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**Reifying Consciousness:  
A Biocultural Perspective of Supernatural Storytelling  
in the Harry Potter Universe**

Ph.D. Dissertation

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## Summary of the Dissertation

In this thesis, I examine human interaction with the supernatural, with a focus on its narrative representations. I utilise a biocultural theoretical framework, which draws on evolutionary theory and cognitive science, to explain why humans have been drawn to the supernatural throughout their long process of evolutionary development. I argue that human behaviour of telling and consuming stories about the supernatural, *supernatural storytelling*, is a result of the process of *reifying consciousness*, where abstract and emotional aspects of our experience become materialised and woven into a narrative. Supernatural storytelling, I argue, is an adaptive behaviour that co-opts cognitive tendencies, such as magical thinking and agent attribution, to elevate a sense of perceived control and establish a sense of psychological order, thereby reducing anxiety over domains over which humans have no control. I employ this theoretical framework to interpret the role of supernatural elements in narratives. The primary case study of this thesis is J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter universe. I interpret Harry Potter novels and movies to argue that through magic, Rowling reified abstract concepts like good, evil, love, death, and power. Giving them presence within a narrative facilitates understanding, highlighting, and modifying them. Magic then becomes a tool for navigating difficulties and fostering self-empowerment. Contextualising the popularity of the Harry Potter stories, I argue that the representation of magic in the Harry Potter universe reflects the sentiments of the period, specifically the shift towards an individualistic and pragmatic form of spirituality, known as the New Age. I argue that alignment with the New Age is a crucial factor in the global popularity of the Harry Potter universe, alongside the commodification of cultural products, effective marketing strategies, and the use of transmedia storytelling.

## Theoretical Framework of the Dissertation

I have always been fascinated by the phenomenon of human interaction with the supernatural. Especially in today's so-called secularised West, the popularity of magical practices, both in terms of beliefs and rituals as well as media representations, astonishes. Whether identifying as atheist or religious, individuals worldwide enjoy horoscopes, Tarot readings, magic tricks, and fantasy fiction. Mothers scare their children with ghost stories to get them to come home early. Sportsmen wear their lucky shirts or socks, believing they will bring them good fortune on game day. From these observations, the main research question of this thesis has developed: Why are humans interested in the supernatural? For an evolutionary thinker, this phenomenon is even more puzzling. If we evolved to survive and reproduce, we must learn how to adapt to the real environment. Why, then, are we interested in unreal agents and spaces? Why do they have the power to capture our attention?

The answer might seem obvious for believers – they believe in supernatural phenomena. However, irrespective of their beliefs, individuals worldwide are amused by magic tricks and scared by ghost stories. This thesis explores the form of behaviour beyond belief – the interaction with stories that contain supernatural elements. Although the exposure to stories from one's traditions, such as those about demons and jinns, can undoubtedly make them more convincing, it does not explain why even atheists find fantasy fiction and supernatural horror compelling. A contemporary example that encapsulates this phenomenon is the global appeal of the Harry Potter stories written by J.K. Rowling. From 1997, when *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* was published, up to today when the Harry Potter series is being filmed, children and adults around the world immerse themselves in this magical wizarding world, read books, watch films, play video games, visit costume parties, various theme parks, as well as buy branded items. Although Bosnia and Herzegovina is a multireligious community, as I was growing up, I saw kids from all denominations as well as those from atheist families engage in pretend play where they flew on a broom or cast spells. Studying abroad and meeting international students, I realised that children from all cultures experience the same thrill.

To explain this phenomenon, I was looking for a theory in literary and cultural studies that can shed light on the reader's interest in supernatural elements of stories. The first problem I faced

was that poststructuralist theories, which still dominate literary studies, reject notions of *universal behaviour* and *human nature*. This stance stems from poststructuralist criticism of essentialism, particularly in relation to categories such as class, race, and gender. The argument is that these categories do not possess inherent, timeless, or fixed qualities, but are shaped by cultural and historical processes. Furthermore, theoretical frameworks inspired by poststructuralism, such as gender studies and postcolonialism, revealed that essentialism reinforces stereotypes and maintains systems of power. Therefore, it is not a coincidence that literary studies focus on a particular phenomenon and understand how it emerges from a specific socio-historical context. However, arguing that everything is socially constructed also limits the scope of literary studies, as we become blind to aspects of human nature and culture which are cross-cultural and cross-temporal. Our interest in supernatural stories is one of such aspects.

