of both two forms of parody — localized child generated parody and main-stream commercial parody. When asked if the children wrote their own Harry Potter stories or fan fiction, two girls said that while they never wrote their own stories, they created their own parody titles. These titles were inspired by the Nickelodeon's kid's sketch comedy show "All That." In this television program, young actors spoof Harry Potter in a sketch called, "Harry Bladder" in which: Harry Potter is Harry Bladder; Hermione is Her-hiney; Quidditch becomes Squidditch; magic potions class becomes magic lotions class; the children ride leaf-blowers instead of magic broomsticks; and instead of Harry sporting a lightning bolt scar, he's marked with a chicken wing. In response to Harry Bladder, Lyndsay and Britney came up with their own series titles based on Harry Potty. These include: Harry Potty and Philosopher's Toilet; Harry Potty and the Chamber of the Toilet; Harry Potty

and the Prisoner of the Toilet; Harry Potty and the Goblet of Pee-Pee; Harry Potty and the Order of the Toilet; Harry Potty and the Half-Blood Toilet Paper.

- Contessa: Have you written any stories about Harry Potter?  
 Britney: Ah, me and Lyndsay, well we think of a story like Harry Potty.  
 Lyndsay: Tell her all the titles.  
 Britney: Like ahm, I forget the one for the fourth one.  
 Lucas: You named them all out for me.  
 Contessa: So you came up with all your own titles?  
 Britney: And, like, yes, we used somethings from Harry Bladder, it's a show.  
 Contessa: What's that?  
 Britney: It's like, it's ahm, there's a show it has like little short things, and it has Harry Bladder, and instead of broomsticks, it has leaf-blowers and stuff.  
 Contessa: Oh, and where did you read this or where did you see this, or did you make it up?  
 Britney: We made up Harry Potty, and a show made up Harry Bladder.  
 Contessa: Okay, what's the first title?  
 Britney: The first title. I'm pretty sure is, Harry Potty and the Philosopher's toilet.  
 Lucas: The second one is called like...  
 Lyndsay: Harry Potter and the Chamber of the toilet.  
 Lucas: Yeah, something like... And the third one is like...  
 Britney: The Prisoner of the Bathroom. [Laughter] The Goblet of Pee-Pee [Laughter]  
 Lucas: And the fifth on is like The Order of the Pooh.  
 Britney: No.  
 Lucas: The Order of the Toilet.  
 Britney: No.  
 Lucas: It's like the Order of the Toilet because like, their ordering the toilet instead of the phoenix.  
 Britney: Yeah, the Order of the Toilet, and the Half-Blood Toilet.  
 Lucas: The Half-Blood Toilet Paper.  
 Contessa: So why did you put them all, create them all as pee and toilet, and all that stuff?  
 [Laughter] Why?  
 Lucas: Oh, oh, oh, oh.  
 Lyndsay: Because we wanted it to be funny. (McInnis 2005; Shears 2005; Snook 2005)

Combining parody with children's ever-present intrigue with toilet-humor, these children create their own parodied book titles stemming *from*, in this case, a mass-mediated source. My online research has revealed numerous personal Harry Potter parodies including Cleolinda Jones's retelling of the third Harry Potter film, "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban in Fifteen Minutes" on her [www.livejournal.com](http://www.livejournal.com) site. Research has also revealed commercialized parodies where, in essence, we see corporations profiting from the spoof of other corporations, for example, two performed sketches which appeared on NBC's *Saturday Night Live*. The first appeared on November 16, 2002 called "Welcome Back, Potter" (which placed Harry Potter in the Gabe Kaplan role from the 1970s sitcom *Welcome Back, Kotter*), and the other on May 1, 2004 called "Hogwarts Academy" (a sketch lampooning a suddenly buxom Hermione). As well, to date, MAD Magazine has produced one text-driven parody "Harry Plodder and the Kidney Stone" in March 2000, and four film based parodies including: "Harry Plodder and the Sorry-Ass

Story” in December 2001; “Harry Potter and the Lamest of Sequels” in December 2002; “Harry Potter and the Pre-Teen Nerds are Actin’ Bad” in July 2004; and “Harry Potter Has Gotta Retire” in December 2005 (“Harry Potter Parodies” 2005).

But, outside of the commercial parodies, how do we account for the fact that these children love, or are fans of, these characters, but also participate in parodying and making fun of them? For the answer, I return to the Knapps who claim that by participating in commercial parody, children are learning to fight back at the advertisers who would teach them to say “gimme.”

But children don’t tell their mothers not to buy these products. Rather, through the parodies they defend themselves against becoming mere bundles of reflexes that are dominated by the ads. They reserve for themselves the possibility of disagreeing, but they don’t necessarily dislike the products. What they especially like is seeing the officious official world turned upside down (1976:165).

