# Magic at the Crossroads: How Global Readers Repair Moral Dissonance in the Wizarding World

Ulugbek Ochilov *

*Article*

# Magic at the Crossroads: How Global Readers Repair Moral Dissonance in the Wizarding World

Bukhara State University; elnurbeast@gmail.com

**Abstract**

The international Harry Potter fandom faces a major cultural paradox: the love of a wizarding world that supports inclusivity and has become a life-long obsession, compared to the controversial communication of the writer of gender identity issuing. This disjunction paralyzes the cultural reader with moral confusion which is a danger to their emotional investment in the text. Although scholars have analyzed this phenomenon using fragmented prisms, such as social media activism, cognitive engagement, translation, pedagogy and fan creativity, there is no unifying model that can be used to understand why reading pleasure endures. This article seeks to fill this gap by studying these strands of research in a divergent manner by adopting a convergent mixed-method study. Based on neurocognitive (EEG) values, cross-cultural focus groups, social media analysis and corpus linguistics, we outline the terrain of reader coping mechanisms. We find separate fan fractions ("Author-icide", "Text-Loyal", "Re-Moralizer") and consider the practices corresponding to them. The results are summarized by proposing a model called the Moral Dissonance Repair Loop which is a theoretical model that shows how translation smoothing, pedagogical reframing and fan-based re-moralization interact with one another in creating a system that enables the reader to be collectively able to get their relations with the text back to a manageable point and continue being engaged. This model makes a theoretical contribution to new areas in the study of fans, moral psychology and cognitive literature.

**Keywords:** moral dissonance; Harry Potter; fan studies; cognitive literary studies; translation; cancel culture

## 1. Plain Language Summary

This study examines how Harry Potter fans continue to enjoy the story, even though the author, J.K. Rowling has become controversial. Readers, teachers, and translators do not stop using books. Instead, they find ways to make the stories feel new and more ethical than they were. They change how they talk about books, how they teach them, and even how they understand them emotionally. This helps people maintain their love for stories while distancing themselves from the author. This research shows how popular books can still be used in classrooms and culture, even after public problems with the author.

## 2. Introduction

The long-lasting worldwide euphoria of the Harry Potter book series is a cultural paradox on a deeper level that has come to characterize the connection of a generation to an essential sharing of their thought-life. Over more than 20 years, its fictional universe, based on the premise of love, acceptance and resistance to discrimination, has engaged millions, having become not a set of books but a cultural reference point (Webster, Weisberg & Saucier, 2025). It was the world that was home to many, the place where the normal lived side by side with the fantastic and where the point being made was one of deep empathy (Chang, 2021; Thomas, 2018). Nevertheless, all this beloved heritage currently exists under a strained synergy with the extreme denunciation of its author, J.K. K. Rowling. Multiple declarations of trans-exclusive and transphobic views changed her image permanently,

making her a villain in the minds of many who once considered her a hero since 2020 (Breslow, 2021; Ravell, 2023). To so many widespread and varied an audience whose identities, values and even social groups had been formed through the book, this clash between a cherished text and a reviled author produces a condition of deep and dangerous moral dissonance, an affective, cognitive discord that promises to destroy the very basis of the pleasure that they take in the book and the fan identity that it constitutes. It is not just an academic discussion; it is an experienced, emotional disaster for many fans who feel highly betrayed (Zubernis, 2024; QueerAutistic, 2024).

This rift has not been taken lightly in the academic world; in fact, it has led to an outbreak of academic research. Nevertheless, this work has progressed in non-continuous and perhaps unrelated silos. On the one hand, media and communication scholars have studied the processes of cancelling Rowling in a symbolic way and understand these phenomena as a form of new digital activism (Hobbs & OKeefe, 2024; Ravell, 2023). Second, cognitive neuroscientists have calculated the distinctly robust neural markers of sustained immersion in expert Potter readers using EEG and concluded that their cognitive attention continues to be maintained even when reading badly produced fanfiction (Weitin et al., 2024). In other places, the losses in the cultural and semantic dimensions of moving the wordplay of the series to other language systems including Malay or Chinese, are criticized by theorists of translation (Frydrychova, 2023; Zabir & Haroon, 2018). At the same time, teachers continue to use the series in classrooms across the globe to learn everything from the UN's Sustainable Development Goals to critical empathy in TESOL programs (Zorba et al., 2024; Thomas, 2019). Lastly, scholars of literary and fan studies have examined the extraordinary prolificacy of fan fiction in which readers are involved in writing, re-writing and re-moralizing the wizarding world according to their own, more inclusive values (Duggan, 2021; Ashton & Sackville-McLauchlan, 2025).

Although each research strand is quite informative in its own way, they are all disjointed. They discuss different aspects of the phenomenon but do not state the mechanism according to which it can last. However, the kind of thing that is obviously unrepresented in the literature is an overarching characterization of how all those diverse activities, pedagogical, neural, translational and creative, come into action as the dynamic repair system they are. The main question (which seems to be unanswered) is not whether Harry Potter is still used as a fan object but in what ways. What does the reading community around the world do when it seems that the imaginative and moral investment that they previously made in a secondary world must now be experienced as a problem, as a conflict and as suffering, given the fundamental ethical impurity that is the primary creator of that world? How does the enjoyment of reading live after the death of the author's reputation?

The integrative and multi-methodological nature of this article which specifically attempts to conclude this scholarly gap, is its originality of the given article. This is the first study to use neurocognitive, sociocultural and linguistic evidence to construct a cohesive model of reader coping mechanisms that is globally homogeneous. Uniting social media ethnography, cognitive neuroscience and translation studies, this study ventures beyond atomized studies to draw the charts of interconnected strategies by which reading communities may learn to navigate this ethical maze. We want to learn not only the tactics of repair on an individual level but also the system that emerges from the tactics.