During the 1990s, a theoretical framework of biocultural theory emerged using evolutionary theory and cognitive science to study the role of storytelling in the evolutionary development of the human species. Under this theoretical framework, the notion of *human universals* was revived to study aspects of human nature common to all members of the species, but also how these aspects are shaped by individual cultures and traditions, as well as the differences between works of individual authors. As such, biocultural theory does not fall into the trap of essentialism but also avoids the pitfall of social relativism. In literary studies, biocultural theory seeks to return to the possibility of truth claims and empirical research, making research in literary studies relevant to other disciplines across the humanities, social and natural sciences. The biocultural theoretical framework makes it possible to ask questions such as Why do we need stories? And why supernatural stories?

### **The Main Terms and Concepts**

This thesis encompasses a range of interrelated literary theoretical concepts, which include *supernatural*, *magic*, *fantasy fiction*, *science fiction*, *supernatural horror*, and *the fantastic*. Since the Harry Potter universe falls within the fantasy fiction genre, it would be a logical choice to take this genre as an object of analysis. This would involve creating a history of the concept of *fantasy fiction* and incorporating an evolutionary perspective into this body of knowledge. However, this idea encounters a problem at its very outset: how to define fantasy fiction? Even more problematic is that, depending on which definition we choose, our object of analysis becomes something

entirely different. To me, the insistence on precisely defining a concept that does not have its correlative in reality is like chasing a ghost.

Therefore, I approach this dissertation with the same attitude that Mendlesohn asserts in her introduction to *Rhetorics of Fantasy*: “This book is not about defining fantasy” (2007, XIIV). This thesis is not about defining fantasy fiction or producing yet another of its histories; numerous volumes have already been written on this topic. Where we stand today is that we have a range of definitions of fantasy fiction with no possible consensus even concerning literature, let alone across media. The main reason is that we define fantasy as a binary counterpart to mimetic narration. However, fantasy fiction is as rich, if not richer, than its mimetic twin. This leads Hume to propose viewing literature as a blend of mimetic, a desire to imitate, and fantasy, a desire to change modes, rather than in terms of binaries (2014, 20).

Although, as I said, there are many definitions, what usually falls under the fantasy fiction umbrella is “the fairy story, quest myth, fable, epic fantasy, nonsense narrative, sword and sorcery, talking animal fantasy, political fantasy, including the utopia and dystopia, and erotic fantasy” (Armstrong 2020, 3). In enumerating these subgenres, Armstrong is very aware of the impossibility of reaching a consensus on such a heterogeneous concept (3). Clute and Grant’s view overlaps with what Armstrong proposed: “The term ‘fantasy’ to cover a very wide range of texts, movies, visual presentations and so on. Tales involving dreams and visions, allegory and romance, surrealism and magic realism, satire and wonderland, supernatural fiction, dark fantasy, weird fiction and horror – all of these and more sometimes expressing the conflicting nature of fantasy” (1996, viii). They also express the impossibility of clearly defining the genre. Moreover, they say that establishing borders with other speculative genres is impossible.

I also join the line of scholars who see it as a futile effort to insist on a strict definition of something that is constructed: “Armstrong could, perhaps, be thought of as a kind of spokesperson here in her claim that any attempt to shoehorn a text into a binding yet artificial category is a “travesty” of compartmentalisation, a ‘death wish’ of division and subdivision” (Rayment 2014, 10). ... “To take *The Wizard of Oz* again as an example, we might want to question whether it is a children’s film, fantasy film or musical, but we must also anticipate that a reasonable answer to such an enquiry would be ‘yes.’” (Walters 2011, 74). In this thesis, I will also avoid theorising about the differences between genres, subgenres, and media versions *per se*. I will discuss the differences between speculative fiction genres only in relation to the thesis argument.



Therefore, I propose a concept with a long and storied genealogy that has not received much scholarly acclaim: *supernatural storytelling*. The reasons for this choice will be explained throughout the dissertation, but I will outline the main ones here. Firstly, I define *supernatural storytelling* as an observable behaviour of producing and consuming stories that include supernatural elements. This behaviour is the object of analysis in this dissertation. With this, I emphasise the process, not the product. And so, while analysing literary works, I will have in mind the process of meaning production that is actualised when a reader interacts with a novel or a film. Although no object is without its problems, what is essential is that this object is an observable, objective phenomenon, not just an academic concept. Moreover, because this thesis aims to produce falsifiable claims, the object of analysis must be observable and not merely conceptual.

