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Harry Potter: A Social Critique
Harry Potter: Sociální Kritika

BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

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Declaration

I declare that, to the best of my knowledge, the following BA thesis is my own work for which I have used only the sources and literature mentioned where due reference is made, and that this thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in the course of any other university studies.

Prague, 3 Aug 2014

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Souhlasím se zapůjčením bakalářské práce ke studijním účelům.

Abstract

Harry Potter: A Social Critique

The aim of this thesis is to offer an analysis of J.K. Rowling's fantasy novels, the Harry Potter series, as a work of social criticism. The striking contrast between the two diametrically opposed fictional worlds, the wizarding world in which the governing principle is magic and its Muggle (a term denoting non-magical status) counterpart defined mainly by the lack of magic, enables Rowling to present and explore various social issues: racial bigotry, social stratification, prejudice, corruption, child welfare, moral questions, misuse of power, civil conflicts, national bias, slavery, terrorism and gender issues. The two coexisting cultures constructed in her novels are reflected in language, customs and values. The complexity of Rowling's work allows her to gradually move towards bigger issues, at first revolving mainly around the main character, Harry Potter, and later involving both the wizarding and Muggle world as a whole. In other words, what starts out as a children's story of childhood changes its course towards a critique of greater social injustices as the characters grow up, a clear bildungsroman in which additional themes are developed apart from the basic struggle between good and evil.

Attention will also be paid as to how Rowling's novels are influenced by the nineteenth century fiction in particular her employment of motifs typical for the Victorian era, for example the narrative of an orphaned child or the issue of the traditional roles of women, both themes persisting to the present day. However, Rowling is not a neo-Victorian author as she champions a contemporary perspective when dealing with the alternative world of the decadent magical culture. She employs deliberate ambiguity, sampling the Victorian era in terms of lifestyle, characterization and mannerism. Victoriana is thus used pragmatically and serves as an exotic background for the presentation of various social discriminations, and is arguably the dominant mode in children's modern literature. Rowling's style is thus perhaps best characterized as fantastic adventure, a literary mosaic incorporating many well-established genres such as detective story, mystery, romance, etc.

A body of critical writing is now forming around Rowling's oeuvre in direct relation to the decline in Pottermania, the consumerist hype around the phenomenon. This critical study now requires analysis of her debt to Victorian modes of social criticism and her deployment of a raft of techniques gleaned from a critical knowledge of the history of children's writing, in itself a reasonably new development in children's literature.

Key words

J.K. Rowling, Harry Potter, fantasy, magic, gothic, mythology, social criticism, social realism, Victoriana, culture, culture shock, prejudice, racism, supremacism, social conflict, gender

Abstrakt

Harry Potter: Sociální Kritika

Cílem této práce je předložit analýzu řady fantasy románů Harry Potter od autorky J.K. Rowlingové jako díla sociální kritiky. Výrazný rozdíl mezi dvěma diametrálně odlišnými fiktivními světy, kouzelnickým světem, v němž je řídicím principem magie, a jeho mudlovským protějškem (termín označující ne-kouzelnický status) definovaný především nepřítomností magie, umožňuje Rowlingové ukázat a prozkoumat rozličné sociální otázky: rasové předsudky, sociální stratifikace, korupce, sociální zabezpečení dítěte, morální otázky, zneužívání moci, občanské konflikty, národní podjatost, otroctví, terorismus a genderová problematika. Tyto dvě souběžně existující kultury, jsou v jejích románech reflektovány v jazyce, tradicích a hodnotách. Komplexnost jejího díla dovoluje Rowlingové se postupně přesunout od jednodušších ke složitějším sociálním problémům. Zpočátku se autorka soustředí na záležitosti týkající se hlavního hrdiny příběhu, Harryho Pottera, a později se zabývá kouzelnickým a mudlovským světem jako celkem. Jinými slovy, to, co začíná jako dětský příběh, se záhy změní v kritiku sociálních nespravedlností, a s tím, jak postavy dospívají, v tzv. bildungsroman (vývojový román), díky čemuž lze rozvíjet, kromě základního motivu souboje dobra a zla, i další náměty.

Pozornost bude věnována také tomu, jak jsou romány Rowlingové ovlivněny literaturou devatenáctého století, obzvláště v kontextu motivů typických pro viktoriánskou éru, jež se objevují v její tvorbě, například příběh sirotka nebo tradiční role žen ve společnosti, témata relevantní i pro dnešní moderní společnost. Ovšem Rowlingová nepatří mezi spisovatele neo-viktoriánské literatury, vzhledem k tomu, že při popisu dekadentní magické kultury jejího alternativního světa zastává současnou perspektivu. Autorka záměrně využívá nejednoznačnosti a nechává se inspirovat viktoriánskou dobou pouze z hlediska životního stylu, charakterizace postav a chování. Obraz viktoriánské Británie je tedy využit ryze pragmaticky a slouží pouze jako exotické pozadí pro představení různých forem sociální diskriminace, a je pravděpodobně dominantním prvkem v moderní dětské literatuře. Tvorbu Rowlingové tak lze zřejmě nejlépe popsat jako fantastické dobrodružství či literární mozaika zahrnující mnohé zavedené žánry, například s detektivní, mysteriózní či romantickou tematikou.

Soubor kritických textů se nyní formuje okolo díla J.K. Rowlingové v přímé závislosti na poklesu Pottermánie, tzn. mediální mánie, která vznikla okolo fenoménu "Harry Potter". Tato kritická analýza tedy vyžaduje podrobnější rozbor vlivu Viktoriánské doby na způsob

sociálního komentáře jež se objevuje v jejích románech, a také použití sociálních motivů relevantních pro moderní dětskou literaturu.

Klíčová slova

J.K. Rowling, Harry Potter, fantasy, magie, gotika, mytologie, sociální kritika, sociální realismus, viktoriánství, kultura, kulturní šok, předsudky, rasismus, supremacismus, sociální konflikt, gender

List of abbreviations

Throughout this thesis, I have used only the British editions of all Rowling's work. For brevity's sake, I have used the following abbreviated forms when quoting the Harry Potter novels:

(PS)	for Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (J.K. Rowling, 1997)
(ChoS)	for Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets (J.K. Rowling, 1998)
(PoA)	for Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban (J.K. Rowling, 1999)
(GoF)	for Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire (J.K. Rowling, 2000)
(OotP)	for Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix (J.K. Rowling, 2003)
(HBP)	for Harry Potter and the Half-blood Prince (J.K. Rowling, 2005)
(DH)	for Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows (J.K. Rowling, 2007)
(FB)	for Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them (J.K.Rowling, 2001)
(QttA)	for Quidditch Through the Ages (J.K.Rowling, 2001)
(ToBtB)	for Tales of Beedle the Bard (J.K.Rowling, 2008)

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1. Introduction

This thesis investigates the elements of social criticism employed in J.K. Rowling's fantasy series Harry Potter from a structuralist perspective. The intention is, through careful textual analysis, to reveal and frame social aspects of Rowling's work relevant to both the present and the past and to evaluate how they function in the text. Attention is also paid to the appropriation and reinterpretation of textual, historical and cultural materials which the author found inspiration in and used as a background for her extensive social commentary. While the criticism of the Harry Potter books often focuses on comparing the series to earlier literary texts, I believe that examining the social order of the magical community and how it is connected to the real world will provide another viewpoint to the discussion of Harry Potter. Thus, this study proposes a particular context for reading the Harry Potter narrative as a work of social criticism, a theme intimately linked to both fantasy and children's literature regardless of the historical period in which it was published or its intended subject matter. However, this paper does not offer a reworking of the definitions of children's literature nor does it seek to explore its possible limitations. Such a definition would call for a history not only of the genre itself but also of the concept of childhood and that is not what follows. Therefore, for the purposes of this paper, I shall forgo any attempts to define the boundaries of children's fiction and simply regard the Harry Potter novels as such based on the fact that they are generally categorized and marketed as children's literature with the blessings of the author herself although they are widely read by people of all ages.

The second chapter provides a frame for the analysis of Rowling's work starting with the development of the fantasy genre. Special attention is given to Victorian and Gothic elements which can be found in the Harry Potter series as they are self-reflexively building upon older fantasy texts especially in regards to mythology and folklore. The notion of social realism is discussed in a separate section with focus on how Rowling combines her fantasy construct with reality through the means of intertextuality. The unique juxtaposition of "primary and secondary worlds"¹ is also discussed in this chapter as the author contrasts the two parallel societies which allows her to address important issues relevant to the real world. Rowling herself has claimed that she "wanted Harry to leave our world and find exactly the same problems in the wizarding world."²

¹ J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Tolkien Reader* (NY: Ballantine, 1966) 69-70.

² J.K. Rowling, *Interview with J.K. Rowling*, Open Book Tour: Carnegie Hall, NY, 19 Oct 2007. Web. 5 May 2013. < <http://www.the-leaky-cauldron.org/2007/10/20/j-k-rowling-at-carnegie-hall-reveals-dumbledore-is-gay-neville-marries-hannah-abbott-and-scores-more> >.

The third chapter presents an indepth analysis of the differences between the magical and the non-magical world. The notion of culture and consequently of culture shock are also included as they are particularly relevant when children coming from the non-magical world cross into its magical counterpart and have to adapt to a completely different environment. The analysis then concentrates on the confrontation between the primary and the secondary world, but also on the movement between the two cultures. Sociological causes of prejudice are examined with focus on the supremacist ideology as the source of social conflict that propels the plot forward. In other words, it addresses how the Harry Potter novels are in fact centered around social agitation and anxiety stemming from conservative and often contradictory beliefs and practices rooted in tradition, ignorance and the fear of the unknown. The question of social stratification is also explored in this chapter. Lastly, the politics of the Harry Potter series are discussed in a separate section concentrating largely on the abuse of authority and the corruptibility of a particular legal system.

Chapter four addresses the theme of racism in light of the treatment of part-human and non-human races and the racial prejudice that they are subjected to due to their unequal social standing. In addition to the themes explored in previous chapter, the issue of institutionalized racism is also touched upon. The unequal relations between witches and wizards and other magical beings or creatures are analyzed in greater detail, the most pressing issues being labour exploitation, slavery, segregation, isolation and social exclusion on the basis of race. And finally, the last chapter is dedicated to examining the notion of gender and the problematic issue of gender-based stereotyping. Essentially, the analysis is conducted in terms of how gender is reflected or subverted in Rowling's fiction. The significance of power distribution among women and men is examined separately.

In this thesis I have used the method of close reading for systematic analysis of the primary texts. The individual Harry Potter novels are discussed thematically and not chronologically as the details pertaining to a particular topic are revealed throughout the seven books through a limited point of view as the protagonists themselves gradually learn more about the wizarding world and its intricacies. This is in line with Rowling's statement that "Harry is the eyes through which the reader sees the world."³ All the terms and concepts that might not necessarily be familiar to the reader are explained as they appear in the text for the first time. And although I aim at well-grounded analysis based on close reading of the Harry Potter texts in the context of social issues, I am fully aware that all literary studies are conducted in a subjective manner as there are as many perspectives as there are readers.

³ Stephen Fry, *Webcast: Interview with J.K.Rowling*, Royal Albert Hall webcast, 26 June 2003, Web. 16 Dec 2013. < <http://www.accio-quote.org/articles/2003/0626-alberthall-fry.htm> >.

2. Fantasy as Medium for Social Criticism

Literary fiction reflects the values and beliefs not only of its time but also of the past. As Hollindale claims, a large part of any book is written not by its author but by the world the author lives in.⁴ This is also true for Rowling, as, given her employment of social realism, she has based her creation on her own understanding of the world. Moreover, she draws inspiration from mythology and folklore, mainly in terms of characterization and language, which she then transforms to subvert the established expectations of the nature of "good and evil." Through this reworking of antiquity, she reveals her own perspective about the real world and the state of contemporary modern society. All these influences inevitably shape the individual experience of the writer and in turn that of the reader. In his critical essay "The Death of the Author" (1967), Roland Barthes claims that a text cannot exist disconnected from the Author who wrote it. He also asserts that while the context (historical, cultural, etc.) can only be set by the Author, it is the Reader who deciphers and analyzes the text. It is in this respect that the Author is "dead."⁵ In the light of this, Rowling is very much "alive" as she is directly involved in how the reader interprets the Harry Potter narrative. Within the books, she intentionally uses various stylistic devices to guide the reader toward a certain opinion.

For instance, Rowling uses positive or negative markers to portray characters either as "good" or "evil". Lord Voldemort, the epitome of evil, is a prime example of this strategy. Before his return to power, he is depicted as a disembodied wandering spirit. Voldemort thus resorts to possession of other living beings. In *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, he attaches himself to Professor Quirell manifesting as a face growing out of the back of his head, a truly horrific idea. "The most horrible face Harry had ever seen. It was chalk white with glaring red eyes and slits for nostrils, like a snake." (PS 315) Voldemort's inhumane appearance is a recurring image. In *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, Voldemort assumes a disturbing "shape of a crouched human child, except [...] It was hairless and scaly-looking [...] its face [...] flat and snakelike, with gleaming red eyes." (GoF 693-4) After the Dark Lord regains a corporeal form, his unnatural features become even more pronounced. Harry describes his face as "Whiter than a skull, with wide, livid scarlet eyes and a nose that was flat as a snakes with slits for nostrils..." (GoF 697) In addition, his followers are also portrayed in a way that makes the reader distrust and/or dislike them immediately. Bellatrix Lestrange for example, is described in terms of her rather unfavourable physical features: "a harsh female

⁴ Peter Hollindale, *Ideology and the Children's Book* (Thimble Press, 1998) 23.

⁵ Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, Ed. Vincent B. Leitch (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2001).

voice" (OotP 689) or "a gaunt and skull-like face" (691) - all of which fit with her image of a dark witch. Furthermore, even after Rowling has published the last novel in the Harry Potter series, she continues to provide additional information about the characters' past, present and future. And thus, by her continuous presence and development of the narrative, she reasserts her authority over the text's meaning and interferes with the reader's perception. Moreover, through re-affirming her characters' extra textual existence, Rowling consciously feeds into the illusion of reality⁶ that she established in the first instalment of the series.

2.1 The Origins of the Genre

Generally speaking, the genre of fantasy can be defined as "an imagined reality that is radically different in its nature and functioning"⁷ to our own and which contains "settings where the magical or the impossible is acknowledged and considered routine."⁸ In other words, fantasy literature does not copy reality as it is, quite the contrary. Its purpose is not to capture the state of the world but to play with what we know and to warp it into something else entirely. In his theoretical treatise, "On Fairy Stories" (1947), J.R.R. Tolkien identifies "fantasy" as one of the main functions of fairy stories⁹ (or *faërie*, a term that can be equated to contemporary understanding of fantasy). For Tolkien, fantasy is the ability to look at the world from another perspective, to employ one's imagination and to create that which does not exist in the real world. He regards the ability to fantasize as at the same time unrestrained and limited by our own experience. "For creative Fantasy is founded upon the hard recognition that things are so in the world as it appears under the sun; on a recognition of fact."¹⁰ And it is precisely the possibility of temporarily escaping reality through the means of fantasy, that continues to attract readers of all ages.