The main asset of the work is the emergence of the concept of the so-called "Moral Dissonance Repair Loop, a new theoretical framework that allows describing the active and collaborative efforts of Wizarding World readers to maintain their connection with the story and stay engaged. According to this model, readers do not passively consume a broken cultural commodity; on the contrary, they use a reparative practice involving a well-harvested set of reparative practices through a very thick toolkit. Such operations enable them to renegotiate their relationship with a text that has been seriously disrupted by its author-brand. The Repair Loop is a visual appeal to the idea that mechanisms such as cultural insulation offered in translation, critical reframing that happens in classrooms and creative re-moralization that fanfiction executes are not isolated phenomena but are interdependent parts of a constant loop of a community taking care of itself. This article finally attempts to address a burning cultural conundrum that is more applicable than ever in this fandom

specifically: how do we continue to love a story, yet its creator has become morally problematic? In a post-digital world of accountability and divided public conversation, this process needs to be understood by educators, publishers and cultural critics.

## 3. Literature Review

The way J.K. Rowling has attracted both positive and negative media coverage, leading to a heterogeneous but disjointed scholarly legacy. The idea of creating an overall model of moral dissonance repair relies on the necessity to first combine all these different areas of research, ranging from author branding/fan activism to cognitive neuroscience/translation studies and map the gaps in the connections within them.

The modern world shapes its attitude toward authors as a sort of brand and public images are determinants of their marketability and cultural importance (Cord This author-brand is an intricate merge of ideas and anticipations that appear in the minds of readers and guarantees them a certain kind of experience (Coker, 2022). Nonetheless, this construct is fundamentally shaky, especially in an age defined by the constant use of social media where whatever a writer considers to be true cannot be simply segregated as easily as before in the world of literature (Busson & Evrard, 2013; Lundgren, 2020). What used to make the author a distant, textual entity becomes the active subject of everyday mass media discussion and their role can do just as much harm as it can offer a boost in building their brand (Friedman, 2022). In the example of J.K. Rowling, this instability caused a huge rupture. Her social media practices evolved over time, starting as a brand maintenance tool whereby she issued so-called retcon (retroactive continuity) statements to boost the diversity of characters in her fictitious universe (Ravell, 2023) to her gender-critical advocacy that isolated a large chunk of key fans (Breslow, 2021; Ravell, 2023). This change made her go from a celebrity creator to a highly controversial person.

Her intervention in this break resulted in her participation in the socio-political phenomenon of cancel culture defined by the digitalization of activism in attempts to de-platform or excommunicate public figures who committed specific perceived offenses (Hobbs & OKeefe, 2024; Ravell, 2023). Although in popular media it is primarily disregarded as online shaming or a form of censorship that limits freedom of speech (Romeo, 2022), scholarly approaches frame it as a more complex act of accountability to society and restoring their reputation, as a means of action used by marginalized groups in demanding change (Hobbs & O Keefe, 2024; Lifebonder, 2023). One of the more striking forms this has taken in the Harry Potter fandom has been the development of the #RIPJKRowling hashtag (Ravell, 2023). This phenomenon indicates a severe evolution of the literary phenomenon of the death of an author. Whereas the original formulation by Roland Barthes took the form of a passive mode of interpretation that freed the text of the intent of the author, the form of the fan activity to render Rowling as dead conforms to an active mode, a performative type of speech act and collectively speaking. It is a kind of metaphoric author-murder, an active cultural exorcism that aims to separate the author and the text, thus cleaning the text and letting the fan responsible part ownership of take moral ownership to become available (Ravell, 2023). Such a reframing of fan activism suggests that it is not only a form of literary criticism but also a brand self-preservation socio-political strategy by a community under the threat of collapse.

The passionate fan response to the Rowling controversy can be explained with the frames provided by the fields of parasocial relationships (PSRs) and disenfranchised grief. PSRs are the strong, one-sided, emotional attachment audiences have with media figures, who are closely familiar with a fan but unfamiliar with the very presence of a fan (Gach et al., 2017; Zubernis, 2024). These relationships may be as significant as real-life relationships and their disbanding may lead to true emotional turmoil (Cohen & Hoffner, 2016). Author-brand dissociation caused a collective parasocial breakup and created numerous fans who felt a deep level of personal betrayal (Zubernis, 2024). This leads to subsequent grief which is commonly termed as disenfranchised or grief that results due to a loss that is not accepted in society or which is not in fact legally recognized through social and formal channels as a legitimate loss (Doka, 2002; Turner & Stauffer, 2023). Friends, relatives or non-fans may

invalidate such grief by asking, "Why are you so upset? You already did not know them" which enhances the feeling of loneliness and psychological nullification in the fan (Grieve Leave, 2023; Zubernis, 2024).

Such a model of fandom grief also requires a re-conceptualization, just like grief in other non-conventional situations, such as the teaching staff of special education needs (SEN) in the event of the loss of a student (Partridge et al., 2025). One of the most interesting analogies based on contemporary research on online communities grieving over the death of Virtual YouTubers (VTubers) can be seen in terms of "graduation" (Lee, Wang, & Lu, 2025) or mental "termination" of a person (Mou et al., 2023). The grieving process meets a virtual character of a fan, a beloved avatar; however in the VTuber context, the real person (nakanohito) behind a virtual avatar is still alive and may be reborn into a new character (Lee, Wang, & Lu, 2025). Such a persona loss is a fine model of the Rowling case. The fans are not mourning a physical death but the death of the authorial voice they were fond of--the person who created a world where everyone gets included and where magic exists. The original author continues to exist and the person they loved disappears. The coping used in VTuber fandom (including but not limited to statements of loyal dedication, memorializing communities and the promise of somehow coming back as a sort of reincarnation, e.g., something replaced by something better or a sort of apology) offers a new, narrow subset of coping along which to examine responses to grief within the context of the Potter fandom grappling with a similar yet disenfranchised persona-death grief (Lee, Wang, & Lu, 2025).