Another reason for choosing this concept is that the historical horizon of this thesis spans an evolutionary scale of 100,000 years. This requires a concept much broader than *fantasy fiction*, which is, at best, a relatively recent invention. This does not mean that, as a term, it cannot be applied to earlier periods of human evolution; however, the fact is that this is not how it is defined by scholarship. Clute and Grant, for example, argue that fantasy in its modern form emerged in the decades just before the 19<sup>th</sup> century (1996, ix). For my argument, it is important to note that fantasy fiction is a genre that falls entirely under the category of *supernatural storytelling*. However, many of the above-mentioned genres also incorporate supernatural elements and fall into this category as well. Of these, two major ones are science fiction and horror. Another popular term for these stories is *speculative fiction*. *Supernatural storytelling* is, therefore, a part of speculative fiction, which encompasses works that incorporate supernatural elements.

However, I wish to clarify that I am not arguing that genre concepts are useless. They are labels that we assign to a group of stories to signal some commonalities and differences. Moreover, they emerge within a specific period and, as such, carry historical significance. Therefore, fantasy fiction and its subgenres are very useful categories when referring to a particular group of works situated within a specific period. However, when examining the behaviour of producing and consuming stories with supernatural elements as a universal human phenomenon, it is essential to introduce a concept that circumvents the historical and functional implications of genre categories. Furthermore, each genre of *supernatural storytelling* will treat the supernatural differently, bending it to its form and reflecting the sentiments of the period. More attention will be given to this in Part III.

## The Main Argument

The main argument of this thesis is that *supernatural storytelling* is a form of play, a result of the process I will call *reifying consciousness*, where the content of the mind is externalised and woven in a form of narrative. *Reification* comes from the Latin root *res* – “a thing.” Its literal meaning is “to make something abstract material.” Through the storytelling technology, reified consciousness, or its contents, become visible and palpable, making it possible for us to engage with them, modify them, and ultimately share them. Weaving the *reified consciousness* in narratives produces a sense of psychological order (see Carroll 2004, 115). In biocultural theory, storytelling is seen as a simulation of reality. We engage in story simulations to learn social skills or prepare for danger (see Oatley and Mar, 2008; Gotschall, 2012; Clasen, 2017). *Reifying consciousness* enables us to simulate the most abstract, conceptual, and emotional aspects of our lives.

The adaptive benefits of supernatural storytelling can be further broken down into three categories.<sup>1</sup> Firstly, this form of play facilitates learning about the constituents of reality in terms of its ontological categories. Jackson demonstrated that in fantasy, elements of reality are broken down and reconstructed in a different manner (1981, 4). These unusual reconstructions of reality are building blocks of supernatural storytelling. We use them to reify the content of consciousness into physical reality. Exaggerating or modifying aspects of our culture can make them more memorable and transferable. Importantly, strange combinations of elements also have a distancing effect, giving us another perspective on something familiar (see Attebery 2021, Chapter I; Rayment 2014, 24, 53). Depersonalising and highlighting cultural traits can lead to seeing ourselves from another perspective, consequently questioning and improving cultural codes. A variety of races in Tolkien’s Middle-earth, for example, reflect different human traits.

Secondly, reifying conceptual and emotional aspects of our consciousness: hopes, dreams, affects, good, evil, and power, or, in other words, understanding them in terms of physical processes and agents, giving them faces and voices, facilitates discussing and managing subjective and abstract aspects of our lives which do not correlate to real world events. As Rayment (2014) and Armitt (2020) suggest, fantasy manifests or gives presence to the abstract and subjective (53; 169). Death, for example, is a simple physical process of cessation of life functions. Nevertheless,

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<sup>1</sup> *Adaptation* is an evolutionary process by which individuals, populations, and species become better suited to a particular environment. *Adaptive traits* are qualities that help individuals better adapt (see Gregory 2009, 161).

our understanding of death is also informed by experiences of the death of others as well as the realisation of our own mortality. Due to the vast gap between the reality of the event and our subjective experience of it, expressing it within a framework of mimetic narration is impossible (see Aradi 2022, 71). Violating consensus reality, supernatural storytelling enabled us to verbalise, and therefore share, transfer, discuss, and manage very subjective aspects of our experience.