"The domain of modern fantasy is related to a long history of myth, legend, folk tale and wonder tale, not to mention religion and the occult."¹¹ Drawing on literature of antiquity and incorporating various myths and folk tales into its core, modern fantasy has become one

⁶ However, we must not confuse Rowling's fantasy texts with works of magic(al) realism. While both genres operate with fantastic elements within a constructed world, the level of mimesis differs greatly. In fantasy fiction, magic is the primary building block in terms of plot, settings and characterization, whereas in magic realism, magic is juxtaposed in a realistic setting. In magic realism, the ordinary is presented as extraordinary and vice versa whereas in fantasy the extraordinary is the norm by design. Furthermore, while fantasy might be considered an escapist literature, magic realism cannot as there is no secondary world to escape to since magic realism purposefully engages the reader to explore their reality from another viewpoint. Maggie Ann Bowers, *Magic(al) Realism* (Psychology Press, 2004) 19-31.

⁷ Meyer H. Abrams, Geoffrey G. Harpham, *Glossary of Literary Terms: Ninth Edition* (Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2005) 323.

⁸ *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, Chris Baldick, ed. (Oxford University Press, England, 2008) 125.

⁹ Tolkien 79.

¹⁰ Tolkien 75.

¹¹ Peter Hunt and Millicent Lenz, *Alternative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction*, A&C Black (2004) 8.

of the prime modes of exploring the impossible.¹² In order to determine what constitutes and is recognized as fantasy nowadays, we must not forget to examine its origins. Before the genre was more clearly defined in the 20th century and the term "fantasy" begun to be used, all literary works containing fantastic elements were termed either as folk tales and later as fairy stories or belonged to another genre entirely, for example to the gothic novel or the ghost story. Therefore, when discussing the history of modern fantasy, such works cannot be overlooked as they deeply influenced the genre and continue to do so. Contemporary fantasy encompasses much more than merely narratives containing supernatural elements as other genre's specifics have entered the construct.

In contrast to the age of Enlightenment and its reliance on reason and rationality, Romanticism turned back to traditional tales of the supernatural and mystical. This revival of fairy tales and medievalism saw the rise of a new literary form, the gothic novel, introducing features now also typical for fantasy literature, specifically the presence of ghosts and haunted castles are relevant to modern fantasy in terms of settings. Thus, the emergence of fantasy as a genre can be traced back to late 18th and early 19th centuries when "the foundations of what would become [...] fantasy had been laid down by Horace Walpole with *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and reinforced by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley with *Frankenstein* (1818)"¹³ - both permeated with dream like atmosphere and monsters. According to Mathews, early modern fantasy narratives such as George MacDonald's novel *Phantastes: A Faerie Romance for Men and Women* (1858) or William Morris' short stories brought about a radically anti-realistic form of text that stood in opposition to the realist novel heavily drawing on the medieval romance. And while MacDonald was one of the first literary critics to write an essay about fairy tales, "The Fantastic Imagination" (1893), in which he analyzed the building and functioning of imaginary worlds,¹⁴ it was Morris who, in *The Hollow Land* (1856) and in *The Well at the World's End* (1896), introduced and developed the idea of an alternative world,¹⁵ a

¹² "Most of the major critics in the field, such as Tzvetan Todorov, Kathryn Hume, Rosemary Jackson or Colin Manlove, consider [...] "On Fairy Stories" to be one of the most valuable theoretical texts on fantasy literature since it provided the basis for defining what fantasy is about - the construction of the impossible." Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn, *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature* (Cambridge University Press: NY, 2012) 1.

¹³ Helen Pilinovsky, "Nineteenth-century Fiction," *Women in Science Fiction and Fantasy, Vol. 1*, Ed. Robin Anne Reid (Greenwood Press, 2009) 12.

¹⁴ "Man may, if he pleases, invent a little world of his own, with its own laws [...] products of Imagination." George MacDonald, "The Fantastic Imagination," *Fantastic Literature: A Critical Reader*, Ed. David Sandner (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004) 65.

¹⁵ The process of building imaginary worlds underwent many changes, from early fairy stories in which the fantastic land was a part of the ordinary world, accessible only to select few through portals or other magical means, to complex fictional constructs independent on the real world. In other words, "The most fundamental difference might seem to be between fantasy set in 'this' world, where there is a tension between the 'normal' and the fantastic elements, and 'other' worlds in which the fantastic is the norm. [...] often places are very

fundamental feature of modern fantasy fiction. In the late 19th century, writers such as Oscar Wilde with his *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) or Bram Stoker with his *Dracula* (1897) continued the gothic tradition and begun to explore social taboos addressing darker themes of death, mortality and sexuality and the negative effects of the supernatural.

The Victorian era saw the transformation of the gothic genre. Gothic motifs were appropriated and modified to make them more suitable for modern readership. "The castles and abbeys of the 18thth century gave way to labyrinthine streets, sinister rookeries, opium dens, and the filth and stench of the squalid slums."¹⁶ The Victorians lived in an age of change as science offered new ways of looking at the world around them. Yet, the need to keep a link to the past remained despite the dismissive attitude towards folklore. The shift from an agricultural into an industrial society¹⁷ disrupted both socio-cultural and geopolitical structures as the British population slowly shifted into urban areas.¹⁸ However, that is not to say the country side had suddenly become deserted, quite the contrary. "While population was concentrated in urban spaces, these were very small compared with the countryside."¹⁹ What truly caused the disconnection from the land of their forefathers were the socio-economic changes, the growing demand for consumer products and in turn the demand for labour that spurred further cultural changes. It was precisely because of this and the growing feeling of alienation that the gothic genre combined with folk and fairy tales presented a perfect narrative material through which the past and its outdated superstitions could be reclaimed and reconstructed as opposed to the 19th century world view. In this respect, "Gothic was the archaic, the pagan, that which was prior to, or was opposed to, or resisted the establishment of civilized values and a well-regulated society."²⁰

precisely described or mapped emphasizing the gap between the real and unreal worlds." Thus, the constructed world can either imitate the real world as in the works of J.K.Rowling or J.M.Barrie, or it can be disconnected from reality as in the works of J.R.R.Tolkien, Lewis Carroll, C.S.Lewis, or Terry Prachett. Hunt and Lenz 11.

¹⁶ David Punter and Glennis Byron, *The Gothic* (Blackwell Publishing, 2004) 21-2.

¹⁷ Jan Keller defines society as "a group of people characterized by common interests." However, as this description is generally considered rather non-specific, he further elaborates on the distinguishing features of society. "When people talk about society, they usually mean the country they live in. Even in the most basic systems of theoretical sociology, society is implicitly identified with a particular state held together through power structures and further defined by its culture."

Jan Keller, *Úvod do Sociologie* (Sociologické nakladatelství SLON, Praha, 1999) 10-11.

¹⁸ When discussing urbanization in the Victorian era, we must keep in mind that "neither the population censuses nor the civil registration system (overseen by the General Register Office) provided an adequate means of measuring migration in the 19th century."

Robert Woods, *The Demography of Victorian England and Wales* (Cambridge University Press, 2000): 33.

¹⁹ "Even when the 1851 census revealed that the majority of people lived in cities, it considered every town with a population of more than 2.500 to be an urban area [...] the image of a truly urban Britain was somewhat illusory. Furthermore, the new urban majority of 54% still left fully 46% in the country."

Susie Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians: Politics, Culture, and Society in Nineteenth-century Britain* (Routledge, 2012) 14.

²⁰ Punter and Byron 8.

In the late 19th century, fantastic literature had become closely linked with children's literature, a new term at the time as childhood was only recently recognized as a special phase in an individual's life. There were two basic approaches to stories containing supernatural elements and intended for juvenile readership. While traditional fairy tales generally do not pertain to a specific historical period or a particular culture, Victorian stories were often concerned with contemporary issues. "In children's literature, the 18th and 19th centuries, the age of pragmatism, saw a battle between the fantastic on one side, and [...] flat-footed practicality on the other."²¹ John Ruskin's Victorian fairy tale *The King of the Golden River* (1841) represents a more conservative attitude aiming to cultivate approved social values and gender roles. Adults in the Victorian era were preoccupied with the moral development of the youth and in turn the whole society. In this respect, Ruskin strictly followed the limitations of his time and carefully edited or rather outright omitted any mentions of inappropriate themes such as sexuality, questionable gender roles etc.

On the other hand, Charles Dickens responded to the pedantic Victorian approach to fairy stories by employing elements of parody and social criticism in his texts. In his essay *Frauds on the Fairies* (1853), Dickens criticized authors who used fairy tales to impart moral or ethical messages to the audience, i.e. the didactic approach. He associated fairy tales with imagination, innocence and freedom and argued that "in an utilitarian age, [...] it is a matter of grave importance that fairy tales should be respected."²² A number of his fictional narrators are female revealing societal conventions and criticizing the repression of women and children. In his original fairy story *The Magic Fishbone* (1867), Dickens promoted creativity and imagination instead of logic and didacticism. When compared to the more common nondescript Victorian maternal figures, MacDonald's female characters were also courageous and strong. While he conformed to the idea of an innocent heroine, Irene from *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872) is quite an adventurous and witty character. Through princess Irene, MacDonald showed that only through recovering the inner child can one, at least momentarily, suspend disbelief when faced with the fantastic. And although fantasy still has a strong connection to literature written for children, it is not its defining component as fairy stories are by no means childish. "There is no reason to suppose that children and fantasy have a natural connection, even if the struggle of imagination and generic constraints parallels the conflict between common concepts of the child and the adult."²³ MacDonald was a firm believer in writing fantastic fiction for readers of all ages since for him fairy stories did not

²¹ Hunt and Lenz 16.

²² Charles Dickens, *The Complete Works of Charles Dickens*, Vol II (Cosimo, 2009) 232.

²³ Hunt and Lenz 4.

equal children's literature. In "Fantastic Imagination" (1893) he stated that he "writes not for children, but for the child-like, whether they be of five, or fifty, or seventy-five."²⁴ Also, we must keep in mind that fantasy is first and foremost a work of fiction and its value has long transformed from educational and spiritual enlightenment to cover a plethora of other themes and motifs. To quote Tolkien, "if fairy-story as a kind is worth reading at all it is worthy to be written for and read by adults."²⁵ Both MacDonald and Tolkien did not consider age to be the deciding factor but the further unspecified "child-like" attitude and unlimited imagination, i.e. the inner child. Although Tolkien and his contemporaries were influenced by antiquity and their predecessors such as Morris or MacDonald, it was the success of Tolkien's work that helped transform and redefine fairy stories into what is nowadays known as the fantasy genre.

In the second half of the 20th century, literary theorists have recognized what MacDonald, Lewis and Tolkien have already proposed decades before, that the association of children's literature and fantastic literature was "an accident of our domestic history. [...] Children as a class neither like fairy stories more or understand them better than adults do."²⁶ In the view of this, fantasy has been approved as a literary genre and stands on equal footing with other genres in terms of literary and cultural value, possibly above most in terms of profitability as the phenomenon of Harry Potter has proven recently. Through expanding the boundaries of fairy tales, subverting the usual modes of conduct of archetypal characters and successfully breaking the connection between fantasy and juvenile literature, the objective of original fairy stories shifted from didactic stories intended to warn children of the dangers of the world and to impart basic morals to a much more complex narrative structure allowing for a social commentary. Rowling follows this tradition and finds inspiration in mythology, fairy tales, the ghost story and the gothic novel. Moreover, Rowling moves beyond the scope of the fantasy novel blending fantastic elements with features typical for adventure, heroic epic, romance or mystery, etc. thus generating a very complex mosaic of genres.

In regards to the magical creatures and beings that appear in her novel, Rowling often borrows from mythology and folklore: goblins, centaurs, werewolves, goblins, giants, trolls etc. The secondary world's settings are heavily influenced by the gothic: the Forbidden Forest crawling with dangerous creatures, Knockturn Alley with its seedy shops, Hogwarts with its numerous ghosts and secret passages, Grimmauld place haunted by a portrait and an insane elf or the graveyard in Godric's Hollow. The moment when Harry first enters the infamous

²⁴ MacDonald 67.

²⁵ Tolkien 67.

²⁶ Tolkien 58.

Salazar Slytherin's Chamber of Secrets is particularly dramatic especially when perceived through the eyes of a child:

A very long, dimly lit chamber. Towering stone pillars entwined with more carved serpents rose to support a ceiling lost in darkness, casting long black shadows through the odd, greenish gloom that filled the place. (ChoS 329)

The preoccupation with death is a particularly gothic theme that Rowling relies upon as a connecting device within the plot starting with the murder of Harry's parents and ending with his self-sacrifice. The gothic mysticism is further emphasized by the narrative of the "Deathly Hallows"²⁷ which supposedly belonged to a personification of Death itself. Voldermort's "horcruxes"²⁸ also function as a link to death since it is through the act of splitting his own soul that he was able to escape death multiple times. In addition, the characters of Harry and Voldermort are juxtaposed as they share a deep connection to death through both the piece of Voldermort's soul embedded within Harry's scar and the possession of one of the Hallows, which are in fact family heirlooms.²⁹ The past and the present come together when the three Hallows are united which enables Harry to shape the future of the wizarding world by fulfilling his destiny when he finally destroys Voldermort. In fact, Rowling is partial to employing a cyclic structure as the various secrets hinted upon in the first book are fully revealed in the last one. In the light of this, the phrase "I open at the close." (DH 559) has an extra textual meaning since the narrative indeed reaches new dimension as the story comes to an end.

2.2 Secondary Worlds, Familiar Illusions

The ontological and structural differences between fantasy and its predecessors lie largely in the process of world-building which is entirely absent in myths, legends, folklore and traditional fairy tales since they are set in the real world whereas modern fantasy is a purely fictional construct created by the author. In his essay, "On Fairy Stories," Tolkien defines fantasy as "the making or glimpsing of Other worlds."³⁰ He presents the faërie (fantasy) as a "secondary world," which is not merely a representation of the "primary world,"

²⁷ "The Elder Wand [...] the Resurrection Stone [...] the Cloak of Invisibility." (DH 332)

²⁸ Voldermort's fear of death is the driving force behind his quest for immortality. It is also the reason for his gradual transformation into an almost demonic presence, an inhuman monster - Harry's exact opposite. "A Horcrux is the word used for an object in which a person has concealed part of their soul. [...] you split your soul [...] and hide part of it in an object outside the body. Then, even if one's body is attacked or destroyed, one cannot die, for part of the soul remains earthbound and undamaged." (HBP 464-5)

²⁹ Both Harry and Voldermort are descended from the Peverell family (DH 347-349), the brothers from a wizarding fairy tale "The Tale of the Three Brothers" (DH 330), who received gifts from Death. Voldermort owned the Resurrection Stone embedded within the Gaunt family ring and Harry owned the Cloak of Invisibility, passed down from father to son.

³⁰ Tolkien, 64.

of our reality, but an articulation of "images of things [...] that are not to be found in our primary world at all, or are generally believed not to be found there."³¹ The secondary world that Tolkien describes is thus not an imitation of reality, but an illusion, it is an alternative world with its own consistency independent on the primary one. Tolkien argues, that the distinction between the two worlds must be maintained at all costs for the illusion to work. In other words, travel and exchange between the two worlds is possible, but restricted.