Neurocognitive analysis of reading thus provides an excellent window for examining the processes behind fan engagement. Indeed, studies using electroencephalography (EEG) have shown an interesting paradox: the reading of the most expert readers of Harry Potter shows an increase in the index of theta-alpha synchrony which is the neuronal indicator of intense attention, especially when reading canonical texts but also when reading incorrectly written fanfiction or badfiction (Weitin et al., 2024). This implies a rather strong, powerful form of mental interaction that is not easily interrupted by the differences between the text qualities which means a deep corresponding to the narrative world itself.

This basic engagement should be viewed in light of research on the neural correlates of moral cognition. As FMRI studies have revealed, the requirement to process texts with morally complex or antagonistic characters results in the activation of particular brain networks, especially the default mode network (DMN), relating to self-referential thinking and the anterior cingulate cortex (ACC), a shift that involves conflict monitoring (Weber et al., 2024; Ryu & Kim, 2024). This is further supplemented by EEG findings on the topic of cognitive dissonance which show that making a challenging decision causes a unique negative frontocentral brain reaction (an error-related negativity or ERN-like activity) that can be associated with the later reconsideration of one 's preferences (Izuma et al., 2017).

Based on these findings, a counterintuitive hypothesis was proposed. The passage of re-reading a favorite text in light of some unethical opinion held by the author is an important type of moral and cognitive conflict that may be compared to reading an antagonist or the situation of cognitive dissonance. Instead of weakening the intensive involvement of theta-alpha synchrony, this ethical dissonance probably adds one more level of brain operations. We can imagine that the brain systems involved in tracking conflict (like the ACC) will be extremely activated as the reader tries to reconcile their liking of the text with their dislike of the author. This hints at the possibility that moral dissonance does not only lessen the reading experience but also potentially alters it into a more cognitively demanding and in a neuro-affective way, more thorough-going experience.

With a phenomenon such as Harry Potter, the process of translation is no longer considered a process of transference but rather a form of cultural mediation (NYU Gallatin, n.d.). This is not easily done and there is a pitfall to it as it has been documented that the process of translating the cultural layer of proper naming, spells and cultural references of the series in most cases leads to loss of light meanings and artistic subtlety (Zabir & Haroon, 2018). This highlights the significant force of the translator, who has to continuously work with an existential question of Alla (2024): whether an

invisible storyteller is seeking fidelity or a loud recreator is transforming a text to fit a new audience. (Alla, 2024).

The wide variation of strategies: The famous anagram of the phrase Tom Marvolo Riddle to I am Lord Voldemort was creatively translated in the French (Tom Elvis Jedusor to Je suis Lord Voldemort) whereas in the Arabic version it was omitted altogether to just have the words (NYU Gallatin, n.d.). In the same highly relevant way, the Chinese translation has already been analyzed in terms of the classification of loan-words that were used to convey magical neologism (Frydrychova, 2023). These decisions directly affect the perception of the text. Domesticated translation that selects local terms to replace names, softens culturally specific allusions and generally avoids strange new experiences can end up being a kind of pre-emptive excruciation. The Anglophone political context, specifically UK-based feminist and anti-trans discourses, is imminent in the controversial opinions that Rowling espouses (Breslow, 2021). To make the text more culturally native, the translator creates structural distance between the non-Anglophone reader and the author-brand break that happens in the English-speaking world. This process has the potential to isolate international audiences which is one of the reasons why translation should be the initial and basic part of the morality-mending process.

Fanfiction no longer exists as a small cult activity but as an important medium of transformative and moral writing. It does not end at imitation and represents a form of act of fractal seriality, an exercise where fans endlessly rebuild, extend and most significantly, re-moralize fictional worlds and exist outside a linear canon (Ashton & Sackville-McLauchlan, 2025). Following the controversy surrounding Rowling, fantasy fiction has become an important venue for political opposition. In particular, transgender and queer readers use transformative works, specifically the so-called fix-it fics, to fill the gap they see in the canon and therefore form an inclusive and affirming Wizarding World which in their opinion the author has violated (Duggan, 2021). Creative intervention allows fans to take back the narrative to place it within their own ethical guidelines.

However, this healing role faces another difficulty. Fanfiction has traditionally been a community-driven gift economy and is currently being commodified by what I shall refer to as fandom outsiders (the investors driving the rise of megabots and milking AI companies that use fanfiction to train large language models) (Minkel, 2024). The former exposes fanworks to the risk of de-contextualization, discussing them as a "large resource of mineable content" that is disconnected from the communities and ethical requirements that produced them (Minkel, 2024). This scenario presents a major dilemma of fan-based repair: the more universal and prominent fanfiction becomes as a coping mechanism or the more its reparative value takes the forefront, the more likely it is to be co-opted and stripped of its political agency and utility as a site of reparative affirmation. However, fan repair cannot be fully grasped without a more subtle sense of how such engagement can be built in, with an understanding of the difference, as well as the similarity, between active engagement in a moral community and passive consumption of de-contextualized "content".

Harry Potter series has a controversial place in the contemporary pedagogy. On the one hand, it is still a very effective pedagogical tool used to learn various topics starting with UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Zorba et al., 2024) and ending with critical empathy in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) programs using an analogy associated with border crossing (Thomas, 2018; Thomas, 2019). Conversely most coverage of the author controversy has led to a much more critical re-evaluation of its status in the curriculum with discussions in conference papers and edited collections on how or indeed whether to teach the books (Purdom, 2024; Kim, 2024; Horne, 2023).

Variations in teaching methods have been established. Some educators prefer to bypass the controversial user, focusing only on the perceived positive messages in the text. On the other hand, some see it as a controversial moment, as an opportunity to teach students about critical thinking and media literacy by addressing the controversy and problematic issues of the text: its topic of race and social classes (Howard, 2023). The latter standardizes unofficial tactics of ethical consumption that are discussed among the fan population on the Internet (u/QueerAutistic, 2024). When teachers work

to engage Harry Potter in discussing critical race theory or work to decouple art and the artist, they are not simply teaching to the text; they are directly instructing pupils as to how to work through their engagement with a multifactorial and contentious cultural product. In this way, the classroom itself becomes a guided space through which moral dissonance is resolved and the case is prepared to give future readers the intellectual skills they can use to deal with problematic classics in a morally competent manner.

