

**Dorothea Wolschak**

## "Harry Potter" and the Modern Witch?

The Depiction of Witchcraft and Witches in the "Harry Potter" Series

**Bachelor Thesis**

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## **Harry Potter and the Modern Witch?**

### **– The Depiction of Witchcraft and Witches in the *Harry Potter* Series**

#### **BACHELORARBEIT**

zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades „Bachelor of Arts“

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## Contents:

I. Introduction	3
II. Theory on Witches	5
1. "Which witch is a witch?"	5
2. Religion, Magic, Sorcery or Witchcraft?	6
3. A History of Witchcraft Persecution	9
3.1. Once Upon a Time... Or How it All Began	9
3.2. Hunting for Witches	12
3.2.1. Legal Basis for Witch-Persecution	14
3.2.2. Trapping Wicked Witches: The Witch Trials	15
3.2.3. Burning of Witches	16
3.3. The Historical Witch	16
3.3.1. The Usual Suspects	16
3.3.2. Witch hunt = Women hunt?	18
3.3.3. The Pentagram of Historical Witchcraft	20
3.3.4. The Appearance of the Witch	25
4. Witchcraft through the Ages	27
III. Witchcraft and Witches in the <i>Harry Potter</i> Novels	30
1. Witchcraft in Literature	30
2. The Phenomenon of <i>Harry Potter</i>	31
3. Harry Potter and the Modern Witch? - The Depiction of Witchcraft and Witches in the <i>Harry Potter</i> Series	33
3.1. The <i>Harry Potter</i> Universe	33
3.1.1. Muggle, Mudblood, Half-Blood, Pure-Blood	35
3.1.2. Magical Places	37
3.1.3. Magical Creatures	40
3.1.4. Magical Reality?	41
3.2. Religion in the <i>Harry Potter</i> Series	42
3.3. The Depiction of Witchcraft and Wizardry in the <i>Harry Potter</i> Novels	44
3.3.1. Hogwarts' Magic Education	44
3.3.2. Avada Kedavra! - The Dark Arts	49

3.3.3. Phoenix Feather, Dragon Heartstrings and Unicorn Hair – <i>Harry Potter's</i> Magical Ingredients .....	52
3.4. Harry Potter and the Girls – Gender Issues in the <i>Harry Potter</i> Books .....	56
3.4.1. Witches in the <i>Harry Potter</i> Novels .....	58
3.4.2. The Appearance of <i>Harry Potter's</i> Witches .....	69
IV. Conclusion .....	71
V. Bibliography .....	74



## I. Introduction

'Tell me one last thing' said Harry. Is this real? Or has this been happening inside my head?' [...] 'Of course it is happening inside your head, Harry, but why on earth should that mean that it is not real?'<sup>1</sup>

While some people devour the books enthusiastically, others despise and would rather burn them. But whatever people think about the *Harry Potter* series' social, educational or literary value, they can hardly dismiss them. *Harry Potter* is a phenomenon worth examining. It is not only the destiny of that shy little boy with his lightning-bolt scar on his forehead that triggered the “Harrycane”<sup>2</sup>, but also the appeal of the magical world of witchcraft.

For centuries, witchcraft is the object of research for various scholars of literature, history, theology, arts, folklore, anthropology, medicine and law. To analyse historical witchcraft, they access preserved spell books, court records, administrative correspondences, pamphlets, penitentials, sermons and art works.<sup>3</sup>

Due to stereotypisation processes, there is a gap between the popular and academic knowledge of witchcraft.<sup>4</sup> While academics rather refer to the historical witch who supposedly threatened the Church and the State since the Middle Ages and was persecuted in the Early Modern Age, laymen rather associate the witch with pictures they conceive from popular literature: the fairy tale image of an old, crook-backed, evil women who lures children into her gingerbread house and eats them. How has the image of the supposedly “single greatest threat to Christian European civilization”<sup>5</sup> changed during the Modern Times?

Since the first volume was published, scholars from various fields have approached the *Harry Potter* phenomenon. The main topics of research have been literary interpretations concerning language, motifs, generic classification, mythological elements and cultural questions relating to family, school, peer group and societal issues. Further academic approaches to the *Harry Potter* series tackled questions of reader interest research, communication studies, marketing strategies, didactics, translations, theology and film adaptations.<sup>6</sup> As of yet, there

1 Rowling (2007:579).

2 Cherian & Vyas (2007).

3 Cf. Dillinger (2007:9-12).

4 Cf. Wiedemann (2007:12).

5 Kors (1973:5).

6 Cf. Karg & Mende (2010:67).