Tzvetan Todorov builds upon Tolkien's definition of fantasy in terms of space limitations and genre boundaries. "The fantastic" genre occupies "the uncertainty between the real and the imaginary, between truth and illusion."³² His classification is based on how the reader interprets the seemingly supernatural events they are confronted with. Adopting a structuralist approach, he identifies the boundaries of the genre to be between mimesis and non-mimesis and identifies two basic narrative modes within the fantastic: "the marvellous" and "the uncanny."³³ Whereas the marvellous offers a separate world in which supernatural phenomena are accepted, the uncanny refers to the unfamiliar and inexplicable within the real one. In other words, in the marvellous, the supernatural is accepted as such (fairy tales) while, in the uncanny, the supernatural occurrences can be explained through the means of rationality (gothic novels). In this respect, supernatural events portrayed in Rowling's work fall into the category of the marvellous as they can be explained only in terms of "magic," i.e. the impossible. However, Todorov's theory is too superficial and narrow as fantasy worlds usually have their own rationality and natural laws. Thus, Tolkien's approach is more suitable when analyzing Rowling's work.

Fantasy texts generally feature a primary and a secondary world, some however, like Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* (1954-5) or George R.R.Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* (1996-present), feature only one of them. Unlike Tolkien or Martin, Rowling places the fantastic directly alongside the mundane allowing them to coexist within one fictional realm. She combines the ordinary with the extraordinary presenting England as well as the rest of the world as a shared space where the magical exists alongside the non-magical. Similarly to Susan Cooper's fantasy series *The Dark is Rising* (1965-77), Rowling too recreates existing locations as direct crossing points between the two worlds. For example, "The Hogwarts' Express" (PS 105) departs from the King's Cross railway station, based on an existing place, from a fictional "Platform Nine and Three-Quarters." (PS 105) Furthermore, in England,

³¹ Tolkien, 69.

³² Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary genre* (Cornell University Press, 1975) 25.

³³ Todorov 27.

children start their secondary education upon reaching the age of eleven. The school year starts at the beginning of September, usually in the first week. Rowling follows this in the secondary world - magical children receive their Hogwarts letter of acceptance before their eleventh birthday and the school year starts on the first of September. (PS 98) Clearly, both Cooper and Rowling build upon the familiar to give their work a more realistic setting. Moreover, Harry's first contact with the secondary world takes place at his relatives' house when Harry finds his acceptance letter to Hogwarts in their mailbox. Suddenly, a familiar ordinary middle-class neighbourhood becomes the site of something extraordinary and entirely unexpected as more and more letters arrive via owls³⁴ when Mr Dursley keeps preventing Harry from opening his post. Instead of employing the traditional image of carrier pigeons, Rowling invents "owl post," choosing a common bird one would however never associate with alternative methods of communication. Moreover, the owls' ability to find the addressee of a letter anywhere alludes to their association with the Greek goddess of wisdom and knowledge Athena.

The mimetic elements in the world of Harry Potter are thus used to imitate the world outside the text and to familiarize the supernatural, a feeling that is further bolstered by the means of intertextuality.³⁵ Through this confrontation with "reality", Rowling succeeded in depicting an intriguing secondary world without breaking the illusion, essentially what Tolkien recognized as the basis of fantasy literature. The secondary world is effectively hidden from the primary one by magical means and is thus accessible only to those who have an intrinsic connection to the supernatural, i.e. they possess magic. Rowling goes as far as to point out the specific moment when the separation of worlds occurred and the reasons behind it. "Upon the signature of the International Statute of Secrecy³⁶ in 1689, wizards went into

³⁴ "The old superstition that it is unlucky to see owls flying by daylight is readily explained, for when wizards break cover to send messages by day, something dramatic must be afoot in the magical world. [...] As a (mostly) nocturnal bird of prey, the owl is inevitably seen as sinister by Muggles, but it has been a faithful servant and helpmeet to witches and wizards for many centuries."
J.K.Rowling, "Owls," *Pottermore*, 31 Jul 2011, Web. 1 Aug 2014.
<<http://www.pottermore.com/en/book4/chapter28/moment1/owls>>.

³⁵ The general definition of intertextuality is that all texts are interrelated and connected to texts that appeared before them. Allan Graham states that "to interpret a text, to discover its meaning, or meanings, is to trace those relations. Meaning becomes something which exists between a text and all the other texts to which it refers and relates." This is particularly important for fantasy literature in regards to allusions to mythology as contemporary authors only rarely invent new supernatural beings. Also, Anglo-Saxon writers in general are deeply influenced by Arthurian legends as it is a part of their cultural heritage.
Allan Graham, *Intertextuality: The New Critical Idiom* (Routledge, 2011) 1.

³⁶ In relation to the International Statute of Wizarding Secrecy, Rowling makes humorous references to the phenomenon of yeti and the Loch Ness monster, once again linking her fictional construct to reality through employing well-known legends and myths. "The International Confederation of Wizards has had to fine certain nations repeatedly for contravening Clause 73. Tibet and Scotland are two of the most persistent offenders. Muggle sightings of the yeti have been so numerous that the International Confederation of Wizards felt it necessary to station an International Task Force in the mountains on a permanent basis.

hiding for good."³⁷ (DH 261) It is no coincidence that Rowling specifically chose the late 17th century as the turning point of wizarding history as it corresponds with the last witch trials in England and also with the famous witch trials in Salem in America. In *Tales of Beedle the Bard*, Rowling elaborates on the topic of witch hunts. "The persecution of witches and wizards was gathering pace all over Europe in the early 15th century." (ToBtB 12) Clearly, Rowling models the history of the witch trials on real events. The world of 15th, 16th and 17th centuries was under the influence of organised religion and had yet to turn to scientific explanations for natural phenomena. Thus, from the late 15th century to early 18th century a wave of witch hunts spread across Europe and its colonies. However, most witch trials in England occurred before 1692 when the International Statute of Secrecy began to be enforced worldwide. (QttA 16) Furthermore, she makes references to fictional historical texts, textbooks and pamphlets such as "Modern Magical History" or "Great Wizarding Events of the 20th Century" (PS 117) to further support her constructs' credibility and realism and to provide an "ancient setting" for her narrative as "antiquity has an appeal in itself" conforming to Tolkien's theory that "history often resembles 'Myth,' because they are both ultimately of the same stuff."³⁸ Indeed, the histories and cultures of both magical and non-magical worlds have the same roots whether we talk about mythology or actual historical events, often crossing paths until a certain point in time where magic eventually became a myth to those who did not possess it.

Within the Harry Potter texts, there is an indefinite number of allusions to mythology (Greek and Roman in particular), Arthurian legends, folklore, fairy tales, history, astronomy, Latin, etc. and we must not forget that the author also draws on older fantasy narratives. In a radio interview from 2005, Rowling herself has admitted that:

"I've taken horrible liberties with [...] British folklore and British mythology [...] You know, we've been invaded by people, we've appropriated their gods, we've taken their mythical creatures, and we've soldered them all together to make, [...] one of the richest folklores in the world, [...] So I feel no compunction about borrowing from that freely, but adding a few things of my own."³⁹

Meanwhile the world's largest kelpie continues to evade capture in Loch Ness and appears to have developed a positive thirst for publicity." (FB xvii).

³⁷ The most notable witch trials in England are "the Witches of Warboys Witch Trials (1589-1593), the Pendle Witch Trials (1612-1634), the Bury St. Edmunds Witch Trials (1645-1694) and the Bideford Witch Trials (1682)." The official end of witch trials in England came in 1735 when The Witchcraft Act was passed by the Parliament making it a crime to claim that any human being had magical powers or was practiced witchcraft. For more information visit: <<http://www.witchcraftandwitches.com/trials.html>>.

³⁸ Tolkien 55.

³⁹ Stephen Fry, "Living with Harry Potter," *Broadcast: Interview with J.K. Rowling*, BBC Radio 4, 26 June 2005, Web. 11 Apr 2014. <<http://www.accio-quote.org/articles/2005/1205-bbc-fry.html>>.

The richness of mythological allusions in Rowling's work covers a wide range of ancient mythology. Her portrayal of magical creatures and animals in particular allows the reader to make the connection between myth and her secondary world intuitively as the narratives she borrows from are an integral part of the cultural heritage of the western world. For example, in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, Harry encounters a three headed dog named Fluffy "that filled the whole space between ceiling and floor." (PS 175) Rowling relies on such comments for comic effect as "Fluffy" seems to be rather inappropriate name for a Cerberus. In Greek mythology, Cerberus was commonly depicted as a monstrous three headed guardian dog of the Underworld. Like the Cerberus, Fluffytoo guards an entrance to an underground place, he protects the trapdoor leading to the Philosopher's stone. In *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, Rowling introduces Dumbledore's phoenix Fawkes, a mythological bird that has the ability to be reborn from its own ashes representing immortality and renewal. Rowling calls this a "Burning Day" (ChoS 225), a process that Fawkes undergoes regularly. However, "most of the time," Fawkes has "wonderful red and gold plumage." (ChoS 225) While her magical beasts and beings such as centaurs, giants, dragons, merepeople or unicorns are more or less mirror images of their classic ancient models, she builds upon these mythical depictions interweaving references to myth, astronomy and language especially in terms of characterization.

The character of Remus John Lupin, for instance, is in itself an amalgam of direct references to wolves. His first name refers to the legend of "Romulus and Remus", the mythical founders of Rome, who were found and suckled by a female wolf. Lupin is a derivation of a Latin noun "lupus" which means "wolf"⁴⁰, it is also a constellation in the southern hemisphere called "The Wolf." Moreover, Rowling employs irony as Lupin taught Defense against the Dark Arts at Hogwarts even though werewolves are considered dark creatures. Sirius Orion Black, Harry's godfather, is also craftily defined by his name. "Sirius" alludes to the "Dog Star,"⁴¹ the brightest star in the constellation of Canis Major. His middle name also refers to astronomy, specifically to the constellation of Orion named after an ancient Greek hunter. Moreover, his surname corresponds with the color of his animagus form, that of a large black dog, which alludes to British folklore as black dogs⁴² were associated with death similarly to how Sirius Black is mistakenly associated with Voldemort's

⁴⁰ *The Oxford Latin Dictionary*, Eds. P.G.W.Glare, W.M.Edwards (Oxford University Press, 1968) 1051. Further referred to as *Oxford Latin Dictionary*.

⁴¹ *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, 1773.

⁴² Andrew Gable, "Black Dogs and Phantom Hounds," *Mysterious Britain & Ireland*, 2000, Web. 28 Apr 2014. <<http://www.mysteriousbritain.co.uk/folklore/black-dogs-and-phantom-hounds-part-one-maryland-and-delaware.html>>.

followers, the Death Eaters. Professor Sybil Trelawney, who teaches Divination, is "the great-great-granddaughter of the celebrated Seer Cassandra Trelawney" (OotP 281). Although, she is "the first in her family since Cassandra to be possessed of Second Sight." (OotP 281) Firstly, her first name is a variation of "Sibylla,"⁴³ a Greek prophetess, and secondly, Trelawney's familial relation to Cassandra is a direct link to another Greek myth. Cassandra was a princess of Troy and a seer, however, she was cursed so that no one would believe her prophecies which eventually led to the destruction of Troy. Like the mythical Cassandra, Sybil too is treated as "an old fraud. [...] her brand of fortunetelling was really no more than lucky guesswork and a spooky manner." (PoA 221)

Similarly to Tolkien, Martin and Cooper⁴⁴, Rowling alludes to Arthurian legends as she weaves elements of heroic fantasy into her narrative. In particular, she makes numerous references to Merlin⁴⁵ who is regarded as an important historical figure in Rowling's secondary world. Merlin is first mentioned when Harry buys "Chocolate Frogs," a wizarding candy containing collectible trading cards of "famous witches and wizards." (PS 113) Both chocolate and trading cards are something that readers can easily relate to as they are common in the real world. Thus, by incorporating legendary figures into everyday life of witches and wizards, Rowling further blurs the boundaries between reality and fiction. Moreover, she mixes up real historical figures with fictional ones: "Dumbledore and Morgana, Hengist of Woodcroft, Alberic Grunnion, Circe, Paracelsus, and Merlin."⁴⁶ (PS 115) Also, there is an official award of "Order of Merlin" (PS 60) that is given to accomplished wizards. Interestingly, Merlin's name is also used in phrasal exclamations such as "Merlin's pants"

⁴³ *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, 1753.

⁴⁴ Cooper in a particular makes great use of Anglo-Saxon elements. For example, the first book of the series *Over Sea, Under Stone* features a magical Grail chalice, an allusion to the Holy Grail. Moreover, the character of Professor Merriman Lyon, an immortal, is eventually revealed to be the mythical Merlin himself. In "The Grey King", Cooper introduces Bran Davies, "the Pendragon, [...] The son of Arthur. [...] When he was born, his mother Guinevere brought him forward in Time, with Merriman's help, because once before she had deceived her lord and she was afraid Arthur would not now believe that Bran was truly his son." And in "Silver on the Tree", King Arthur appears, the image of a warrior king. "And Arthur took Eirias in one hand and the scabbard in the other, and sheathed the sword."

Susan Cooper, *Silver on the Tree* (Simon and Schuster, 2010) 97, 269.

⁴⁵ "Wizard and adviser to four kings of Britain: Vortgern, Ambrosius, Uther and Arthur. [...] Geoffrey of Monmouth, the first writer to mention Merlin (in *The History of the Kings of Britain* from 1136), adapted him from Myrddin, a warrior and "mad prophet" in Welsh legend. [...] We owe our conception of Merlin as Arthur's magician to Robert de Boron, who wrote *Verses Merlin*. [...] Robert's romance was adapted by other French writers into *Prose Merlin*, a *Vulgate Merlin*, and a *Post-Vulgate Merlin*, which together form the basis of Malory's story of Merlin and thus provided the modern portrayal of the character."

Christopher W. Bruce, *The Arthurian Name Dictionary* (Taylor & Francis, 1999) 358-9.

⁴⁶ Albus Dumbledore and Alberic Grunnion are characters created by Rowling. Circe refers to the Greek goddess of magic. Only Paracelsus is based on an actual person, a famous Renaissance alchemist, astrologist, physician and botanist. Morgana (Le Fay), like Merlin, is a sorceress in the Arthurian legend while Hengist is a 5th century Saxon leader, a figure of Anglo-Saxon legend. Bruce 367.

(OotP 373) or "Merlin's beard" (GoF 83) and in clausal exclamations as in "What in the name of Merlin are you doing?" (OotP 230) Apart from references to Merlin, there are also some striking similarities between Harry Potter and King Arthur, i.e. both are orphans unaware of their parentage, both have wizards/mentors guiding them on their quests, and both of them marry a woman of a similar name as "Ginevra" is another form of "Guinevere."⁴⁷ The connection between Arthur's swords (the sword from the stone and the sword from the Lady of the Lake) and the sword of Godric Gryffindor is also worth mentioning. Similarly to how Arthur draws the sword from the stone, a symbol of his Kingship, Harry pulls "a gleaming silver sword [...] its handle glittering with rubies the size of eggs" (ChoS 343) out of the Sorting Hat and is told that "Only a true Gryffindor" (ChoS 358) could have done it - a proof of his hero status. In *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, Severus Snape deposits "the sword of Gryffindor [...] at the bottom of the forest pool" (DH 299) and uses a spell to guide Harry there. And although it is Ronald Weasley who retrieves the sword in the end, the event is nonetheless reminiscent of one of the versions of how Arthur was given the sword by the Lady of the Lake, the connection strengthened by the fact that Ron's father's name is Arthur.