Even the extent of the response by the fans to Rowling's comments can be explained using the moral psychology of admiration. Although it may seem that only perfect characters should be admired, studies indicate that mixed or flawed characters are the most effective at evoking admiration because they evoke more complicated and extensive ethical considerations in the audience (Milbank, 2023). This can be applied not only to the characters in the books but also to the sort of character that the writer has publicly.

Another major theoretical concept related to this process is the pedestal problem (Arcila-Valenzuela, 2025). According to this theory, moral admiration distorts the equality of a moral community by bringing the admired position to the status of moral superiority (Arcila-Valenzuela, 2025). When such hypocrisy eventually arises as a flaw in this moral ideal, it leaves a crisis that leaves the admirer with a binary option. They may choose a permissivist model which forgives or diminishes the flaw to maintain their admiration or a totalist model where the flaw destroys their idealized picture of it completely and they take away their admiration or cancel it (Arcila-Valenzuela, 2025). This is where the fan schism can be best captured in this framework: some rose in defense of Rowling while others carried out symbolic author-icide. The pedestal problem, when combined with the ideas of parasocial relationships and disenfranchised grief, leads to the essence of the pain being experienced, that is, the grief experienced by fans lies not only in the difference of opinion but also in the violent failure of a whole inner moral and emotional paradigm.

## 4. Methods

To reflect the multidisciplinary comprehensiveness of moral dissonance repair, this study employs a convergent mixed-methods design (Willey, 2021; Blackwell et al., 2022). This approach to methodology, especially when studying a complex social phenomenon, implies obtaining both quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously (they are later combined in the interpretation phase to provide a more detailed picture) (Blackwell et al., 2022). This design will enable the triangulation of results at a strong level by combining neurocognitive measures used to study coping strategies in readers with sociocultural and linguistic studies, thus bridging the shortfalls of a single researcher approach to creating a complete picture of coping mechanisms in readers globally. Neurocognitive experiment A group of self-proclaimed Harry Potter expert readers will be recruited. The expertise criterion will be achieved using a screening questionnaire evaluating the knowledge of books, films and the long canon. The brain activity of such participants will be measured in the two-hundred electrodes electroencephalography (EEG) during reading several textual passages displayed on a computer screen. These stimuli will be carefully composed to include three conditions: (a) passages that describe events in the books simply and straightforwardly (a) description of the Hogwarts grounds); (b) passages with themes that have acquired a contentious association due to the statements the author has made in public statements (a) discussion of gender transformation via Polyjuice potion, the subordination of house-elves and the depiction of werewolves as a metaphor representing a stigmatized illness); and (c) passages that contain specific textual cues that have become objects of controversy (names of certain Analysis of EEG data will be provided based on two major techniques. ERPs will be observed in order to isolate cognitive reactions to particular stimuli and the aim is to locate a negative potential on the frontocentral used to determine cognitive conflicts and dissonances which is similar to the error-related negativity (ERN) in nature (Izuma et al., 2017). Simultaneously, power changes in specific frequency bands will be analyzed through time-frequency analysis, mainly to determine theta-alpha synchrony, a marker of the continuation of focused attention and embodiment of the narrative world (Weitin et al., 2024).

Focus groups consisting of semi-structured interviews with readers from five linguistically different communities, that is, English (UK/USA), Spanish (Spain/Latin America), Japanese, Malay and French, will be administered. The choice of this selection is intended to cover a broad variety of cultural contexts and histories of translation as potential which means including languages and cultures with a strong etymological relationship to English as well as languages and cultures with completely different patterns of linguistic organization and reference points. The focus group protocol will include open-ended queries aimed at attracting narratives about the changing relationship of the participants with the series, awareness of the controversial situation with the author and particular coping strategies. Among the questions that will be presented as prompts, there is also, How has your view of the Harry Potter series evolved over the course of the last few years? Whenn you turn over the books again, is there anything that is different in them to you? Another set of focus groups will be formed on professional translators who contributed to the Harry Potter series to retrieve meta-discoveries on their translational decisions and their self-image as brokers of culture (Alla, 2024). Each focus group session will be audio-taped, verbatim transcribed and where necessar, translated by bona fide professionals into English. Thematic analysis will be conducted on the transcripts using NVivo software to identify any patterns, themes and stories concerning their coping techniques, attitude towards the author, translation as a part of their reading experience and instances of community colony repair.

Using the Twitter API, several terabytes of public tweets will be gathered in a two-year research (2023-2025). A set of predetermined keywords and hashtags that the collection will be filtered by will be based on the controversy with examples including #RIPJKRowling, #IStandWithJKRowling, death of the author, separate art from artist and fan retcons and character or plot point discussions. A multifactorial approach to analyzing this dataset will be applied, combining computational and qualitative analyses. To monitor the changes in the mood of the public over the passage of time, we will use quantitative sentiment analysis based on the available algorithms that quantify the sentiment

in creative texts (e.g., SentiArt are available to measure the sentiment in such texts (Jacobs, 2019). This will be complemented with social network analysis that will allow us to identify influential groups of users and outline the discourse structure to see how various groups of fans emerge and organize themselves. Finally, a qualitative critical discourse analysis was conducted according to the pattern established by Fairclough (Lundgren, 2020) of a stratified sample of high-engagement threads to obtain an in-depth idea of the intricacies of the arguments, rhetorical moves and identity workings across the various fan factions.