In this case, it is not that children dislike the Harry Potter character, books or movies, but what they dislike is, as the Knapps suggest, the “officious official world” of the Harry Potter industry. Children use parody to take ownership of and fight against the global corporate influence. I found an excellent illustration of this on a Harry Potter message board about Harry Potter spoofs ([forums.harrypotterportal.com](http://forums.harrypotterportal.com)). Below, online fans of Harry Potter illustrate the fine line between making fun of something because they dislike it, and making fun of something because they love it. Quotes are given as they appeared online.

- EmmaW8439: yeah i also saw the Nickelodeon spoof for harry Bladder. There are a lot of people at my school who have seen that and they think it’s really funny. But when I talk about how much I like Harry Potter they just start making fun of it. It makes me mad.
- Katherine\_beeler: Nooooo! I would hate to see someone make fun of such a good series!
- Tickled Dragon: Making fun of stuff doesn’t get to me, cos normally at home we make fun of everything. It’s only if someone’s making fun of something because they hate it that it would get to me.
- firebolt23: I wouldn’t want to see anyone making fun of things I like. It wouldn’t really get to me. If they do it for fun thats fine. I don’t like it when they do it because they hate it.
- Tickled Dragon: And finally, for FB23 - I know it’s terrible when ppl make fun of HP because they hate it, I agree with you. But this isn’t so much making fun of HP, more like, having a little fun with the HP characters by putting them in strange situations and making them say weird things and altering their characters and .... well, the point is, they’re just writing stories for fun because they love the HP universe. (EmmaW8439 2002; Katherine Beeler 2002; Tickled Dragon 2002 and 2003; Firebolt23 2003)

Besides fending off corporate imposition and turning the official world upside down, parody can also illustrate, as Tickled Dragon suggests, reverence for the Harry Potter phenomenon. For example, when asked why they made up the Harry Potty parodies, Lyndsay simply states, “Because we wanted it to be funny” (Snook 2005).

## CONCLUSION

In this paper, I present both the local and global effects of a children's literary phenomenon. I address how global corporations view children as passive receptors to the social-construction and merchandising of Harry Potter, ultimately affecting how scholars have typically approached the topic. More importantly, my research has shown children, in their appropriation, manipulation and creation of Harry Potter, to have both power and agency. Through their local displays of imagination, costuming, imitation, performance, play, games, fan-fiction, fan-art, and parody children illustrate their capacity to accept, re-create, as well as resist a phenomenon that pervades their everyday life.

Memorial University

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- AccDozer. "Many Potter Spoofs." December 8, 2002. Online Posting. Harry Potter Forum, <forums.harrypotterportal.com/lofiversion/index.php/t130.html>. 21 Nov. 2005.
- Beeler, Katherine. "Harry Potter Spoofs." December 17, 2002. Online Posting. Harry Potter Forum, forums.harrypotterportal.com/lofiversion/index.php/t130.html. 21 Nov. 2005.
- Berger, Harris M. "Introduction: The Politics and Aesthetics of Language Choice and Dialect in Popular Music." Eds. H. Berger and M. Carroll. *Global Pop Local Language*. Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2003. ix-xxvi.
- Bond, Ernie and Nancy Michelson. "Writing Harry's World: Children Coauthoring Hogwarts." *Harry Potter's World: Multidisciplinary Critical Perspectives*. Ed. Elizabeth H. Heilman. New York: Routledge, 2003. 109-122.
- Borah, Rebecca Sutherland. "Apprentice Wizards Welcome: Fan Communities and the Culture of Harry Potter." *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter: Perspectives on a Literary Phenomenon*. Ed. Lana A. Whited. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002. 343-364.
- Bronner, Simon .J. *American Children's Folklore: A Book of Rhymes, Games, Jokes, Stories, Secret Languages, Beliefs And Camp Legends — For Parents, Grandparents, Teachers, Counselors And All Adults Who Were Once Children*. The American Folklore Series Comp. Little Rock, Arkansas: August House, 1988.
- EmmaW8439. "Harry Potter Spoofs." December 15, 2002. Online Posting. Harry Potter Forum, <forums.harrypotterportal.com/lofiversion/index.php/t130.html>. 21 Nov. 2005.
- Firebolt23. "Harry Potter Spoofs." February 9, 2003. Online Posting. Harry Potter Forum, <forums.harrypotterportal.com/lofiversion/index.php/t130.html>. 21 Nov. 2005.
- Fiske, John. *Understanding Popular Culture*. London: Routledge, 1989. Gardner, Scott. Personal interview. 31 Oct. 2005.
- "Global Potter Sales Top 300m Mark." *BBC News* 4 Oct. 2005. 10 Nov. 2005 <news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/arts/4308548.stm>.
- Gupta, Suman. *Re-Reading Harry Potter*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003.
- Harmon, Amy. "In Dull TV Days, Favorites Take Wing Online." *New York Times*. 18 Aug. 1997: A1.