Aside from making numerous allusion to ancient mythology and to astronomy, Rowling also takes advantage of her classical education⁴⁸ in terms of the primary language in which spells are cast. Thus, it is not surprising that Rowling chose Latin as the basis for a majority of magical incantations mentioned in her novels as it gives magic "an air of antiquity and mystery" since Latin predates English and other modern languages. And although Latin is still taught in some places around the world and to an extent employed by the Christian clergy, to most people it is the language of the past and their knowledge of it is limited to quotes and mottos or medical and legal terms. Based on the analysis of some of the spells that appear throughout the series, we can divide Rowling's employment of Latin into two basic categories: a) Latin words and b) Latin derivations. For example, "Reparo" (GoF 188), a spell that enables the caster to repair broken or damaged objects, is actually a Latin verb meaning "to repair/rebuild."⁴⁹ Some names also have Latin origins, for example "Severus" means "strict/severe"⁵⁰ in Latin which fits Severus Snape, the Potions Professor, perfectly as he is depicted as a harsh man both in behaviour and appearance. "Albus" meaning "white/pale"⁵¹ in Latin is the first name of the Hogwarts' Headmaster. Quite a fitting name considering that

⁴⁷ Bruce 243.

⁴⁸ "J.K.Rowling attended the Exeter University, where she earned a French and Classics BA degree." "Biography," J.K.Rowling Official Site, 15 May 2004, Web. 3 Oct 2013. <http://www.jkrowling.com/en_GB/#/about-jk-rowling/>.

⁴⁹ *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, 1616.

⁵⁰ *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, 1750.

⁵¹ *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, 93.

Dumbledore is often described as having silvery almost white hair and a beard and opposes dark wizards. In some instances Rowling used real Latin, while in other places she used Latin derivatives. For example, "Expelliarmus" (ChoS 206), a spell used to disarm an opponent, is a combination of the Latin verb "expello" meaning "to expel/to force out"⁵² and the Latin noun "arma" meaning "weapons."⁵³ Also, the -us ending is quite typical for Latin words. Rowling also makes indirect references to the runic alphabet, the subject of "Ancient Runes" (ChoS 272), which is one of the electives on the Hogwarts curriculum. Even though Latin is the primary language for spellcasting, runes are apparently still in use in the wizarding world.

2.3 Social Realism

Literature has a potential to show society not only in its current form but also its possible deviations through the mode of social realism, which allows the reader to easily identify with the narrative as such fictional constructs can imitate the actual world in many ways.⁵⁴ This is not exclusive to any particular genre as social realism can convey social information from any viewpoint. According to Stephens, realism does not actually reproduce reality but reflects recognizable social structures and behaviour and thus enables the reader to look at it from the outside. However, fantasy is far more removed from reality than any other genre, since it represents something that does not exist in the real world, i.e. Stephens sees fantasy as an ideal medium for social criticism as it allows for experimentation with various social constructs.⁵⁵ This perspective is often achieved through the eyes of the protagonist as is the case in the Harry Potter series. It is mainly through Harry's limited point of view that the secondary/magical world is revealed and contrasted with the primary/non-magical one. Furthermore, due to the main protagonist being raised in an abusive non-magical environment, he has a double perspective when finally re-entering the wizarding society and consequently being subjected to more physical and psychological trauma. The maltreatment that Harry is subjected to at his home is truly extensive: aggression, criticizing, rejection, lack of nurturing, detachment, social isolation, neglect, etc. Harry's case is a clear example of the imperfect child welfare system as the authorities failed to protect the orphaned boy. There are no social workers, no child protection agencies working with Harry and his relatives. His

⁵² *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, 648.

⁵³ *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, 170.

⁵⁴ When discussing "imitations of reality or mimesis" we must keep in mind that the concept itself is not about reproducing reality as it is but rather about imitating reality based on the authors' subjective perception. This is particularly relevant for Rowling as the Harry Potter novels are not a pure mimesis but contain certain elements that can be read as mimetic, for example the Muggle world as a whole or the Hogwarts boarding school system or even the celebrating of Christmas, a traditionally Christian holiday.

⁵⁵ John Stephens, *Language and Ideology in Children's Fiction* (NY: Longman, 1992) 242.

situation in the primary world is then mirrored in the secondary world. This allows Rowling to introduce more complex topics as Harry matures and his ability to perceive social wrongs expands.

The striking contrast between the two diametrically opposed fictional worlds, the wizarding world in which the governing principle is magic and its Muggle (a term denoting non-magical being or status) counterpart defined mainly by the lack of magic and the presence of technology clearly imitating the real world, enables Rowling to present and explore various social issues such as racism, corruption, child abuse, labour exploitation and gender issues. However, Rowling does not set out to correct any historical or contemporary wrongs, nor does she idealize either of her worlds, she merely provides a social commentary on the existing issues through the medium of a fantasy novel. The inclusive nature of the series provides thus no philosophical meditations upon how to deal with social injustices nor calls for radical reform other than the suggestion to stand up for what is generally considered as morally right. And as is the case with both fantasy and children's literature this translates into the archetypal battle between "good and evil", i.e. the supposition that the hero must ultimately defeat the villain.

However, Rowling manages to locate the reasons for the most prominent social flaws not only within the society itself but also within the individual as she often offers an insight into the mind of the villain. For example, Dumbledore provides Harry with memories of Voldemort's childhood which portray young Tom Riddle as an emotionally deprived boy who mistrusts adults in general as he has been subjected to their fear of the unknown due to him being a magical child in a non-magical environment. "I don't believe you," said Riddle. "You can't kid me! The asylum, that's where you're from, isn't it?" (HBP 253) Rowling portrays the young boy as a sociopath,⁵⁶ showing obvious signs of violence, cruelty and paranoia that would eventually become much more pronounced as Tom Riddle grows into his Dark Lord persona.⁵⁷ "I can make bad things happen to people who annoy me. I can make them hurt if I want to." (HBP 254) These psycho-analytical ventures into a particular protagonist's life

⁵⁶ In 1991, Hare developed *The Hare Psychopathy Checklist-Revised* to assess the psychopathic disorder. Basic features of psychopathy are: "superficial charm, grandiose sense of worth, pathological lying, manipulative, lack of remorse or guilt, shallow affect, lack of empathy, failure to accept responsibility for own actions, parasitic lifestyle, poor behavioral control, early behavioral problems, lack of realistic goals, impulsivity, irresponsibility and juvenile delinquency." Voldemort's character fits the criteria perfectly. Robert D.Hare, *The Hare Psychopathy Checklist-Revised* (Toronto, Ontario: Multi Health Systems, 1991).

⁵⁷ Rowling's portrayal of Riddle's behaviour and psyche conforms to the post-Freudian theory of developmental psychology, Erikson's 8 stages of psychological development in particular. The lack of family, friends and adult role models during his childhood are at the centre of Riddle's insecurities and psycho-social issues as children growing up in an unhealthy environment are unable to develop into emotionally stable individuals. Erik H. Erikson, "Growth and Crisis," Ed. Theodore Millon, *Theories of Psychopathology and Personality* (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Co., 1973) 136-156.

defining moments further provide a more realistic characterization.⁵⁸ Even when Voldemort explains why he renounced his Muggle father's surname and created a new name for himself, it all amounts to his childhood issues of abandonment:

You think I was going to use my filthy Muggle father's name for ever? I, in whose veins runs the blood of Salazar Slytherin [...] I, keep the name of a foul, common Muggle, who abandoned me even before I was born, just because he found out his wife was a witch? (ChoS 337)

The social themes explored in Rowling's texts are generally centred around group dynamics with particular focus on social hierarchies and power structures of the secondary world. The preoccupation with social roles and the issue of adapting into a new environment is also closely linked to the *bildung* in Rowling's novels as her characters go from adolescence to adulthood. Not only do Harry and his peers gradually learn to navigate the social structures of the magical community, they also have to reassert their identity. For this reason, Rowling intentionally avoids dealing with demographical and geographical factors although in the real world they might contribute to the above mentioned social problems. Thus, her witches and wizards do not express prejudice based on one's speech patterns or skin colour. It is as if magic itself serves as a unifying factor when it comes to basic cultural norms. Economic factors are also touched upon only very briefly and that is primarily in relation to the banking sphere when the difference between wizarding and Muggle currency is explained to Harry upon his first visit to "Gringotts, a wizarding bank run by goblins." (PS 85-6) There is no information provided about the the influx of muggle-borns impacting the wizarding economy nor are there any explanations as to whether there exists an agricultural network or not and whether manual labour is simply relegated to house elves. Also, as opposed to the well developed themes of racism, inequality, child abuse or labour exploitation, Rowling deliberately avoids dealing with more delicate issues such as homophobia or anti-semitism to avoid controversy and thus these will not be discussed in this paper.

2.4 Victorian Background

The popularity of Victorian rewritings have increased in the second half of the 20th century resulting in the formation of the genre of neo-Victorian fiction, i.e. texts which harness the Victorian era in terms of style, themes and motifs. In general, "neo-Victorian

⁵⁸ Usually featuring memories or flashbacks into the past of male characters such as Harry Potter, Tom Riddle, Severus Snape and Albus Dumbledore either perceived from their own point of view or in the form of somebody else's memory. All of these events are somehow relevant either to the plot or they offer an explanation for a particular character's behaviour and life choices.

novels imitate texts from the Victorian era and in most cases they follow the Victorian narratives structurally, formally and thematically."⁵⁹ When we look back at the 19th century, the nostalgic appeal reveals itself to be rather naive and simplistic when contrasted with the reality of the period marked by anxiety, political reforms, abolition of slavery, child labour and repressive social codes. However, the preoccupation with "Englishness," a rather vague yet traditional notion used to describe the English national consciousness, is very much present in all British literature. Jeremy Paxman argues that being English is not a birthright but "a state of mind"⁶⁰ and provides an extensive lists of characteristics relevant to the sense of Englishness.⁶¹ Typical aspects of Englishness (as it has been defined and reconstructed over time) that can be found within the Harry Potter narrative are: snobbery (the Malfoys), class and hierarchy (pure-blood ideology), hypocrisy (the Dursleys), suspicion of foreigners (the Bulgarians, the French), romantic ruralism (settings), fixation on weather (settings), public schools (Hogwarts), football (Quidditch) etc. According to Paxman, even though Englishness has changed over the years, "the attitudes of mind that made the English culture what it is - individualism, pragmatism, love of words and [...] cussedness - are unchanged."⁶²

Although the Harry Potter novels do not belong among works of neo-Victorian fiction,⁶³ Rowling does borrow a number of elements typical for nineteenth century novels and their contemporary reworkings. Rowling's fantasy construct is not a reconstruction of the Victorian period as it is not located within the historical period since the events take place in the present. Furthermore, the aim of the narrative is not to work as a mediator between the present and the Victorian era but to entertain and also to comment on real world. And while Rowling, to an extent, models the customs, norms and values of the wizarding society on the Victorian era, she alters them and only employs these features to represent and establish "the otherness" of the secondary world. Also, she is not very forthcoming with detailed specifics so we do not know to what extent the magical society imitates its Victorian model in regards to class and traditions. The Muggle world has embraced industrial revolution and radically

⁵⁹ Christian Gutleben, *Nostalgic Postmodernism: The Victorian Tradition and the Contemporary Novel* (Amsterdam and NY, 2001) 6.

⁶⁰ Jeremy Paxman, *The English: A Portrait of a People* (Penguin Books, 1999) 77.

⁶¹ Paxman also examines the identities of the "Englishman" (the gentleman or the countryman) and the "Englishwoman" (the Victorian ideal or the postmodern housewife). He states that the old British empire has been replaced by a "new England" (238) that "owes everything and nothing to the past." (255) Paxman 238, 255.

⁶² Paxman 264.

⁶³ The "desire to rewrite the historical narrative of that period by representing marginalised voices, new histories of sexuality, post-colonial viewpoints and other generally 'different' versions of the Victorian" is also not present within the works of J.K. Rowling as it is not the era itself that is at the centre of the narrative but merely serves as a contrasting background to the muggle world. This lack of re/visionary element then further supports the premise that the Harry Potter series are not works of Neo-Victorian fiction. Mark Llewellyn, "What is Neo-Victorian Studies?," *Neo-Victorian Studies* (Autumn 2008) 165.

changed due to scientific advancement. On the other hand, the wizarding world is stagnating due to witches and wizards relying on magic to solve any issues and thus the need for a social and/or political change is nearly non-existent. The invariable state of things also translates into the most basic modes of conduct presented through superficial details with special attention being paid to architecture and fashion. "Wizard clothing might be said to be frozen in time, harking back to the 17th century, when they went into hiding."⁶⁴

In general, the 19th century English novel stressed the importance of the protagonist. Many authors of the time, Charles Dickens and Charlotte Bronte for instance, focused on the personal growth of a character, a fundamental feature of the bildungsroman genre.⁶⁵ In relation to this, the Harry Potter series offers a study of an individual's (Harry Potter) moral and emotional development following his personal journey from childhood to adulthood. Rowling also draws upon classic Victorian narratives of the male orphan child hero, a literary cliché found in the works Dickens novels, for example in *Oliver Twist* (1837) or in *David Copperfield* (1850). However, the orphan hero narrative is definitely not exclusive to Victorian fiction as it has been used and continues to be present in children's literature without any restrictions. Similarly to protagonists of Dickens' bildungsromans, Harry Potter too is depicted as the victimized orphan's searching for identity and struggling against restrictions and expectations placed upon him by the society. Firstly, Harry is subjected to verbal and emotional abuse by his family, the Dursleys. Apart from being called a "freak," forced to clean the house, tend to the garden and cook and being made to sleep in a dark cupboard, his relatives show no compassion nor any affection for their nephew. Once Harry arrives at Hogwarts, he is thrust in a life-threatening situations or rather rites of passage, and is often shunned by his peers and even friends for reasons completely out of his control. As is typical for children's literature, the victimized hero receives no adult assistance, quite the contrary, it is the adults who pose the biggest threat to him - from teachers to dark creatures. Thus, Harry is forced to rely on himself and on his friends to survive the numerous deadly encounters with Voldemort and his followers. In this respect, Harry's epic quest, through which he develops from a child to an adult, from the victim into the hero, fits well into the orphan hero tradition.

⁶⁴ "Their nostalgic adherence to this old-fashioned form of dress may be seen as a clinging to old ways and old times; a matter of cultural pride."

J.K.Rowling, "On Clothing," 31 Jul 2011, *Pottermore*, Web. 2 Apr 2014.

<[http:// http://www.pottermore.com/en/book1/chapter5/moment1/clothing](http://www.pottermore.com/en/book1/chapter5/moment1/clothing)>.