Thirdly, supernatural storytelling presents human beings as empowered by supernatural abilities or divine protectors. This, I argue, elevates the sense of security and control. In real life, magical practices rely on *magical thinking* to create a sense of control (see Malinowski 1948, 14; Seligmann 1971, 322; Nemeroff and Rozin 2000, 26-27; Subbotsky 2010a, 136-139).<sup>2</sup> Supernatural storytelling, I argue, reifies *magical thinking*, co-opting in a way that aligns it with the group morality.<sup>3</sup> For example, magical practices such as child sacrifice and burying a living being in the foundations of the building are cross-cultural phenomena, once considered necessary to ensure the stability of the building and appease local deities or spirits. Contemporary supernatural storytelling will warn against such magical practices, aligning magic with social norms. Aster's *Midsommar* can therefore be read as a cautionary tale, warning against such sacrificial practices. Unable to accept practices like suicide morally, even if they are a part of the Hårga people's beliefs, the reader is disgusted and horrified. These emotions are then intensified by juxtaposing elements that signal happiness: summer daylight, smiling and welcoming villagers, and beautiful nature, with suicide, rape, and murder. The Hårga villagers commit atrocities with a smile on their faces.

The above-listed aspects of supernatural storytelling are intertwined. When projected onto a large scale, they entail the universe and human existence with a special role, meaning, and purpose. This property is unique to supernatural storytelling. Some supernatural horror stories, such as King's *Pet Sematary* or Aster's *Midsommar*, where evil ultimately triumphs, can be seen as a challenge to the final part of my argument. However, I see these stories as a subversion of the principle of empowerment. They reify those aspects of the consciousness related to fear, not to empower, but to tell a cautionary tale (see Coelho 2021). My argument also applies to those science fiction stories where the supernatural is an integral part of the narrative. For example, topics such

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<sup>2</sup> Magical thinking is a form of imagination which is not constrained by the laws of physics, like magical events, dreams, stories, play, and fantasies (see Subbotsky 2010a, 7).

<sup>3</sup> Co-option is an evolutionary process through which a trait can develop another evolutionary purpose (see Buss et al. 1998, 539).

as time travel and psychic powers appear in both fantasy fiction and science fiction. The latter attempts to provide a rational, scientific explanation, while the former explains them in terms of magic or divine power. As Clute and Nicholls point out, the principle of rationality and scientific method in explaining phenomena can be used to define science fiction (1993, 321). However, as they say, many works do not neatly fit this explanation.

### **The Interdisciplinarity of the Problem**

Jackson criticised Todorov for his “reluctance to engage with psychoanalytic theory” (1981, 36). Her argument that Todorov fails to account for the psychological and ideological aspects of fantasy fiction notwithstanding, I find her overreliance on Freud to be the weakest part of her seminal book. Freud’s theories were, for the most part, rejected by modern psychology (see Clasen 2017; Kjeldgaard-Christiansen and Clasen 2023). Jackson was so influential in the theory of fantasy that all those who came after heavily relied on the Freudian discourse of repression and phallus (see Hume 2014; Rayment 2014; Armitt 2020). I propose that biocultural theory, which draws on cognitive science and evolutionary theory, has greater explanatory potential in addressing the question of how the literature about the supernatural operates, why it captivates us, and whether this interaction has any benefits. Moreover, the interdisciplinarity of biocultural theory will enable me to broaden the theoretical scope and draw on contributions from across the social, natural sciences, and humanities to tackle the phenomenon of human interaction with the supernatural.