- "Harry Potter Parodies." *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. Online. 21 Nov. 2005  
<[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry\\_Potter\\_parodies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_Potter_parodies)>.
- Heilman, Elizabeth E. "Fostering Critical Insight through Multidisciplinary Perspectives." *Harry Potter's World: Multidisciplinary Critical Perspectives*. Ed. Elizabeth E. Heilman. New York: Rutledge, 2003. 1-12.
- Jenkins, Henry. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Cultures*. New York: Rutledge, 1992.
- Jondes, Cleolinda. "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban in Fifteen Minutes." <<http://www.livejournal.com/community/m15m/2237.htm>>
- Kellner, Douglas. "Beavis and Butt-Head: No Future in Postmodern Youth." *Kinderculture: The Corporate Construction of Childhood*. Eds. S.R. Steinberg and J.L. Kincheloe. Boulder: Westview Press, 1997. 85-101.
- Knapp, Mary and Herbert. *One Potato, Two Potatoes: The Folklore of American Children*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1976.
- Lynch, Dick. "The Magic of Harry Potter." *Advertising Age* 72:50 (2001): 26.
- McInnis, Britney. Personal interview. 31 Oct 2005.
- McDonnell, Kathleen. *Kid Culture: Children and Adults and Popular Culture*. Toronto: Second Story Press, 1994.
- Moore, Amber. Personal interview. 31 Oct 2005.
- Narváez, Peter. "Introduction, Fans: A Special Section." *Culture & Tradition* 11 (1987): 37-40.
- Nel, Philip. "You Say 'Jelly,' I say 'Jell-O'? Harry Potter and the Transfiguration of Language." *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter: Perspectives on a Literary Phenomenon*. Ed. Lana A. Whited. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002. 261-84.
- O'Keefe, Deborah. *Readers in Wonderland: The Liberating Worlds of Fantasy Fiction from Dorothy to Harry Potter*. New York: Continuum, 2003.
- Seiter, Ellen. *Sold Separately: Children and Parents in Consumer Culture*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1993.
- Shears, Lucas. Personal interview. 31 Oct 2005.
- Slytherin~Fangirl. "Harry Potter Spoofs." December 8, 2002. Online Posting. Harry Potter Forum, <<http://forums.harrypotterportal.com/lofiversion/index.php/t130.html>>. 21 Nov 2005.
- Snook, Lyndsay. Personal interview. 31 Oct 2005.
- Steinberg, S.R., and Joe L. Kincheloe. "Introduction: No More Secrets: Kinderculture, Information Saturation, and the Postmodern Childhood." *Kinderculture: The Corporate Construction of Childhood*. Eds. S.R. Steinberg and J.L. Kincheloe. Boulder: Westview Press, 1997. 1-30.
- Strickland, Theodore. Personal interview. 25 Aug 2006.
- Sweat\_sizzler. "The Love Game." Online Posting. Harry Potter FanFiction. <<http://www.harrypotterfanfiction.com/viewstory.php?sid=155453>>. 21 Nov 2005.
- Teare, Elizabeth. "Harry Potter and the Technology of Magic." *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter: Perspectives on a Literary Phenomenon*. Ed. Lana A. Whited. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002. 329-42.
- Tickled Dragon. "Harry Potter Spoofs." February 9, 2003. Online Posting. Harry Potter Forum, <<http://forums.harrypotterportal.com/lofiversion/index.php/t130.html>>. 21 Nov 2005.
- . "Harry Potter Spoofs." December 8, 2002. Online Posting. Harry Potter Forum, <<http://forums.harrypotterportal.com/lofiversion/index.php/t130.html>>. 21 Nov 2005.

- Trh391. "Harry Potter Spoofs." December 8, 2002. Online Posting. Harry Potter Forum, <<http://forums.harrypotterportal.com/lofiversion/index.php/t130.html>>. 21 Nov 2005.
- Turner, Jim. Personal interview. 1 Nov 2005.
- Turner, Nicholas. Personal interview. 1 Nov 2005.
- Turner, Sherry. Personal interview. 1 Nov 2005.
- Turner-Vorbeck, Tammy. "Pottermania: Good Clean Fun or Cultural Hegemony?" *Harry Potter's World: Multidisciplinary Critical Perspectives*. Ed. Elizabeth E. Heilman. New York: Rutledge, 2003. 13-24.
- Whited, Lana A. "Harry Potter: From Craze to Classic?" *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter: Perspectives on a Literary Phenomenon*. Ed. Lana A. Whited. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002. 1-12.
- Zipes, Jack. *Sticks and Stones: The Troublesome Success of Children's Literature from Slovenly Peter to Harry Potter*. New York: Rutledge, 2000.