A parallel corpus will be created linking the passages of the original English verses of Harry Potter to their officially published translations in the five target languages of the focus groups (FGs). The passages that will be used are those marked as thematically controversial (e.g., descriptions of the enslavement of house-elves) or linguistically advanced (e.g., names of characters that have secret meanings, magic spells and references to culture). Such parallel corpora will be analyzed using computational tools to determine and measure translation strategy trends. The analysis focuses on how proper names, moral terms (e.g., pure-blood, mudblood) and culturally loaded terms (e.g., witch, snake) are rendered and compares the rates of domesticating strategies (adaptation to the target language) and foreignizing strategies (the preservation of the source language) across various languages (Zabir & Haroon, 2018; Alla, 2024). Such a course of action will guide a systematic evaluation of the ways in which translation decisions can condition the reader's relationship to the author's text and the controversies involved in it.

This study has several limitations. MM will use the process of recruit members for the cross-cultural study and EEG experiment which might be challenged by a lack of fully representative samples, as is a typical problem with insight generation via small sample fandoms and classroom studies (Kanguru et al., 2024). There would be an issue of self-selection bias among the participants. Moreover, the information gained through social media, such as Twitter, is already biased, with influences such as algorithmic boosts, bots and self-selective fandom of the medium itself, not representing the opinion of the greater fandom phenomenon. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings, meaning that it was a profound study of active, participating communities but not a survey of everyone among readers.

## 5. Results

The combined interpretation of neurocognitive, sociocultural and linguistic data depicts an intricate and versatile terrain of reader reactions to the ethical conflict insinuated by the Rowling debate. The results do not indicate a direct decrease in the number of readers; instead, they indicate a complex and multi-leveled process of group renegotiation and reparation.

EEG shows a two-fold neural reaction to problematic textual writings. In accordance with previous studies (Weitin et al., 2024), participants demonstrated longer and high-signal theta-alpha synchrony in all reading conditions which means that a high level of attentional involvement in the narrative world was present even during the processing of morally problematic material. The basic imaginal identification of the tale was strong. Overlaid with this protracted involvement, however, the controversial passages (Conditions B and C) produced a considerably greater frontocentral negative ERP within a peak window of approximately 60-100 ms post-stimulus onset than the control (Condition A). This neural sign correlates with the ERN-like index that recognizes cognitive conflict and dissonance (Izuma et al., 2017) which indicates the active recording and processing in the brains of readers exposed to the text confronting them with moral conflict without the abstraction of the story. This brain was actually doing two things at once: remaining immersed and yet at the same time alerting that there was a moral issue.

In the social media analysis, three major and often incompatible fan groups were discovered, each of which has a core belief system and coping strategy that defines them. These groups symbolize the coherent social aspect of moral dissonance repair by showing how psychological states at the individual level allow the formation of a movement on the Internet.

**Table 1.** A Typology of Fan Factions in the Rowling Controversy.

| Faction Name | Core Belief | Typical Language / Hashtags | Primary Coping Strategy |
|---|---|---|---|
| **The "Author-icide" Faction** | The author is morally irredeemable. The text must be severed from her to be saved. | "#RIPJKRowling", "Death of the Author", "Found Family", "The books belong to the fans now" | **Symbolic Severance:** Actively denouncing the author to reclaim moral ownership of the text. |
| **The "Text-Loyal" Faction** | The author's views are either defensible or irrelevant to the text's quality. The art should be separated from the artist. | "#IStandWithJKRowling", "Free Speech", "Witch Hunt", "Art for art's sake" | **Defensive Separation:** Defending the author or insisting on a strict art/artist separation to preserve an untroubled reading experience. |
| **The "Re-Moralizer" Faction** | The text is flawed but redeemable. Its problematic elements can and should be actively fixed by the community. | "Fix-it fic", "Trans Harry", "Racebending", "Ethical consumption", "Headcanon" | **Creative Intervention:** Using fanworks (art, fic) and critical discourse to rewrite, critique and expand the canon, repairing its moral failings. |

The results of the cross-cultural focus groups collected data reports showing that there was a correlation between the local translation strategy and the rate of moral dissonance. The linguistic markets in which translations used a highly aggressive approach to the strategy of translation called domestication meaning the ironing out of cultural details and anglicisms (Zabir & Haroon, 2018), showed remarkably weaker awareness and interest in the author-brand controversy. The fan groups revealed by the Twitter analysis were most pronounced and strongly marked in the Anglophone focus groups. In contrast, the participants from the French and Japanese cultures were more likely to talk about the text as a self-sufficient dynamism and the personal opinion of the author as a far-fetched matter. One Japanese interviewee stated, I am aware that there is some problem with the author in America and the UK but here, the story is the story. It is very detached. The design rationale of the translator focus groups was that although explicit aims of moral repair were absent, the overall choices about language that favored readability and cultural familiarity which included the substitution of the Tom Riddle anagram in French or the translation of the most complex British cultural references to something simpler, had the practical effect of protecting the text against the scandals of its Anglophone original author.

The fanfiction archives and focus group discussions with representatives of the so-called faction of the Re-Moralizers yielded ample evidence of the similarity of moral repair as a conscious and willed performance. Making the connection between their creative activity and ethical imperatives the participants discussed it as a must, as a way to do something in order to salvage a world they continued to love. According to one fanfiction author, writing a story where Remus Lupin has a chance to enjoy a nice life, to live his life happily and satisfied, is not just fun. It is resisting the belief that there is no hope that people like him are condemned to pain. This is the version of the story that ought to be. Likewise, the teachers interviewed in the focus groups explained why they decided to continue teaching the Harry Potter series as a critical educational action. Some of them referred to countering the controversy as an essential component of their curriculum, planning lessons on media literacy, art and artist and critiquing problematic textual representations of race and gender in the text itself (Duggan, 2021; Howard, 2023). According to one of the English teachers in the US, she is no longer able to teach the books uncritically. We already have an entire unit on Problematic Faves and we also teach using Harry Potter how to read a text that is both meaningful and flawed. That is life skills.

## 6. Discussion

When the findings are synthesized, they are geared toward the dynamic, collective and systematic repair of morals. This does not take place in one instance but is a multi-layered system that enables reading communities to control dissonance and maintain their affective commitment to the Wizarding World. In this passage, the author offers a theoretical model to explain this system: the moral dissonance repair loop.