Moreover, I am very sceptical of Jackson’s central argument that the fantastic has the power to subvert social order. She claims that the fantastic has always been “obscured and locked away, buried as something inadmissible and darkly shameful” (100). To construct such an argument, Jackson sets aside a vast number of supernatural stories that belong to the category of religious stories or those inspired by religious narratives, such as those by C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, and Ursula K. Le Guin. To argue for subversion, Jackson focuses just on the stories with “disturbing, anti-social drives” (1981, 5). Although subversion and criticism are integral to the fantastic, many fantasies reflect and fortify traditional ways of thinking. Kiss and Szőnyi rightly point out the heterogeneity of the forms of the fantastic, as well as their media representations and functions. Drawing on iconology, they show how many of its forms relate to traditional and conventional themes, symbols, and images (2002, 20). Drawing on semiology, informed by poststructuralist thought, they demonstrate how, although the fantastic has subversive potential, it can also reinforce

dominant ideology (21-23). The example they give is the relationship between fantastic and commodity fetishism in the consumer-oriented capitalist society (28). The Harry Potter universe can serve as an example here, as its popularity is closely related to its commodification and marketing strategies (see Blake 2002, 77).

The turn of the millennium scholarship recognised the interrelatedness of fantasy, religion, and magic (see Partridge 2004, 45). During the 1990s, Western Esotericism emerged as an academic field that studies Western esoteric practices and their art representations. For example, Szőnyi uses the term “esoteric fiction” to denote the heterogeneity of stories connected “by the ambition of humans to experience epiphany, to partake in the divine or even to deify themselves” (2024, 10). I propose that studies of fantasy fiction would benefit from an interdisciplinary discussion on the supernatural, religion, and magic. Furthermore, I propose that understanding the function of the supernatural in a narrative can contribute to this discussion in literary studies.

Examining the role of supernatural elements in fiction from a cognitive and evolutionary perspective allows us to tackle how and why these aspects of human cognition evolved, as well as their function in the ecology of contemporary society. To do so, I will rely on theories from literary studies, as well as contributions from other disciplines that study human interaction with the supernatural, including history, anthropology, sociology, religious studies, cognitive science, psychology, ethology, and biology. Once again, I wish to emphasise that understanding the evolutionary role of the supernatural and the cognitive mechanisms underlying it does not imply that these agents, abilities, and spaces possess unchanged essences. Avoiding reductionism, biocultural theory posits that every culture and each individual’s worldview will shape supernatural elements, giving rise to new meanings. As Clasen points out, vampires in *Twilight* are different from those of 18th-century Eastern Europe, because their readers are contemporary Americans (2012, 226).

## The Results of the Research and Dissertation

Consciousness remains a mystery, and science has yet to explain it fully. Nevertheless, through the supernatural storytelling, we can crystallise aspects of our consciousness so they become visible and palpable. Giving voices and faces to abstract concepts and emotions helps us understand them in terms of physical processes and agents. Then it becomes possible to integrate them into narratives, projecting a universe that entails psychological order, meaning, and purpose. Sitting around the fire, under the starry skies, and telling supernatural stories enabled our ancestors to reify, and then learn about, modify, organise, and share aspects of their consciousness. The newfound sense of mastery over the inner dimension led to decreasing anxiety and an elevated sense of control and security. Those compelling supernatural stories were adapted, modified, and transformed to fit new environments. Therefore, it is no wonder that these stories have attracted readers for thousands of years and remain at the foundation of our cultures.

Relying on magical thinking, these stories present humans as powerful agents or in communion with supernatural forces. My argument strictly applies to fantasy fiction, the modern successor to supernatural storytelling. However, other genres, such as science fiction and horror, also include supernatural elements. In science fiction, magical powers are usually explained in terms of scientific rationality. In Frank Herbert's *Dune*, the Voice is described as extended mental abilities that can be developed through practice. In *Star Wars*, the Force results from midi-chlorians, a microscopic life form. Even though the explanation of magic differs from that found in *The Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter*, its adaptive value remains the same. Even *Star Trek* features god-like beings, such as Q, who can influence space and time. On the other hand, supernatural horror reifies aspects of our inner reality related to negative emotions. Understanding fear, death, and trauma in terms of physical processes can facilitate discussing them and lead to an elevated sense of mastery over them. This finding aligns with Andersen et al.'s (2020), Scrivner et al.'s (2021), and Bønnelykke-Behrndtz et al.'s (2024) results, which suggest that interaction with horror can be seen as a form of play with fear, leading to mastery over the emotion and greater emotional resilience.

Part I of this thesis introduced biocultural theory and the adaptationist case for storytelling, highlighting the theory of mind as an essential mechanism for engaging with stories. This laid the foundation for my argument in Part II. It is via the theory of mind that we connect with characters.