⁶⁵ The term "bildungsroman" or "the formation novel" describes literary works that deal with the psychological growth of a central character from adolescence to adulthood, from a child's naivety and innocence to an adult's sense of social responsibility. The process of maturity is an arduous journey and consists of several life-changing events that mark significant changes within the character. The bildungsroman's focus, however, is dual, i.e. inward toward the self and outward toward society.

Marianne Hirsh, "The Novel of Formation as Genre: Between Great Expectations and Lost Illusions," *Genre*, 12 (Autumn 1979) 296-300.

The social dimensions of Harry Potter are also influenced by the school story narrative, a motif typical for 19th century children's literature as the system of public boarding schools is deeply rooted in British culture. Victorian children's literature reflected the gender separation with different types of books written for girls and boys. Thus, until the 1950s, the boarding school story was divided into boys and girls subgenres. For example, Thomas Hughes' *Tom Brown's School Days* (1857) features a public school for boys whereas Enid Blyton's series *Malory Towers* (1946-51) and *The Naughtiest Girl* (1940-52) are both set at public schools for girls. In Harry Potter, Rowling adapts the traditional British school story and merges the two subgenres together. Matthew Grenby identifies three basic criteria of the school story: "it is set almost entirely in a particular school, it focuses on the relationships of teachers and their pupils, and it contains attitudes and adventures unique to school life."⁶⁶ When we ignore the magical aspects, Hogwarts is otherwise a typical boarding school as students must attend classes, do homework and face punishment when they break the rules. "Out of bed so late, this'll mean detention!" (HBP 380)

Similarly to Hughes or Blyton, Rowling too stresses the importance of education through descriptions of the various subjects taught at Hogwarts, the stress of the examination period, teacher/student meetings about career options after students finish their seventh year, etc. "OWLs are really important, affect the jobs you can apply for [...] We get career advice too [...] So you can choose what NEWTs you want to do next year." (OotP 206) Unlike Blyton however, Rowling challenges the educational authority on a moral level as her characters are exposed to ambiguous motives of several professors which they have to unravel which forces them to develop their magical and intellectual skills. The objective of the school story is somewhat similar to that of bildungsroman since both are concerned with the process of growing up, the search for identity and the transition between childhood and adulthood. Generally, the protagonists of the school story as well as the coming of age narrative have to undergo both emotional and physical trials to find their place in society, to discover their identity. In heroic fantasy, the fate of the hero is usually pre-destined, that however, does not contradict the theme of personal development and self-discovery.

⁶⁶ "In Britain, public school actually denotes the most exclusive kind of private school, institutions generally founded in the nineteenth century or earlier and drawing their pupils from the social elite." Matthew Grenby, *Children's Literature* (Edinburgh University Press, 2008) 88.

3. Blood Purism as the Source of Social Conflict

The social injustices mentioned in the previous chapter generally have their origin in ignorance and/or irrational fear of the unknown and the resulting conflicts springing from such unfounded misconceptions are characteristic of interaction between different societies and their distinctive cultures. Schaeffer defines culture as "the totality of learned, socially transmitted customs, knowledge, material objects, and behavior. It includes the ideas, values, customs, and artifacts of groups of people."⁶⁷ In other words, culture is always connected to a particular society and mediated through language and behaviour. And while social norms, customs and values in general transfer from one generation to another, culture is flexible, it adapts to new elements and influences from other cultures. When speaking of culture, the issue of cultural transition and consequently culture shock must be taken into consideration, parallels of which are easily identified in the wizarding world. For this reason, I believe that examining the magical society will serve as a relevant viewpoint for the discussion of the Harry Potter phenomenon. In Harry Potter, the transition between the two worlds and their respective cultures is ensured through the existence of muggle-borns who allow for a limited overlapping of the two worlds due to their bicultural identity. "In a multicultural context, culture shock is a more or less sudden immersion into a nonspecific state of uncertainty where the individuals are not certain what is expected of them or what they can expect from the persons around them."⁶⁸ The continuous influx of muggle-borns can be easily likened to the process of immigration, of social displacement. Magical children born to non-magical parents not only have to embrace a culture alien to their own experience, but they are also subjected to its laws enforced by a governing body separate from the British Government, i.e. the Ministry of Magic.

However, it is mainly the character of Harry Potter, who provides a more detailed insight into the effects of culture shock caused by having to assume a new identity, that of a famous wizard in his case, and to adapt to a completely alien environment after ten years of ignorance in regards to his magical heritage. It is through the eyes of the child hero, a muggle raised boy with no prior knowledge of magic, i.e. in a position similar to that of the reader, that the supernatural world of wizards and witches is revealed and explored in great detail with particular focus on social injustices. The cultural differences are further emphasized

⁶⁷ Richard T. Schaeffer, *Sociology: A Brief Introduction* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2002) 51.

⁶⁸ "Culture shock is the process of initial adjustment to an unfamiliar environment. This psychological construct of culture shock has been used to describe the adjustment process in its emotional, psychological, behavioral, cognitive and physiological impact on individuals."
Paul Pedersen, *The Five Stages of Culture Shock* (ABC-CLIO, 1995) 1.

every time Harry is forced to go back to his magic-hating relatives for the summer holidays or is faced with new information about his primary culture. It is interesting to note that Rowling also offers an alternative perspective, most notably in the form of Mr Weasley and his keen interest in muggle gadgets. Here Rowling plays with the English language to show the ignorance of the wizarding world when it comes to muggle technology, for example when Mr Weasley misspells the word "electric" as "eclectic." (GoF 52) To him and similarly to other wizards and witches, the non-magical world is a strange place just as the wizarding world is a mystery to the Muggles.

Thus, from the position of an outsider, Rowling challenges the social construct of race⁶⁹ and questions ideals of authority, ethics and morality. When discussing race in the context of Harry Potter we must differentiate between human and non-human oriented prejudice⁷⁰ as the nature of these two categories differs in terms of the level of oppression that members of the discriminated groups are subjected to especially in regards to the legal sector. The features specific for a certain social group then denote not only the individual social status but also the limitations that come with it.⁷¹ The effects of discrimination vary from low such as verbal abuse or slander to physical attacks and eventually to civil war. The aim of this chapter is then to analyze the most prominent differences that separate the magical society of Harry Potter into distinct social groups of which one considers itself to be superior to another on the grounds of either magical or purist supremacy. Also, the undesirable consequences of such prejudice will be analyzed here applying the conflict perspective when necessary.

3.1 Wizarding Supremacism: Muggles, Squibs, Wizards and Witches

Supremacism, characterized by belief in the supremacy of any particular group, is of dual nature in Harry Potter narrative. Firstly, there is a clear distinction made between the magical and non-magical world. When we consider the prevalent supremacist attitude towards

⁶⁹ "The term race is a social construct. [...] That is, the classifying of individuals by external physiological differences is purely a societal product." There is no biological validity to the term race" as it basically classifies people based on their physical characteristics such as hair type, skin colour, stature etc. Shirley Jean Better, *Institutional Racism: A Primer on Theory and Strategies for Social Change* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2008) 3.

⁷⁰ "Prejudice, in its ordinary and literal sense, is prejudging any question without having sufficiently examined it, and adhering to our opinion through ignorance, malice, or perversity, in spite of every evidence to the contrary." William Hazlitt, "On Prejudice," *Sketches and Essays* (London: Richards, 1903). Bluepete Essays, Web. 10 June 2013. < <http://www.blupete.com/Literature/Essays/Hazlitt/Prejudice.htm> >.

⁷¹ "When applied to social groups, prejudice generally refers to existing biases toward the members of such groups, often based on social stereotypes, and at its most extreme, becomes denying groups benefit and rights unjustly or, conversely, unfairly showing unwarranted favor towards others." Anne-Marie Mooney-Cotter, *Culture Clash: An International Legal Perspective on Ethnic Discrimination* (Ashgate Publishing, 2013) 7-8.

Muggles, it is clear that those who do not possess magic are viewed as inherently inferior to those who do. Therefore, it is not actually the different cultures but rather a twisted notion of race that serves as the basis of prejudice which propels the plot forward. Racism "has entered into culture and determined social interaction, thus it has a direct effect on individual's lives."⁷² Where Muggles use technology and rely on science, wizards have direct access to a supernatural source of power, i.e. magic. It stands to reason that as much as science transforms the lives of muggles and in turn their culture, magic shapes the norms, values and beliefs of the magical beings in a similar manner. These different tools of survival cause a tangible rift between the two societies and mutual understanding is nigh impossible due to ignorance of their defining elements. And although Rowling does not provide much information on magic itself aside from offering rather vague explanations in regards to magical objects such as wands or remarks on the usage of spells, contemporary wizards and witches, regardless of their allegiance, perceive themselves as superior to muggles solely on the grounds of being magical, of having magical heritage.

We first encounter this type of magic based supremacism already in the first chapter of the first book ironically in the form of personal comments of Minerva McGonagall. As a Hogwarts professor and the deputy headmistress, i.e. a prominent figure in everyday contact with muggle-born students, she represents a role model and thus ought to be above bias. And yet, even she perceives muggles as inferior due to their inability to comprehend magic. "Even the Muggles have noticed something going on. [...] Well, they're not completely stupid." (PS 16) Moreover, in the very same chapter, Rowling offers a contrasting perspective through the description of the Dursley family and their attitude towards the supernatural. She stresses their appreciation of normalcy, in fact they strive on presenting themselves as a stereotypical middle class family and consider anything out of the ordinary as abnormal. Indeed, Rowling's language is often ironic especially when showing the snobbery and hypocrisy of the middle class represented by the Dursleys. Rowling has stated that "We're a phenomenally snobby society. The middle class is so funny. It's the class I know best and it's the class where you find the most pretension."⁷³ In public, the Dursleys pretend to be a perfect and loving family while at the privacy of their home they are abusive towards their nephew. Their only concern is to make a good impression, not to actually be good. Rowling is fond of using contrast to prove her point, and in this case it is especially productive as the bias is clear in the minds of both narrow-minded Muggles and wizards. Moreover, Rowling is impartial in distributing

⁷² Alana Lentin, *Racism and Ethnic Discrimination* (The Rosen Publishing Group, 2011) 71.

⁷³ Mark Lawson, *Interview with J.K. Rowling*, Southbank Centre, 27 Sept 2012, Web. 2 Jun 2014.
<http://www.jkrowling.com/en_GB/#/timeline/southbank-centre/>.

judgemental attitude and thus all of her characters regardless of the "good and evil" classification display varying levels of bias towards one another. And it is this bigoted impartiality that further attributes to the social realism employed in Harry Potter.

On the other hand, the so-called squibs, i.e. "someone who was born into a wizarding family but hasn't got any magic powers, kind of the opposite of muggle-born wizards" (ChoS 159-60), are regarded as defective due to their considerably weakened or outright non-existent link to magic. Logically, squibs are not allowed to attend magical schools and have to be either homeschooled or enter the muggle education system. Hence, despite having magical ancestry they are excluded from the magical community and treated as if they were Muggles. Through this Rowling alludes to the social exclusion of physically impaired people who, due to their medical problems, have unequal job opportunities etc. Moreover, the discrimination against squibs is institutionalized since the wizarding law does not recognize them as citizens. For example, when Arabella Figg is giving testimony at Harry's trial in front of the Wizengamot there are no records of her existence because she is not considered a proper witch. Consequently, she is not being taken seriously by Minister Fudge not only because he wishes to discredit Harry, but also because of her squib status.

"We have no record of any witch or wizard living in Little Whinging, other than Harry Potter," said Madam Bones at once.

"I'm a squib", said Mrs Figg. "So you wouldn't have me registered, would you?"

"A Squib, eh?" Said Fudge, eyeing her closely. "We'll be checking that.

[...] Incidentally, can Squibs see Dementors?" he added. (OoTP 131)

In the case of Figg, who resides in a Muggle neighbourhood, she is viewed as a "batty cat-loving old lady from nearby Wisteria Walk." (OotP 8) Even in the Muggle world, she lives at the edge of the society, she is a peripheral character, a comic figure stereotyped according to her age.⁷⁴ Both Harry and his relatives view her in terms of her age and appearance, her physical attributes especially define her as an elderly person. "Her grizzled grey hair was escaping from its hairnet, a clanking string shopping bag was swinging from her wrist and her feet were halfway out of her tartan carpet slippers." (OotP 23) Without exception, Rowling portrays her elderly characters in a stereotypical fashion with special

⁷⁴ This particular type of prejudice is referred to as "ageism," a term coined by Robert Butler in 1969 in his article "Age-ism: another form of bigotry." Butler defined ageism as a negative perception of elderly people, i.e. systematic stereotyping and discrimination against people because they are old. "Age-ism reflects a deep seated uneasiness [...] a personal revulsion and distaste for growing old, disease, disability; and fear or powerlessness, 'uselessness', and death." Robert N. Butler, "Age-ism: Another Form of Bigotry," *The Gerontologist*, 9 (Winter, 1969) 243. *Oxford Journals*. Web. 19 Jul 2014. <http://gerontologist.oxfordjournals.org/content/9/4_Part_1/243.extract>.

focus on their deteriorating health. For example, Horace Slughorn, a retired potions master, is described as "an enormously fat, bald, old man" (HBP 65) who openly acknowledges the negative effects of growing old as he cites his various ailments. "Weak chest. Wheezy. Rheumatism too. Can't move like I used to. Well, that's to be expected. Old age. Fatigue." (HBP 68)

Another example of how squibs are treated in the magical world is "Argus Filch, the caretaker." (ChoS 130) Unable to perform magic, he occupies one of the lowest working positions in the magical community. "It's only a bit of mud to you, boy, but to me it's an extra hour scrubbing!" (ChoS 138) Similarly to Figg, Filch too is invisible in the eyes of wizards and witches and is respected neither by other Hogwarts staff members nor by the student body. In fact, he is "loathed by every student in the school." (ChoS 130) For that purpose, Rowling highlights his repulsiveness by pointing out his unappealing physical appearance. "There were purple patches on his sunken, veined cheeks, his jowls were aquiver and his thin grey hair disheveled." (OotP 255) Even his only companion is described in similar terms. "Filch owned a cat called Mrs. Norris, a scrawny, dust-colored creature with bulging, lamp like eyes just like Filch's." (PS 145) The caretaker's office too resembles its occupant's decrepit physical state. "The room was dingy and windowless, lit by a single oil lamp dangling from the low ceiling. A faint smell of fried fish lingered about the place." (ChoS 137) In general, Filch is portrayed as an angry and resentful old man who hates students because they were born with magic while he was not. "He's bitter." (ChoS 160) And it is precisely his negative perception of both himself and others caused by self-loathing and social exclusion that turns him into a tragic caricature of an old lonely man. However, he is not redeemed, quite the contrary as Rowling reinforces the stereotype when Filch gleefully collaborates with Umbridge in the abuse of students when she temporarily assumes control of Hogwarts in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*.