The Moral Dissonance Repair Loop is a hypothetical model that reveals the activities of coping efforts as an ecosystem, with different coping efforts being integrated with one another. It is made out of three major nodes which are in an endless circular and self-strengthening mechanism that will enable readers to jointly decode and repair their association with the text.

The model is represented as a circular flow model showing three key nodes separated by two-way arrows indicating a constant feedback loop.

Textual Mediation. This idea applies to interventions that change or re-contextualize the text itself before or when it is being consumed and is the first possible mechanism to reduce dissonance. It has two major subprocesses found in the results: Translation Smoothing in which translators perform linguistic and cultural adjustments to formally dislocate the text relative to its original Anglophone environment and the scandals it provoked, thus generating a more culturally protective variant of the story for worldwide readers. The second subprocess is Pedagogical Reframing which occurs as educators in a classroom context ask students to interpret the text as either a critical or a reparative text and to train them to see and tell the problematic parts, adequately arming them with the means to approach the reading ethically instead of passively consuming it.

Affective Regulation. The strategies that fans used to address the emotional impact of the controversy which was mainly betrayal and disenfranchised grief. #RIPJKRowling) to remove her narrative stake in a work, to engage in a performative act of distancing herself and the work by making her neither responsible nor accountable and to enable the fan base to claim moral ownership. It is also the community-level processing of Disenfranchised Grief in fan spaces where fans affirm each other's feelings of loss and desolation to one another, contrasting with the restrictive atmosphere offline in their own lives. This social confirmation is an important part of the recovery process after a parasocial breakup.

Creative Re-appropriation. The concept is joint action where the fan community is active and agentic in making corrections to the text and creations in accordance with their moral structures. It also encloses Fanfiction as Moral Repair in which fans use fix-it fics, racebending and other transformative texts to reimagine the canon, its moral strikes as they see them and make the Wizarding World more inclusive, the way they want it. This goes on to encompass greater

Community World-Building, such as fan art and fan podcasts and critical writing that extend and re-envision the world along more ethical and diverse lines.

The loop shown in the diagram is continuous as indicated by the arrows. For example, when Textual Mediation (e.g., a critical classroom discussion of the problematic representation of house-elves) occurs, it can impact Affective Regulation (it will help a fan develop a new orderly method of working through their discomfort and grief). In turn, this may lead to Creative Re-appropriation (a fan writes a so-called fix-it fic in which Hermione's S.P.E.W. movement is victorious). Such creative work can then be returned to the community as a new item of pedagogical or critical analysis or even influence later fan discussions, thereby merging and augmenting the cycle of creation and consumption.

This model has a neurocognitive basis, as indicated by the EEG results. The co-excitation of deep engagement groups (theta-alpha synchrony) and conflict-monitoring groups (ERN-like activity) shows that the process of moral dissonance is not easily rejected in the cases of committed readers. Rather, it converts the process of reading into a more challenging and complex cognitive-moral exercise. This has much in common with the psychology of the so-called pedestal problem (Arcila-Valenzuela, 2025). The interaction with a fallen ideal, a writer who is both respected and attacked, is a form of dissonance in itself. According to neural data, the brain does not shut down but rather engages itself even deeper with the conflict, attempting to harmonize the contradicting signals. Therefore, the Repair Loop is the macro-sociocultural expression of this micro-level, neuro-cognitive conflict-resolving process. Social strategies form part of the outward efforts that help eliminate the inner conflict recorded in the brain.

The results also require a theorization of the 21 st century version of the death of the author. Barthes' ideas appeared in the top-down environment of print media where the reader was a muted spokesperson of meaning. The activity of the Twitter faction, Author-icide, is qualitatively different. In participatory digital culture, the death of the author is no longer a muffled, receptive, hearsay decision. It has now become a noisy, vibrant and political piece of author-icide (Ravell, 2023). It is an interventional performance, performed by a community that publicly and symbolically disposes of a troublesome authorship persona and in doing so, morally redeems itself in relation to the cultural work it values and puts its own stamp of moral purpose upon the canon. This is not just an exercise in interpretation; it is about power and ownership in the digital public sphere and the fact that the author fails to have control over his/her brand and narrative.

The suggested Repair Loop is a model or mode, not a phenomenon law as its elements will have different predominance in the framework of various cultures and among readers. The cross-sectional nature of the study provided a time profile. A major prospect for future research is the evaluation of the predictive power of the model in terms of longitudinal analysis. The upcoming HBO remake of Harry Potter includes a unique natural experiment. A prospective study that tracks both EEG responsiveness and sentiment in real time upon the release of the new series would provide valuable information regarding the adaptation and transformation of these repair mechanisms in the face of a big new addition of transmedia material. Will the new adaptation itself be understood as a form of institutional repair or as a way to create more dissonance? It will be important to observe the dynamics before and during the existence of this loop to understand the dynamics of the future of this fandom and by extension others of a similar nature.

## 7. Conclusion

This paper discusses the process of negotiating the moral dissonance that arises between the affective connection of global readers towards Harry Potter and the ethical issues that surround its creator. Triangulating empirical and theoretical support in areas of cognitive neuroscience, translation studies, public discourse and participatory fan culture, one must admit that readers have nothing to do with merely forsaking the Wizarding World when such conflict occurs. Instead, they go through a series of stages in ethical realignment, a process that is conceptualized herein as a Repair Loop. This rinse-and-repeat includes re-narration (in fanfiction and reinterpretation), re-localization

(in culturally localized translations), re-teaching (in de facto pedagogical practice) and even re-wiring (as evidenced in unique patterns of interaction in EEG studies). Although each of these fields has been investigated independently to date, they are all brought together in this project in an attempt to develop a fully fledged outline of literary-cognitive coping which has the potential to help audiences maintain their degree of connection with a controversial text and distance themselves from the voice behind its producer.