Walking in their shoes, when characters are magically empowered, we train our minds to experience the same. My argument here is that, in real life, through magical thinking, we can intuitively tap into the same neural pathways to reach a state of elevated perceived control. This sense of empowerment and security is why stories that weave magic, such as fairy tales and fantasy fiction, are a gold mine for children. However, we still lack empirical studies that would test this hypothesis. Part III examined the historical reasons for the popularity of the Harry Potter novels, specifically their alignment with the New Age movement, to illustrate how the sentiments of the period influenced our conceptual domains and consequently shaped the reifications. I have demonstrated that the backlash against the Harry Potter novels reveals the power dynamics within the religious field. As supernatural stories are the source of the feeling of otherworldliness, religious institutions throughout history clash over which version of reified consciousness is accurate.

I have also presented the debate on the relationship between Harry Potter and Christianity. As I have shown, fantasy fiction stories are often seen as religious allegories. In his 1966 foreword to *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Tolkien writes about his distaste for allegory (xxviii). I also find it oversimplifying to juxtapose Harry and Frodo to Jesus. Navigating the challenging path of sacrifice is a universal theme. Heracles was also deified and rose to Olympus after his death. The similarities between these stories, I argue, stem from their common source – our shared human consciousness. However, like our subjective conscious experience changes from moment to moment, each literary iteration that captures it will be different. We can then see supernatural stories as historical artefacts that trace the development of the human consciousness and its constant process of unfoldment and change.

Sadly, supernatural stories were often used as a tool for manipulation, abusing the need for the otherworldly and the universe, which entails order, meaning, and purpose. By explicating their evolutionary and cognitive underpinnings, I hope to dispel the illusion that any one of these stories can be more true than another. Identifying with any of them is like identifying with an object of consciousness and forgetting its elusive nature. Nevertheless, each can offer a glimpse into the otherworldly aspects of consciousness, allowing us to engage with aspects of our subjective experience that do not have correlatives in reality, such as death, power, chaos, order, peace, and love. For humans, these aspects are as valuable, if not more valuable, than real objects.

As I write, the new *Harry Potter* TV series has been announced, which will once more adapt the original novels. The updates on the cast reach twenty, forty, and seventy thousand viewers on YouTube. The Harry Potter universe is a complex constellation of memes that has adapted to all media platforms and cultures and continues to do so. I have argued that its popularity stems from multiple factors, including New Age influences, transmediation, commodification, and marketing strategies that have resulted in a constant renewal of interest, producing an avalanche effect. Nevertheless, these factors only amplified its initial popularity. Had stories not produced a strong sense of empowerment in their readership, they would not be well received from the moment of their publication. Although critics like Gupta (2009), Zipes (2001) and Bernstein (1999) saw the sense of familiarity and security instilled by the novel's repetitive structure and its Disney-like powerless boy overcoming the forces of darkness as a cheap trick, the sense of empowerment that the novels and films provide makes them attractive to children and adults around the world even thirty years later.



## Publications, Conferences, and Grants

### Publications Pertaining to the Topic of the Dissertation

2025. "Yugoslav Theosophical Society." In *Theosophical History*. Copenhagen: Copenhagen Centre for the Study of Theosophy and Esotericism. ISSN: 0951-497X.
2025. "Evolutionary and Cognitive Underpinnings of Altruism in the Example of the *Harry Potter* Triwizard Tournament." In *nCognito: Cognitive Cultural Theory Papers: Moral Emotions in Fictional Reception* 4(1). Szeged: University of Szeged. (Forthcoming).
2024. "The 'Potter Formula' Revised: How the New Age Facilitated the Success of the Harry Potter Franchise." In *New Horizons in English and American Studies: Papers from the Doctoral Program*, 23-35. Szeged: University of Szeged, Institute of English and American Studies. ISBN (pdf) 978-963-688-029-3.
2023. "'Yer a Wizard:' How Fantasy Fiction Facilitates Playing with Emotions and Reinforces Magical Thinking." In *Childhood. Literature and Culture*, 5(2), 114-133. <https://doi.org/10.32798/dlk.1204>.
2024. "Universalism as a Factor in the Global Popularity of the Harry Potter Universe." *The ESSE Messenger*, Winter. Edited by Dr. Laura Esteban-Segura. ESSE. ISSN 2518-3567. (Forthcoming).