Aside from the examples of Figg and Filch (see above), there is also the character of Neville Longbottom who has self-esteem issues based on his belief, instilled in him by others, that he is weak magically wise. "Everyone knows I'm almost a Squib." (ChoS 201) Despite his pure-blood status, he considers himself inferior and is treated as such by others. Apparently, the pressure on young children who do not exhibit signs of magic in their early years can be quite strong. As can be gleaned from Neville's recollection of his childhood memories, magical parents and family members are willing to endanger their children as long as the result is a bout of accidental magic:

My great-uncle Algie kept trying [...] to force some magic out of me – he

pushed me off the end of Blackpool pier once, I nearly drowned – but nothing happened to me until I was eight. Great-uncle Algie [...] was hanging me out of an upstairs window by the ankles [...] he accidentally let go. But I bounced [...] They were all very pleased. Gran was crying, she was so happy. (PS 137)

The negative attitude wizards and witches adopt when their children do not show signs of magic early on are similar that of parents who have excessively high expectations. Rowling criticizes overly demanding parents who push their children to participate in sports and/or to do better at school out of a desire for them to succeed later in life. Such pressure can severely damage the child's emotional development. Neville's self-esteem issues stem exactly from this as it was his family's lack of positive support that impacted his sense of self.

3.2 Pure-blood Supremacism: Muggle-borns, Half-bloods, Pure-bloods

In the secondary world of Harry Potter, Rowling managed to create a rather homogeneous culture unified by the governing principle of magic (see chapter 2). At first glance, the British magical community as a whole appears to be free of ethnic discrimination. At Hogwarts we can see students with different ethnic backgrounds being accepted by their peers in all of the four houses.⁷⁵ In fact, with the exception of the visiting French and Bulgarian students during the Triwizard Tournament, Rowling dealing with ethnic minorities altogether. What she does instead, is employ ethnicity markers, such as names, appearance and accent, which allows the reader to deduce a particular person's ethnic origin. For example, Minerva McGonagall's surname⁷⁶ and her wearing various items of clothing patterned with tartan such as "a tartan bathrobe" (PS 260), "a tartan dressing gown" (OotP 410) and using "a tartan-edged handkerchief" (HBP 574) identifies her as a Scotswoman. Similarly, we can safely assume that Seamus Finnigan is Irish based on both his names and his speech. "Me dad's a Muggle." (PS 137) Another example of such naive and simplistic identity definition is Cho Chang, her name is of Asian descent and her physical attributes further support this assumption as she has "long, shiny black hair" (OotP 170) typical for Asiatic people. Moreover, at Hogwarts Christmas and Easter are celebrated while non-European holidays are not even mentioned.

⁷⁵ For example, Cho Chang or Padma Patil from Ravenclaw, Dean Thomas, Parvati Patil, Lee Jordan and Angelina Johnson from Gryffindor and Blaise Zabini from Slytherin.

⁷⁶ In a radio interview from 1999, Rowling revealed that she named the character of Professor McGonagall after William McGonagall, an infamous Scottish poet. Christopher Lydon, *Radiocast: Interview with J.K. Rowling*, The Connection: WBUR Boston Radio, 12 Oct 1999, Web. 20 May 2013. <<http://www.accio-quote.org/articles/1999/1099-connectiontransc2.htm>>.

Rowling conforms to mainstream ethnic representation, working with certain characteristics presumed to be typical for a particular culture. In this respect, her portrayal of ethnic minorities in the Harry Potter novels mirrors the situation in Great Britain not to provide social commentary on this issue but merely to introduce multi-ethnic diversity of magical Britain which in a way parallels the real world. The ethnic stereotyping becomes particularly evident when Rowling introduces students from the two magical schools, i.e. Beauxbatons, France and Durmstrang, Eastern Europe. Aside from names such as Fleur and Gabrielle Delacour, or Igor Karkaroff, it is mainly the foreigners' poor pronunciation that sets them apart from Hogwarts' students and staff. The French guttural 'R' is particularly telling as is Victor Krum's distinctive accent. "Veil, ve have a castle also." (GoF 455) Moreover, Rowling hints at the different economic standing of Britain and Eastern Europe when "The Durmstrang students [...] were picking up the golden plates and goblets and examining them, apparently impressed." (GoF 274-5) However, while the above mentioned characters are easily recognized by the reader in terms of their ethnic background, they play only insignificant roles and are mainly used to emphasize the fact that ethnicity has no effect on one's ability to perform magic. It is not surprising, considering that the story is set in Great Britain, that nearly all of the main characters are white, English and male.

Despite Rowling's subtle attempt at social inclusion of ethnic minorities, the magical community is far from perfect as blood supremacism tends to cause social tension. Blood purism, a concept based on the belief that pure-bloods are superior to half-bloods and to muggle-borns based on their magical lineage,⁷⁷ is promoted by a group of wealthy and politically influential pure-bloods, as the means of continued power and control. However, this has not always been the case as blood purism gained popularity and eventually become the dominant ideology of supremacist pure-bloods only after "the magical community went into voluntary hiding following the persecution by Muggles in 1692."⁷⁸ The questionable purity of a person's blood has been challenged since the beginning and has no factual basis:

Muggle/wizard marriage had been common for centuries, those now self-

⁷⁷ Rowling herself has noted that the pure-blood supremacists ideology bears a striking resemblance to that of the Nazis during the Second World War although she had not intended to draw this connection. "The expressions "pure-blood," "half-blood," and "muggle-born" have been coined by people to whom these distinctions matter, and express their originators' prejudices. ... If you think this is far-fetched, look at some of the real charts the Nazis used to show what constituted "Aryan" or "Jewish" blood. I saw one in the Holocaust Museum in Washington when I had already devised the "pure-blood," "half-blood," and "Muggle-born" definitions and was chilled to see that the Nazi used precisely the same warped logic as the Death Eaters. A single Jewish grandparent "polluted" the blood, according to their propaganda." J.K.Rowling, "FAQ Questions," J.K.Rowling Official Site, 15 May 2004. Web. 14 Sep 2013. <http://www.jkrowling.com/textonly/en/faq_view.cfm?id=58>.

⁷⁸ J.K.Rowling, "Pure-blood," 31 Jul 2011, *Pottermore*. Web. 7 Apr 2014. <<http://www.pottermore.com/en/book2/chapter7/moment1/pure-blood>>.

describing as pure-bloods were unlikely to have any higher proportion of wizarding ancestors than those who did not. To call one-self a pure-blood was more accurately a declaration of political or social intent than a statement of biological fact.⁷⁹

And thus, the true conflict does not stem from the purity of one's blood but that of power. Indeed, it is based on ideology⁸⁰ rather than on biological differences although those factor in as well. In his introduction to sociological theory, *A Good Book, in Theory*, Alan Sears summarizes the focus of conflict theory thusly:

Societies are defined by inequality that produces conflict, rather than which produces order and consensus. This conflict based on inequality can only be overcome through a fundamental transformation of the existing relations in the society, and is productive of new social relations. The disadvantaged have structural interests that run counter to the status quo, which, once they are assumed, will lead to social change.⁸¹

In other words, social conflict theory views dominant groups and the privileges they enjoy due to their elevated social status to be at the root of the prejudice and consequent oppression and/or acts of violence against other groups that may pose a threat to the status quo.

When we consider the blood purists to be the privileged group, several similarities become apparent: most of them are wealthy, pure-blooded members of the upper class. The Blacks are a prime example of such a blood purist family. "The tapestry looked immensely old [...] a sprawling family tree dating back to the middle Ages. [...] The Noble and Most Ancient House of Black." (OotP 103) It is only natural that they are interested in protecting their social status, economic and political power. In the United Kingdom, the nobility holds hereditary titles of peerage and until 1999 noble families were entitled to a seat in the House of Lords.⁸² Although Rowling alludes to the old hereditary system, she does not give out any details in regards to their position within the magical government. The House of Lords also used to act as the final court. In the Harry Potter novels, it is the "Wizengamot, the Wizard

⁷⁹ J.K.Rowling, "Pure-blood," 31 Jul 2011, *Pottermore*. Web. 7 Apr 2014. <<http://www.pottermore.com/en/book2/chapter7/moment1/pure-blood>>.

⁸⁰ The concept of ideology is as complex as it is inclusive. The complexity intensifies when we consider how many "ideologies" have appeared in the last hundred years or so. According to Freedman's definition ideology can be understood as a "thought-behaviour, a conceptual map for navigating the socio-political realm." In other words, Freedman views ideology as an intersection between beliefs' system and political power. That, however, does not mean that ideology must necessarily translate into a dominant form of social thought, merely that it is a tool to legitimize injustice motivated by socio-political interests of a particular group.

⁸¹ Alan Sears, *A Good Book, in Theory: A Guide to Theoretical Thinking* (University of Toronto Press, 2008) 34.

⁸² Sally Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England* (Greenwood Publishing Group, 1996) 23.

High Court"⁸³ (OotP 90) that fills the role of high court of law. It also appears to be quite similar to the British Parliament as there are various decrees and laws passed by the Wizengamot. However, whether membership is hereditary or not remains unclear. Although, it appears that wealthy and/or politically connected members of the elite (The Malfoys) are able to directly influence the nature of laws being passed and consequently the society as a whole.⁸⁴ An issue that arouses concern in the real world as well, the connection between politics, business and media is particularly worrying as it happens behind-the-scenes yet affects everyone. For instance, Arthur Weasley abuses his position of authority for purely personal reasons. He is employed at the Ministry of Magic working at "The Misuse of Muggle Artifacts Office" (ChoS 38) and yet, his greatest hobby is to tinker with magical objects. "Arthur Weasley, you made sure there was a loophole when you wrote that law! [...] Just so you could carry on tinkering with all that Muggle rubbish in your shed!" (ChoS 47)

At the same time, the conflict perspective focuses on how these issues cause social changes. The differences which serve as the source of blood purist bigotry prevalent in the secondary world of Harry Potter consequently cause agitation affecting all social groups regardless of their involvement or stance on the issues of racism and equality. However, the main social conflict is not between the magical and non-magical societies as those are more or less independent on each other. The social problems presented in Rowling's novels are primarily contained within the secondary world whereas the primary world provides contrast only rarely. Instead, the author draws a comparison between the secondary world and the real world which allows Rowling to address problematic issues of authority, class, prejudice, etc. From the supremacist perspective, the British class system is re-enacted in the Victorian like wizarding community, the rich have power whereas the poor are powerless. This obsession with class is not only Victorian but very much present in contemporary Britain, a remnant of a not so distant past. In general, "class is revealed in manners, speech, clothing, education and values. [...] Different classes live in separate areas and observe different social customs"⁸⁵ pertaining to their class. And even though Britain is officially a classless society, the concept of class remains a potent social issue as elites, often represented by prestigious public schools,

⁸³ The word "Wizengamot" is most likely based on "Witengamot", an Anglo-Saxon council of nobles and advisors to the king. In Old English, the verb "witan" meant "to know, to have knowledge" and the noun "gemót" meant "meeting/assembly/council". The phrase "Witena gemót" (referenced for example in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*) then translates as "an assembly of the wise." Joseph Bosworth, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*, Ed. Thomas Northcote Toller et al. Comp. Sean Christ and Ondřej Tichý. Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague, 21 Mar. 2010. Web. 21 Jul. 2014. <<http://www.bosworthtoller.com/036091>>, <<http://www.bosworthtoller.com/015291>>.

⁸⁴ "The division of society into elite and mass is universal [...] a few exercise a relatively great weight of power, and the many exercise comparatively little."

Harold Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan, *Power and Society* (Yale University Press: New Haven, 1950) 219.
⁸⁵ Mitchell 17.

continue to shape the community's structure. In Harry Potter, the preoccupation with class is explored in a conservative hereditarian context since it is the pure-bloods who campaign against those without magical ancestry and/or "impure" blood. Thus it is not the economic or educational differences but the level of magical heritage that divides the classes. And while the social hierarchy is described only vaguely as a person's value is measured by their actions and choices as seen through Harry's perspective, we can surmise that the pure-bloods represent the upper class, half-bloods represent the middle class and muggle-borns the lower class, i.e. a division based on social status. However, this is not a clear cut classification because migration among classes is possible⁸⁶ and restricted only among the families of blood purists⁸⁷ such as the Blacks or the Malfoys⁸⁸ who openly discriminate muggle-borns - from calling them derogatory names such as "mudblood"⁸⁹ (ChoS 242) to outright attacking them.

In the secondary world, power structures play an important role. Given that the Harry Potter series are set at a boarding school for children, it is the school hierarchy that the protagonist and therefore the reader are exposed to the most. Upon first entering the educational institution of the secondary magical world, the students are sorted into one of the four houses based on their dominant personality traits. The "Sorting Ceremony" (PS 126) determines not only their school house affiliation for the next seven years but also irrevocably alters their perception of members of other Hogwarts houses. Quidditch matches and the house point system then further deepen the rivalry between the four houses. Prejudices based on one's house are quickly instilled, especially in the case of children who grew up in the wizarding world, and carry on to adult life. This view is supported by the fact that most students sorted into Slytherin are upper class pure-bloods. Furthermore, the House of Slytherin is viewed as "evil" not only by other students, Gryffindors in particular, but even by staff members. It is actually Hagrid, the "Keeper of Keys and Grounds at Hogwarts" (PS 57),

⁸⁶ "In practice, class differences tend to be reproduced over the generations, so that children take on their parents' class membership, although there is always a certain social mobility."
Thomas Hylland Eriksen, "Social Hierarchies," *Small Places, Large Issues: An Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology* (Pluto Press, 2001) 150.

⁸⁷ Rowling mocks the pure-bloods as their intermarriage strategy has led to a decrease in physical, mental and magical power. As Sirius Black puts it: "The pure-blood families are all interrelated [...] If you're only going to let your sons and daughters marry pure-bloods your choice is very limited." (OotP 105) Prime examples of inbreeding are the Gaunts, "a very ancient Wizarding family noted for a vein of instability and violence that flourished through the generations due to their habit of marrying their own cousins." (HBP 200-1) Marvolo Gaunt, Voldemort's grandfather, is depicted as "oddly proportioned." (HBP 192) His children, Morfin and Merope also show signs of deformity. "Her eyes, like her brother's, stared in opposite directions." (HBP 194)

⁸⁸ Members of the Malfoy family in particular provide a number of comments in regards to the blood purist attitude. For example, by claiming that "some wizarding families are much better than other" (PS 120), Draco Malfoy sets himself apart from "blood traitors" (OotP 96) and non-pure-bloods.

⁸⁹ Ronald Weasley represents "blood traitors," purebloods who does not discriminate against half-bloods or muggle-borns, sums up the derogatory term and the blood purist attitude thusly: "Mudblood's a really foul name for someone who was muggle-born [...] Dirty blood. Comon blood. It's mad. Most wizards these days are half-blood anyway. If we hadn't married Muggles we'd have died out." (ChoS 127)

whose claim that "There's not a single witch or wizard who went bad who wasn't a Slytherin" (PS 90) ultimately influences Harry's decision to beg the "Sorting Hat" (PS 123) to sort him into Gryffindor instead of Slytherin. Harry himself acknowledges that his negative opinion of Slytherins is subjective and not necessarily based on his own experiences with the other students. "Perhaps it was Harry's imagination, after all he'd heard about Slytherin, but he thought they looked like an unpleasant lot." (PS 131)

And yet, aside from the Hogwarts sorting system, the image of the unofficial social hierarchy within the magical community remains unclear given that only a portion of the pure-bloods conform to the blood purist agenda. Ironically, Voldemort himself is a half-blood and only through deceit does he manage to acquire pure-blood followers, i.e. Death Eaters. The group that forms around Voldemort further distinguishes itself from other social groups through dress code, symbolism, speech, accent and titles⁹⁰ feeding to the mystery of the upper class as the barriers between classes become more tangible. The usage of symbolism can also be found in reality as many racist groups use symbols either to mark their targets or to distinguish themselves from the rest of the society. In contrast, pure-bloods who do not follow the pure-blood doctrine freely mingle with all classes regardless of social status or heritage. For instance, James Potter, a pure-blooded heir, had married Lily Evans, a muggle-born.