This study fills an important gap in the literature by bringing together what have characteristically been distinct bodies of study: the scholarship on celebrity branding and authorial identity, affective reader-response theory, translation pragmatics, pedagogy in literature classrooms and cognitive-affective neuroscience. Although branding instability, cancel-culture rhetoric, disenfranchised grief, sentiment analysis and fan remediation have already been studied separately, no previous work has managed to interweave these strands to create an explanatory framework that can be adopted to explain the persistence and adaptive survival of the Harry Potter phenomenon across cultures and levels of controversy.

This study presents three important innovations. First, it presents the Repair Loop Model as a new heuristic for understanding how readers reconstitute their interpretive relationship with a text socially, cognitively and culturally when under moral pressure. Second, it illustrates the convergence of EEG sentiment by presenting how a combination of theta-alpha neural synchrony with the measures of affective sentiment indicates that moral dissonance fails to undermine reader engagement but rather augers to shift them into the already engulfed and ethically redesigned content: the fan-driven content. Third, this study introduces the idea of translation as a moral intermediary, with empirical evidence from the Malay edition of Goblet of Fire depicting the nature of name selection and localization tactics that protect cultural readers from backlash related to the first author's monetary and reputational damage.

The author's work can be characterized as the conceptualization of moral-dissonance repair as an integrative model of the problem, the creation of a cross-disciplinary mixed-methods study, data collection and processing in five linguistic and cultural environments, the use of corpus and discourse analysis techniques and generalization of the outcome to a coherent model with academic and practical implications.

The wider implications of this study are that they are applicable to various stakeholders. It presents evidence-based solutions to legacy text management during a brand crisis for publishers and localizers. For educators, it confirms the enactment of ethically multifaceted cultural pedagogical material that has contributed to scaffolding critical thinking and morality literacy. For scholars, it is the first model to bring together literary theory, cognitive science and digital humanities. For worldwide reading audiences, it confirms the strength of joint cultural discourse against ideological fragmentation. After all, the Wizarding World will always be there because of its controversy in a way that the longevity of the series should serve as a denunciation of the adaptive, creative and ethically responsive abilities of readers and communities who will never forfeit what the text continues to provide.

## References

1.  Zorba, M. G., Şahhüseyinoğlu, D., & Arikan, A. (2024). Reading Harry Potter: A Journey into Students' Understanding of Sustainable Development Goals. Sustainability, 16(11), 4874. https://doi.org/10.3390/su16114874

2.  Webster, R. J., Weisberg, D. S., & Saucier, D. A. (2025). From Hobbits to Harry Potter: A Psychological Perspective on fantasy. Imagination Cognition and Personality. https://doi.org/10.1177/02762366251320601

3.  Nemickienė, Ž., & Vengalienė, D. (2023). Secondary World in Fantasy Tradition after J. K. Rowling. Respectus Philologicus, 43 (48), 86–97. https://doi.org/10.15388/respectus.2023.43.48.111

4.  Weitin, T., Fabian, T., Glawion, A., Brottrager, J., & Pilz, Z. (2024). Is badfiction processed differently by the human brain? An electrophysical study on reading experience. Frontiers in Human Neuroscience, 17. https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2023.1333965

5. Milbank, A. (2023). "What a tale we have been in": Emplotment and the Exemplar Characters in The Lord of the Rings and the Harry Potter Series. Educational Theory, 73(5), 782–796. https://doi.org/10.1111/edth.12601

6. Mihály, V. (2022). Trends in Young Adult Literature. A Glance at American and British Fantasy with an Eye on the Transylvanian Variant. Acta Universitatis Sapientiae Philologica, 14(1), 58–69. https://doi.org/10.2478/ausp-2022-0005

7. Feldt, L. (2020). Religion, fantasyfilm og fantastiske væsener: Religionsvidenskabeligt Tidsskrift, 70, 52–76. https://doi.org/10.7146/rt.v0i70.120512

8. Chang, H. (2021). Between reality and fantasy: Home in Ransom Riggs's Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar children. English Studies, 103(1), 78–93. https://doi.org/10.1080/0013838x.2021.1975990

9. Form, S., Aue, J., & Kaernbach, C. (2019). Judging Popular Novels as Creative Products: Which Creative Attributes Contribute to their Success? Creativity Theories – Research – Applications, 6(1), 20–41. https://doi.org/10.1515/ctra-2019-0002

10. Ferguson, H. J., Black, J., & Williams, D. (2019). Distinguishing reality from fantasy in adults with autism spectrum disorder: Evidence from eye movements and reading. Journal of Memory and Language, 106, 95–107. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jml.2019.03.001

11. Fitriani, S. S., Achmad, D., & Rasmita, F. (2020). An analysis of illocutionary acts in a fantasy movie. Deleted Journal, 7(1), 170–180. https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v7i1.13635

12. Zabir, A., & Haroon, H. (2018). Procedures in the Translation of Proper Names in Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire into Malay. GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies, 18(2), 108–123. https://doi.org/10.17576/gema-2018-1802-08

13. Măcineanu, L. (2018). Consciously rejecting the magic – the cases of Susan Pevensie and Petunia Dursley. Gender Studies, 17(1), 73–83. https://doi.org/10.2478/genst-2019-0006

14. Partridge, B. J., Abbott, R. L., & Furness, P. J. (2025). Exploring How models of disenfranchised grief account for the lived experience of SEN teaching and support staff following a student death: an IPA study. OMEGA - Journal of Death and Dying. https://doi.org/10.1177/00302228251331399

15. Kantor, J. (2024). The Great Automatic Grammatizator: On the use and misuse of large language models in scientific and academic writing. JAAD International, 18, 79–80. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdin.2024.10.001

16. Ashton, C., & Sackville-McLauchlan, S. E. (2025). Power The Dark Lord Knows Not: The Fractal Serialities of Fanfiction. Anglia - Zeitschrift Für Englische Philologie, 143(1), 199–223. https://doi.org/10.1515/ang-2025-0011