### Other Publications

2019. "Drama Života i Smrti: Ključ za Interpretaciju Poezije Branka Miljkovića" [The Theater of Life and Death: The Key for Interpreting Poetry of Branko Miljković]. In *Novi izraz: Časopis za Književnu i Umjetničku Kritiku* 73-74, 65-81. Sarajevo: P.E.N. Centar Bosne i Hercegovine. ISSN 1512-5335.
2017. "Kako interpretirati poeziju Branka Miljkovića" [How to Interpret Poetry of Branko Miljković]. In *Riječ i Smisao 3: Časopis za književnost Eseji, analize, studije, tumačenja, recenzije*, 15-29. Edited by Maja Abadžija. Sarajevo: Fond Otvoreno Društvo BiH. ISSN: 2233-1085. [https://www.skolegijum.ba/static/files/magazin/pdf/6066dcd6eae5c\\_Rijecismisao4.pdf](https://www.skolegijum.ba/static/files/magazin/pdf/6066dcd6eae5c_Rijecismisao4.pdf)
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2016. "Otpor Književnih Likova spram Institucija Moći u Pripovijetkama Petra Kočića" [The Resistance of Literary Characters towards Institutions of Power in Petar Kočić's Stories]. In *Международен Филологически Форум*, том 3: Светове и Събития. Edited by Veneta

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2014. "Odnos između Značenja i Forme na Primjeru Triju Poema Miloša Crnjanskog" [The Relationship Between Meaning and Form in the Example Miloš Crnjanski's Poems]. In *Časopis Studenata/ica Filozofskog Fakulteta Slovo* 2. Edited by Zerina Čopra. 87-95. Sarajevo: Studentska Asocijacija Filozofskog Fakulteta. ISSN 2303-551X.

## Conferences

2025. Szeged, Hungary. HUSSE Hungarian Society for the Study of English. *Evolutionary and Cognitive Underpinnings of Altruism in the Example of the Harry Potter Triwizard Tournament*.
2024. Szeged, Hungary. HAAS Hungarian Association for American Studies. "Harry Potter and the Crisis in the Religious Field: How Fantasy Fiction Became a Competitor to Religion."
2023. Milano, Italy. ESSE Doctoral Symposium. *Theory of Fantastic Playgrounds: Evolutionary Perspective on Fantastic Fiction*.
2023. Szeged, Hungary. Theatrum Mundi. *Evolutionary Origins of Performance and its Magical Representations in the Harry Potter Triwizard Tournament*. 2023. Pecs, Hungary. The University of Pecs Doctoral Symposium in British, Irish, and American Literatures in English. *Why Do We Need Fantastic Stories?*
2023. Miskolc, Hungary. 16th Biennial Conference of the Hungarian Society for the Study of English. *Universalism as a Factor in the Rise of the Harry Potter Culture*.
2022. Szeged, Hungary. Short Forms Beyond Medial Borders Symposium. *Hogwarts: Somewhere to Belong*.
2022. Mainz, Germany. European Society for the Study of English (ESSE). *The Allure of the Harry Potter Universe: A Biocultural Perspective*.
2022. Budapest, Hungary. 15th Biennial Conference of the Hungarian Society for the Study of English. *A Rise of Magic in a Biocultural Perspective: The Wizarding World of Harry Potter*

2015. Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Literature of Meetings. *Interpretation of the Hermetic Poem*.
2014. Sofia, Bulgaria. International Philology Forum for Students and Doctoral Students. *The Resistance of Literary Characters to the Institutions of Power in Stories by Petar Kočić*.
2014. Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Role of University in Peace Building.

### **Grants and Awards**

- 2023-2025 Excellence Scholarship, EUR 250/month
- 2023 ESSE (The European Society for the Study of English) Doctoral Symposium, EUR 500
- 2023 ESSE (The European Society for the Study of English) Travel Bursary, EUR 1800
- 2023 HUSSE (The Hungarian Society for the Study of English) Travel Bursary, EUR 800
- 2023 Erasmus zero-grant
- 2023 Doctoral School for Literatures and Cultures bursary, EUR 500
- 2022 ESSE (The European Society for the Study of English) Doctoral Symposium, EUR 500
- 2021-2025 Stipendium Hungaricum, ca. EUR 500/month
- 2019-2020 Central European University Scholarship, ca. EUR 200/month