However, it is not only the pure-bloods who are prejudiced but ironically they are also victims of their own propaganda. In the second novel, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, Harry, Ron and Hermione suspect Draco of being "the heir of Slytherin" (ChoS 173) because of his magical lineage and the fact that the Malfoy family prides itself on being blood purists. "The whole lot of them have been in Slytherin. [...] They could easily be Slytherin's descendants." (ChoS 173) Draco's passive-aggressive attitude towards muggle-borns only serves to cement their suspicion. "You'll be next, Mudbloods!" (ChoS 173) Even when Draco is found to be innocent of releasing the deadly basilisk among the student body, he is still seen as the enemy. In fact, Rowling paints all Slytherins in a negative light. Voldemort and his Death Eaters are portrayed as evil, cruel and/or insane while Slytherin students show themselves to be quite spiteful and mean. Generally, Slytherins have no redeeming qualities and without exception conform to the dark image of their House. The aversion of other Hogwarts Houses towards Slytherin is further increased by the actions of a select few, namely

⁹⁰ Voldemort's followers wear hooded cloaks and masks to hide their identity which is reminiscent of the Ku Klux Klan in the US. The Death Eaters also bear the Dark Mark, a tattoo that links all of them to their leader magically and visually, and they use a spell called Morsmorde to inspire fear in their victims. Furthermore, when we consider that Voldemort grew up during the Second World War that took place in the primary world (history, culture and social order are modeled on the real world) and his actions effectively spur on the Second Wizarding War, the similarities between blood purists and fascists are staggering.

Snape's apparent favoritism towards his own House, the aggressive style of the Slytherin Quidditch team, the behaviour of Umbridge's "Inquisitorial Squad" (OotP 551) led by Draco, and of course, the abuse and torture that students and their families have suffered at the hands of Death Eaters or their sympathizers. However, we ought to keep in mind, that the focus is either on adult graduates or on Harry's year group. In other words, there is no way of confirming that all Slytherin students, the younger years especially, behave as those mentioned above.

Apart from discrimination aimed at a particular group (see above), there is one aspect that serves as justification for masses to turn against an individual regardless of his or hers blood status or political leanings and that is the label of "being a dark wizard" which equals to being evil. For example, when it is revealed that Harry is a Parselmouth, he is subjected to scorn and emotional abuse from the whole school based solely on the fact that Salazar Slytherin was a Parselmouth. "Being able to talk to snakes was what Salazar Slytherin was famous for. That's why the symbol of Slytherin is a serpent." (ChoS 213) Apparently, the ability to communicate with serpents immediately denotes evil although it is just another, albeit magical, language not a sign of an individual's nature. Harry, drawing upon a different experience, cannot understand why his ability to speak to snakes presents such a problem for his peers. It is not until finding that Voldemort has the same ability that Harry begins to doubt himself. Similarly to the Dursley's abysmal treatment of their nephew stemming from their fear of the unknown, the wizarding public immediately turns on Harry and he becomes a social pariah. For example, Ernie Macmillan begins to spread rumours about Harry believing him to be "dark/evil" based on an unfounded common belief about the ability to speak to snakes being inherently evil. "He's a Parselmouth. Everyone knows that's the mark of a Dark Wizard." (ChoS 216) Rowling uses situations such as Harry being ostracized for something completely out of his control, to show how society is firmly set against anything even remotely out of the norm no matter how irrational and unfounded a particular opinion is.

3.3 Politics and War

Drawing on her own experience, Rowling modelled the governmental structure of both the primary and the secondary world on the contemporary British model altering it to fit the current socio-political situation in the magical society. The Ministry of Magic thus presents a very realistic image of a governing body with all its weaknesses. Although the system appears to promote equality where wizards and witches are concerned at least, it is far from perfect. Rowling's negative portrayal of the Ministry of Magic defined by bureaucracy and censorship

resembles familiar assumptions about existing governmental structures. Through political figures of "Cornelius Fudge, the Minister of Magic" (PoA 33)⁹¹ and "Dolores Umbridge, Senior Undersecretary to the Minister" (OotP 127), Rowling criticizes corruption and the abuse of authority. For instance, Umbridge abuses her power to legalize discrimination against werewolves. "She drafted a bit of anti-werewolf legislation two years ago that makes it almost impossible for him to get a job." (OotP 271) On a similar note, Lucius Malfoy⁹² was able to bribe his way out of Azkaban when he was suspected of being a Death Eater. Minister Fudge himself defends him against accusations. "Malfoy was cleared! [...] A very old family - donations to excellent causes." (GoF 765)

Both male and female Ministry officials are, in most cases, portrayed as either incompetent, immoral and/or corrupt. The Minister himself is portrayed as a weak and incompetent leader concerned only with keeping his position and popularity. Thus, when Harry reveals that Voldemort has regained a physical body, Fudge refuses to take necessary precautions to stop the Dark Lord's second rise to power. "Accepting that Voldemort's back would mean trouble [...] Fudge can't bring himself to face it." (OotP 89) Furthermore, he uses the *Daily Prophet*, a wizarding newspaper, to publicly discredit both Albus Dumbledore and Harry Potter to cover Voldemort's return:

The Ministry's leaning heavily on the *Daily Prophet* not to report any of what they're calling Dumbledore's rumour-mongering, so most of the wizarding community are completely unaware any things happened. (OotP 89)

The Ministry of Magic is essentially controlling the wizarding newspaper as vital information is heavily censored or denied and misleading propaganda is printed instead. And it is precisely because of these deficiencies in the centralized power structure that Voldemort's followers are able to infiltrate the Ministry in such a short time. Rowling's depiction of the *Daily Prophet* alludes to contemporary concerns about the connection between politics and mass media. The allusion is not limited to totalitarian systems in which the press, television, etc. fall under direct control of the government but also to democratic societies in which the elites are able to influence the public opinion through the mass media.⁹³ Whether Rowling actually intended to draw this comparison is unclear but the connection remains nonetheless.

⁹¹ Minister of Magic, i.e. a position of authority that can be equated to that of the British Prime Minister.

⁹² Lucius Malfoy's actions in regards to the Ministry of Magic remind us of a lobbyist, intentionally corrupting the law to serve his own interest. He is known to have influence on high-ranking ministry officials. "Malfoy's been giving generously to all sorts of things for years... gets him in with the right people... then he can ask favors... delay laws he doesn't want passed... he's very well-connected." (OotP 141)

⁹³ Rowling published the first Harry Potter novel in 1997 and the last in 2007, this corresponds with the premiership of Tony Blair, a time of controversy since the Labour Party was closely linked with the media as they continue to have a huge impact on voters.

In reaction to Voldermort's first rise to power, an illegal organization formed around the figure of Albus Dumbledore to oppose the Dark Lord and his followers. The Order of the Phoenix reforms again in anticipation of the Second Wizarding War. "It's a secret society. [...] Dumbledore's in charge, he founded it. It's the people who fought against You-Know-Who last time." (OotP 65) And while the Order does not ignore the legal system, it certainly operates outside the boundaries of law. However, unlike Death Eaters, members of the Order are portrayed as heroes while Death Eaters are shown as villains. In other words, one group has a morally higher ground even though both utilize magic just as dangerous and devastating as their opponents. This is typical for opposing social groups when one claims positive markers for themselves while applying negative attributions to others. In the view of this, even when the Order's actions could be considered illegal, they are overlooked as necessary evil. The most notable example is when Severus Snape finds out that Harry must die in order to destroy the seventh horcrux in Harry's scar. "You have kept him alive so that he can die at the right moment? [...] You have been raising him like a pig for slaughter." (DH 551)

In the light of this, Rowling's portrayal of both sides of the war provides an apt opportunity for an exploration of morality in the face of social conflict. However, Rowling does not show war efforts as managed by the Ministry even though it has its own public security forces such as the "Aurors" (GoF 180) or "Hit Wizards" (PoA 155), trained officers responsible for apprehending dangerous criminals. The Ministry's involvement in protecting the community appears to be nearly non-existent and Rowling does not show its potential until it is under Voldemort's control. Thus, the fight is carried on mainly between Death Eaters and the Order of the Phoenix. These two groups remain rather small in number until later on in the series when the inevitable battle between Voldemort and Harry becomes imminent. In the last book, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, both organizations start to gather allies to prepare for the final battle which takes place at Hogwarts. Given the scope of the series, the civil war is restricted to British borders and is fought on a much smaller scale as there are no real armies to speak of.

Already in the first novel, the concept of blood purity is used by blood purists, Death Eaters especially, to support their political views and their hostile attitude towards Muggles, muggle-borns and also towards half-bloods and pure-bloods who oppose the pure-blood doctrine, i.e. blood traitors. However, it is not until the sixth novel when their behaviour turns into physical violence. Over the course of the last two books, Death Eaters manage to infiltrate the Ministry of Magic and seize control of the government controlling the masses through terror, fear and propaganda. After that, the situation escalates quickly and muggle-

borns come to be legally persecuted by the "Muggle-born Registration Commission," (DH 203) from that moment onwards racism becomes institutionalized and blood purism becomes the dominant ideology. Pamphlets titled "Mudbloods and the Dangers They Pose to a Peaceful Pure-Blood Society" (HP DH 205) are distributed among the magical population and witches and wizards are investigated in regards to their "blood status, family and security status." (DH 207) The muggle-born registration alludes to the situation of Jews in Nazi Germany as Jewish people were subjected to similar unjustified injustices. Those who lack "proper" heritage are then put on trial on the assumption that they have acquired magic in a nefarious manner:

"A wand was taken from you upon your arrival at the Ministry today, [...]
Could you please tell us from which witch or wizard you took that wand?"
[...] "I didn't t-take it from anybody. I b-bought it [...] It -it -it chose me."
[...] "No, I don't think so, Mrs Cattermole. Wands only choose witches or
wizards. You are not a witch." (DH 214).

The government not only fails to uphold basic rights of its citizens but actively prosecutes them for being muggle-born. Those who are found guilty of lacking the proper magical lineage are stripped of their citizen status and either are sentenced to Azkaban or receive the Dementor's kiss,⁹⁴ another parallel with the real world and Hitler's regime as people were murdered for reasons completely out of their control.⁹⁵ Voldemort and his followers have thus successfully managed to overpower the entire community by taking control of its governing body. The most horrifying outcome of this shift in political power is genocide.⁹⁶ On her US book tour in October 2007, Rowling has said: "I very consciously wanted to show what is one of the great evils of war, which is that totally innocent people are slaughtered... Another great evil of war is that children lose their families."⁹⁷ The persecution of muggle-borns and half-breeds during the Second Wizarding War forced many to flee the country. This of course affects not only them and their families but the society as a whole. Thus, prejudice then becomes the vehicle for social change as opposition rises to overthrow the blood purists.

⁹⁴ "You can exist without your soul [...] But you'll have no sense of self any more, no memory, no... anything. [...] You'll just – exist. As an empty shell. And your soul is gone for ever... lost." (PoA 183)

⁹⁵ Rowling also alludes to other contemporary civil conflicts for example the genocide of the Tutsi people in Rwanda in 1994 or the South African apartheid, a system of racial segregation.

⁹⁶ "Genocide might be defined as the deliberate killing of most or all members of a collective group for the mere fact of being members of that group. [...] The archetypal example of genocide in modern times, on any conceivable definition, was, of course, the nazi Holocaust of European Jewry before and, most directly and murderously, during the Second World War."

W.D.Rubinstein, *Genocide: A History* (Pearson Education, 2004) 1-2

⁹⁷ J.K.Rowling, *Open Book Tour: Interview with J.K.Rowling*, New Orleans, 18 Oct 2007, Web. 27 Nov 2013. <http://blog.nola.com/living/2007/10/new_orleans_students_give_rowl.html>.

4. Racial Prejudice and Oppressed Minorities

The disparity between humans and non-humans in the secondary world of Harry Potter stems from the imbalance in the distribution of power. "Politics is linked with power; both power that people exert over each other, and ways in which society wields power over people by imposing institutionalized constraints on their agency."⁹⁸ The Ministry of Magic, the centre of political power, basically promotes racism⁹⁹ and enforces its views on the magical world. In this respect, it is humans who shape the social structure according to their supremacist beliefs, placing themselves as the ultimate authority - the privileged race. The prevalent view of the social structure of the magical world is best illustrated in the description of "The Fountain of Magical Brethen" (OotP 118) located in the Atrium of the Ministry of Magic. From the following excerpt, it is clear that the wizarding community considers itself superior to other magical beings:

A group of golden statues, larger than life-size, stood in the middle of a circular pool. Tallest of them all was a noble-looking wizard with his wand pointing straight up in the air. Grouped around him were a beautiful witch, a centaur, a goblin and a house-elf. The last three were all looking adoringly up at the witch and the wizard. (OotP 117)

In general, racial classification is based on biological, cultural, historical and social features distinguishing particular genotypes from one another. In the case of other magical races it is even easier to recognize the different genetic make-up since they are another species altogether. Aside from their significantly different anatomy which immediately sets them apart from humans, races such as goblins, centaurs, merepeople and giants have formed their own distinct societies defined by unique cultural aspects such as language, history and tradition, all of which further separates them from the wizarding community. However, despite the undeniable proof that the before mentioned races have formed stable communities independent on the wizarding one and therefore logically ought to enjoy the same social status,¹⁰⁰ they are not granted the same rights due to their creature status as designated by the wizard-ruled magical government. This classification basically puts races such as werewolves

⁹⁸ Eriksen 157.

⁹⁹ "Racism is an individual or an institutional practice that perpetuates inequality, based on racial membership." Better 10.

¹⁰⁰ Keller defines status as "a position that an individual occupies in opposition to other members of a particular society. [...] Social status defines one's rights and responsibilities towards other people. [...] In this respect, social status is determined by hierarchy and constitutes the basis of social roles and social interaction." Keller, 195.

or house-elves on a level similar to that of magical animals, none of which posses higher mental faculties that would enable them to form complex social structures.

Therefore, all non-human species regardless of their level of intelligence fall under the jurisdiction of the "Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures, the second largest Department at the British Ministry of Magic." (FB xviii) There are three types of magical creatures recognized by law: beings, beasts or spirits belonging to "the Being Division, the Beast Division or the Spirit Division" (FB xiii) respectively. This classification is based on the creature's "sufficient intelligence to understand the laws of the magical community" (FB xii) and also "on the perceived dangerousness of a creature." (FB xxii) In regards to basic rights, goblins, centaurs, etc. are forced to deal with the Ministry of Magic via Liaison Offices and are denied representation in the government entirely based solely on their designated creature status which inherently puts them on an unequal footing¹⁰¹ when compared to witches and wizards. Moreover, not only are they treated as inherently inferior they are denied the same rights that wizards and witches enjoy such as the right to carry a wand. In this respect, the Ministry of Magic restrict their access to both political and magical power. "Clause three of the Code of Wand Use: No non-human creature is permitted to carry or use a wand." (GoF 148-9) The apparent segregation, as other species live only in certain areas, also significantly limits any chances at resolving the situation. Non-human magical beings are thus subjected to laws and norms of the wizarding world regardless of their consent. While this may be an understandable course of action, especially in the case of magical animals, in order to protect the magical world from being exposed to Muggles, it stands to reason that magically adept species such as goblins are fully capable of handling their own affairs instead of being forced to submit to laws being passed on their behalf. The non-human oriented discrimination is thus not based on the lack of magical ancestry and the ability to use magic but solely on the basis of one's species.