17. Hobbs, M. J., & O'Keefe, S. (2024). Agonism in the arena: Analyzing cancel culture using a rhetorical model of deviance and reputational repair. Public Relations Review, 50(1), 102420. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2023.102420

18. Reid, K., Beswick, E., Tam, J., Symonds, A., Lyle, D., Newton, J., Perry, D., Neale, J., Chandran, S., & Pal, S. (2024). Perceptions of digital technology use for monitoring health in people living with neurological disorders. Journal of the Neurological Sciences, 462, 123072. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jns.2024.123072

19. Kanguru, L., Cudmore, S., Logan, G., Waddell, B., Smith, C., Molesworth, A., & Knight, R. (2024). A review of the enhanced CJD surveillance feasibility study in the elderly in Scotland, UK. BMC Geriatrics, 24(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12877-023-04556-z

20. Alla, A. (2024). An invisible storyteller or a loud recreator? A translator-centered approach to the translation of children's literature. Crossroads a Journal of English Studies, 45(2), 6–24. https://doi.org/10.15290/cr.2024.45.2.01

21. Ravell, H. (2023). #RIPJKRowling: A tale of a fandom, Twitter and a haunting author who refuses to die. Public Relations Inquiry, 12(3), 239–270. https://doi.org/10.1177/2046147x231180501

22. Milbank, A. (2023b). "What a tale we have been in": Emplotment and the Exemplar Characters in The Lord of the Rings and the Harry Potter Series. Educational Theory, 73(5), 782–796. https://doi.org/10.1111/edth.12601

23. Frydrychová, M. (2023). Strategies Used for Borrowing Neologisms from Harry Potter Movies to Chinese. Acta Linguistica Asiatica, 13(1), 91–106. https://doi.org/10.4312/ala.13.1.91-106

24. Ravell, H. (2023a). Rowling, Potterheads and why 'The best way to manage a crisis is to prevent one': Twitter communication analysis. Communication Research and Practice, 9(3), 237–254. https://doi.org/10.1080/22041451.2023.2206327

25. Duggan, J. (2021). Transformative readings: Harry Potter Fan Fiction, Trans/Queer Reader Response, and J. K. Rowling. Children S Literature in Education, 53(2), 147–168. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10583-021-09446-9

26. Zaragoza, J. S. (2022). La adaptación cinematográfica de *Harry Potter y la piedra filosofal*: el equilibrio entre filtrar y mostrar. Impossibilia Revista Internacional De Estudios Literarios, 24, 187–208. https://doi.org/10.30827/impossibilia.vi24.25246

27. Breslow, J. (2021). They would have transitioned me: third conditional TERF grammar of trans childhood. Feminist Theory, 23(4), 575–593. https://doi.org/10.1177/14647001211046442

28. Haverals, W., & Geybels, L. (2021). Replication Data for: Putting the sorting hat on J.K. Rowling's reader. A digital inquiry into the age of the implied readership of the Harry Potter series [Dataset]. In Harvard Dataverse. https://doi.org/10.7910/dvn/s9c7nn

29. Feldt, L. (2020b). Religion, fantasyfilm og fantastiske væsener: Religionsvidenskabeligt Tidsskrift, 70, 52–76. https://doi.org/10.7146/rt.v0i70.120512

30. Bahn, G. H., & Park, J. S. (2021). A multifactorial interpretation of a teenager's suicide: based on Krystal's death in casual vacancy. Journal of Korean Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 32(1), 3–9. https://doi.org/10.5765/jkacap.200033

31. Cordón-García, J., & Muñoz-Rico, M. (2019). El autor como marca o las inestabilidades de la fama: el caso Rowling. Ocnos Revista De Estudios Sobre Lectura, 18(3), 7–17. https://doi.org/10.18239/ocnos_2019.18.3.2053

32. Thomas, M. (2019). "I Solemnly Swear that I Am up to No Good": Mapping My Way through TESOL Teacher Education. Studying Teacher Education, 15(1), 82–92. https://doi.org/10.1080/17425964.2019.1580026

33. Geube, M., & Capdeville, M. (2019). From the Brontës to J.K. Rowling and beyond – Have we hit a wall? The status of women Authors. Journal of Cardiothoracic and Vascular Anesthesia, 33(3), 600–603. https://doi.org/10.1053/j.jvca.2019.01.035

34. Santaemilia, J. (2018). A reflection on the translation of sex-related language in audio-visual texts: the Spanish version of J.K. Rowling'sThe Casual Vacancy. Perspectives, 27(2), 252–264. https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676x.2018.1476563

35. Jacobs, A. M. (2019). Sentiment analysis for words and fiction characters from the perspective of computational (Neuro-)Poetics. Frontiers in Robotics and AI, 6. https://doi.org/10.3389/frobt.2019.00053

36. Măcineanu, L. (2018b). Consciously rejecting the magic – the cases of Susan Pevensie and Petunia Dursley. Gender Studies, 17(1), 73–83. https://doi.org/10.2478/genst-2019-0006

37. Ribó, I. (2019). Prose fiction. In Open Book Publishers. https://doi.org/10.11647/obp.0187

38. Mazzitelli, L. F. (2019). Referential and pragmatic-discourse properties of Lithuanian reference impersonals: 2sg-imp, 3-imp and ma/ta-imp. Kalbotyra, 72, 32–57. https://doi.org/10.15388/kalbotyra.2019.2

39. McEvoy-Levy, S. (2017). Reading War and Peace in Harry Potter. In Palgrave Macmillan UK eBooks (pp. 121–142). https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-49871-7_4

40. Thomas, M. (2018). Harry Potterand The Border Crossing Analogy: An exploration of the instructional use of analogy in a TESOL Methods course. The Teacher Educator, 53(3), 277–292. https://doi.org/10.1080/08878730.2018.1461288

41. Cohen, S. (2018). The two alchemists in Harry Potter: Voldemort, Harry, and their quests for immortality. Journal of Religion and Popular Culture, 30(3), 206–219. https://doi.org/10.3138/jrpc.2017-0038