4.1 Goblins

Goblins from classic fairy tales are generally depicted as small malevolent or mischievous spirits. However, 19th century literature appropriated and built upon the negative image of goblins stealing human children.¹⁰² For example, in *The Princess and the Goblin*, MacDonald uses the themes of separation and mutual hatred between goblins and humans to

¹⁰¹ Social inequality is linked to racial inequality, both are processes that drastically limit a particular group's opportunities and choices within a society.

¹⁰² A motif found in many folk tales, referenced, for example, in Sikes Wirt's compilation of Welsh fairy tales *British Goblins: Welsh Folk-lore, Fairy Mythology and Traditions* (1880) or Edwin S. Hartland's folklore study *The Science of Fairy Tales: An Inquiry Into Fairy Mythology* (1891).

highlight the cultural anxiety of his time, the era of the British empire. In this context, goblins represent the conquered race/nation while humans are the invaders/colonialists. Harnessing folklore and classic literary representations of goblins found in older texts, Rowling adopts similar approach as her goblins too form a separate culture from the wizarding one. Like MacDonald's or Tolkien's goblins, they live underground, in caves and mines, and despise humans and their hostile perception is returned. The apparent xenophobia expressed by both races is reminiscent of the situation in the real world. Rowling employs folklore images to illustrate cultural concerns and attitudes towards the issue of racism, colonialism, immigration and culture clash. In the words of Bill Weasley: "Dealings between wizards and goblins have been fraught for centuries [...] There has been fault on both sides." (DH 417) This stands true as there is a general feeling of distrust displayed by both, goblin and wizard characters¹⁰³ alike regardless of their inclination to good or evil. However, the true scale of the racial discrimination prevalent in the magical world that the goblins are subjected to is revealed through little bits of information here and there. Firstly, it is necessary to note that goblins are classified as beasts by the wizard-ruled Ministry of Magic which is one of the contributing factors to the on-going conflict between the two magical races. "In 1811, [...] Troll representatives were questioned in the absence of goblins and judged not to understand anything [...] both trolls and goblins were therefore classified as beasts." (FB xii)

While Rowling exposes and criticizes racism, she also somewhat downplays the familiar issue of prejudice by using it for comic relief (see examples below). Based on the *Fantastic Beast and Where to Find Them* overview of the development in classification of magical creatures, it can be argued that goblins have always opposed being classified at all and repeatedly showed their disagreement in the most disruptive manner possible often using other less intelligent species to discredit the Ministry of Magic. In the following excerpt, goblins at the same time thwarted and ridiculed the Ministry's attempts at re-classification by indirectly causing a scene:

Burdock Muldoon, Chief of the Wizards' Council in the 14th century, decreed that any member of the magical community that walked on two legs would henceforth be granted the status of being, all others to remain beast. [...]
The meeting hall was crammed with goblins who had brought with them as many two-legged creatures as they could find. (FB x)

¹⁰³ Even house-elves view goblins in negative light. However, it appears that their dislike stems from their total devotion to their human owners who are prejudiced against goblins on principle. For example, Winky expresses her opinion of goblins when she compares Dobby's rebellious behavior to that of goblins as "unbecoming to a house-elf. [...] like some common goblin." (GoF 112)

A similar situation occurred when "Muldoon's successor, madame Elfrida Clagg, attempted to redefine 'beings' [...] as those who could speak the human tongue." (FB xii) Once again, goblins managed to prove that the classification is based on unfounded theories that can be easily disproved when "Trolls who had been taught a few simple sentences by goblins proceeded to destroy the hall as before." (FB xii) The origins of the social conflict between the two communities can be traced as far back as early Middle Ages based on the information provided by the author herself. Through analyzing the reactions of goblins to being constantly regarded as subordinate to the wizarding society and treated as such, a conclusion can be reached that it was the issue of inequality that the goblins objected to (see above).

The history of goblin-human relations is violent and riddled with unsuccessful goblin rebellions aimed at the wizarding community asserting its influence over the goblin nation. In this respect, goblins represent the natives of the territories across the world (Ireland, India, North America, etc.) that the British Empire had asserted a claim to. The colonials (the Irish, African Americans, etc.) were negatively stereotyped as barbarians and considered as lower beings until late 19th century. At Hogwarts, during the lessons of History of Magic, wizarding children are taught about various Goblin uprisings, for example the "goblin rebellions of the 18th century." (GoF 257) However, these events were recorded by members of the system that oppresses the goblins and thus there is no objectively view of the causes of these conflicts. Also, the names of goblins mentioned in relation to these incidents usually ascribe negative and/or ridiculous attributes to the rebels such as "Emeric the Evil and Urc the Oddball" (PS 146). Thus, schoolchildren learn from an early age both at home and at school that goblins are not to be trusted. There is no direct answer provided by academic sources as to why these rebellions started, although, from the information found in *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* and in the "W.O.M.B.A.T. tests,"¹⁰⁴ a certain pattern emerges that supports the theory that social injustices are at the root of the hostile feelings displayed by both societies. "Goblins have got good reasons to dislike wizards, [...] They've been treated brutally in the past."¹⁰⁵ (DH 409) And while the prejudice goes both ways and goblins show

¹⁰⁴ The Wizards' Ordinary Magic and Basic Aptitude Test or W.O.M.B.A.T. for short was available on J.K.Rowling's Official website in section Room of Requirement prior to February 2012. There were three test grades from which additional information about the wizarding world can be deducted as many of the questions do not allow for an incorrect answer.

¹⁰⁵ The only sources dealing with goblin-human relations that are available to the readers are the comments made by various characters in the Harry Potter novels, FB and the W.O.M.B.A.T. For example, in the W.O.M.B.A.T. test Grade 2, question 5 lists five possible unresolved issues that may have triggered the infamous goblin rebellion of 1612, all of them connected to the issue of racial discrimination. a) the lack of goblin representation on the Wizengamot, b) wizard attempts to enslave goblins and use them as house-elves, c) wizard refusal to grant goblins the right to carry a wand, d) attempt of wizards to regain control of Gringotts bank and e) series of brutal goblin-slayings by wizard murderer.

intense distrust towards the wizarding community as a whole, witches and wizards enjoy full rights assured by the legal system while other magical races do not.

However, unlike with other discriminated races, such as centaurs or house-elves, there is one particular cultural difference that continuously causes a dispute between goblins and wizards, e.g. diametrically opposed notion of proprietary right. "To a goblin, the rightful and true master of any object is the maker, not the purchaser." (DH 418) Thus, the concept of inheritance poses a serious problem when the object in question is goblin-made. "They consider our habit of keeping goblin-made objects, passing them from wizard to wizard without further payment, little more than theft." (DH 418) Here, Rowling points to cultural barriers as another possible cause of the clash between the two races. However, as this dispute over ownership has been the source of conflict for centuries, it is clear that neither side is willing to compromise in order to reach a mutually beneficial agreement. Griphook, the first goblin Harry encountered in the first novel, claims that the sword of Godric Gryffindor belongs to the goblins and has been stolen by the Hogwarts founder. "Wizarding arrogance! That sword was Ragnuk the First's, taken from him by Godric Gryffindor! It is a lost treasure, a masterpiece of goblinwork!" (DH 409) While Rowling ridicules wizarding approach to the beast classification of goblins (see above), similarly, she ridicules the attitude of goblins towards the issue of ownership. Aside from the cultural differences which only add negative points to the problematic situation between the goblin and wizarding communities, there are also legal issues to consider.

In general, the goblins' opinion of wizards is most certainly unfavourable steeped in centuries of oppression. In the following excerpt, Griphook explains why goblins refuse to cooperate with wizards. In other words, Griphook accuses wizards of being racists and having forcibly silenced and debilitated goblins and other magical races on the grounds of not being human. "The right to carry a wand," said the goblin quietly, "has long been contested between wizards and goblins." (DH 395) The theory that racism is the main factor for the social conflict is further supported by the dialogue between Harry and Griphook, that summarizes the gist of the rampant bigotry displayed by both sides. "You buried the elf [...] You also rescued a goblin. [...] Goblins and elves are not used to the protection, or the respect [...] Not from wand-carriers." (DH 393-4) Also, it provides an external view through Harry, who, as a Muggle-raised child, has not been influenced by neither wizards nor goblins to be biased against either party. Due to his lack of magical upbringing, Harry is able to remain neutral and to distance himself from the stereotypical superior attitude of wizards that the goblins are

accustomed to this puts him in a unique position to negotiate with Griphook who is baffled by Harry's non-wizard like behaviour.

Through Harry's ignorance, Rowling demonstrates that prejudice is highly illogical and has no foundation other than misconceptions and unwillingness to accept other social structures as equal to the dominant one. Ron's reaction to the goblin's words illustrates the wizard's view - he dismisses the goblin's claims as "one of those goblin stories, [...] about how the wizards are always trying to get one over them." (DH 409) Throughout the Harry Potter novels, wizards and witches from both sides of the social conflict show bias against goblins originating in centuries old misconceptions and stereotypes still held by the wizarding society. However, the racial prejudice poses a serious problem as it hinders any possible collaboration with the goblin nation at the time of war. And it is Griphook again, who points out that no matter whose side the goblins choose, they will still be nothing more but beasts with no rights, mere servants to the wizarding world. "As the Dark Lord becomes even more powerful, your race is set still more firmly above mine!" (DH 395)

4.2 House-elves

Aside from the conflict between witches and wizards and goblins, the most shocking issue that Rowling addresses is that of slavery and labour exploitation. Hermione, as the only character openly concerned with the inequality prevalent in the wizarding world notes that "Wizarding history often skates over what the wizards have done to other magical races." (DH 409) Her statement mirrors Ernst Toller's quote "History is the propaganda of the victors." Toller's phrase has been adopted and reinterpreted countless times over the years in an attempt to apologize for various historical injustices committed against the oppressed, in this case house-elves. Hermione also recognizes that the magical world is biased against other non-human creatures and that history is written by the privileged and not by those who are being victimized and discriminated against. And although Rowling is careful in maintaining politically correct approach when pointing out social flaws, it does in no way diminish Hermione's honest indignation at the current state of things:

Not once, in over a thousand pages, does *Hogwarts A History* mention that we are all colluding in the oppression of a hundred slaves! [...] That book's not entirely reliable. [...] 'A Highly Biased and Selective History of Hogwarts, Which Glosses Over the nastier Aspects of the School' would be more accurate title. (GoF 262)

The race of house-elves is magically bonded to wizarding families and unless discharged via the giving of clothes they cannot leave their owners nor can they directly

disobey orders. Generations of house-elves have been conditioned for centuries to serve and to accept their slave like status and even to reinforce it themselves effectively suppressing their sense of self. Prime example of this is Dobby's behaviour throughout *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* when he is constantly punishing himself for one reason or another. "Bad Dobby! [...] Dobby will have to shut his ears in the oven door for this. [...] Dobby is always having to punish himself for something, sir." (ChoS 20) The impossibility of house-elves being given clothes purely for their comfort further objectifies them. It is mentioned several times in the books that many of them wear only rags, for instance when Dobby still belonged to the Malfoy family he wore something that "looked like an old pillowcase, with rips for arms and leg holes." (ChoS 19) While Rowling repeatedly addresses the issue of victimization and oppression of house-elves at the hands of their human owners, in many respects reminiscent of the desperate pre-abolitionist situation of African slaves in the colonies,¹⁰⁶ she somewhat reduces the effect of this particular social injustice by using house-elves for comic relief. Dobby and Kreacher in particular, behave in a crazy and pitiful manner and torture themselves in the most ridiculous ways.

Similarly to how Rowling perpetuated ethnic stereotyping when portraying witches and wizards of different ethnic origin, she downplays her criticism of labour exploitation as the enslaved "working class" is also portrayed in a stereotypical manner, submissive and nearly invisible. As can be seen in the examples above, house-elves' speech reflects their low position and lack of formal education. They usually do not refer to themselves in first person singular but in third person singular which only serves to degrade them more and if they do actually use the "I" self-reference, the form of the following verb is often used incorrectly, for example "He is wanting paying." (GoF 111) The language used can thus be read in the context of an outsider as the imperfect grammar is far from the standard of the wizarding majority. Through this, Rowling once more links her fantasy series to reality, especially to the genre of the slave-narrative which often notes differences between the language skills of slaves and their owners, for example in Alice Walker's epistolary novel *The Colour Purple* (1982). Moreover, the magical bond prevents house-elves from speaking their mind, similarly to Celie in Walker's story, effectively silencing the house-elves as they are compelled to "keep their masters' secrets, to uphold the family's honour and to never speak ill of them." (GoF 416)

¹⁰⁶ Slavery is generally characterized by degradation, brutality and systematic dehumanization. In this respect, the treatment of house-elves is indeed modeled on that of black slaves in America and other colonies. Similarly to slaves, house-elves have to endure both physical and emotional abuse as they are powerless against their masters. Their mental conditioning is total and their psyche so damaged that they even punish themselves whenever they feel that they have disobeyed their masters. House-elves suffer from an inferiority complex which is further reinforced by being considered a property in the eyes of their human owners.

Furthermore, based on various examples in the Harry Potter novels, it is a fact that house-elves in general do not wish to be free. Compared to real history, this is an odd concept that a race as a whole would wish to remain in servitude being denied even the most basic of rights. The idea of being freed and subsequently fired from what they perceive to be their job is absolutely unthinkable as it is a matter of pride and honour to faithfully serve their wizarding families. For example, when Harry inquires about Dobby's welfare after he freed him from his enslavement to the Malfoy family, Winky expresses her shock and indignation at Dobby's socially unacceptable behaviour of wanting payment claiming that "Freedom is going to Dobby's head" (GoF 111) and that he has "ideas above his station" (GoF 111) such as "He is wanting paying for his work sir." (GoF 111) Thus, with the exception of Dobby, house-elves make themselves clear that they do not want to be freed nor get paid. Dobby himself, who is considered an oddity among his kind because he wants to be free: "The Hogwarts elves had now started edging away from Dobby, as though he was carrying something contagious." (GoF 414) is unable to overcome his conditioning and thus for him freedom is more of an ideal than something he could to explore fully:

"Professor Dumbledore offered Dobby ten galleons a week, and weekends off," said Dobby, suddenly giving a little shiver, as though the prospect of so much leisure and riches was frightening, "but Dobby beat him down, miss... Dobby likes freedom, miss, but he isn't wanting too much." (GoF 415)

And even though, he is no longer Lucius Malfoy's property, Dobby still has the urge to punish himself for speaking ill of his former master. The psychological effects of a life-long enslavement are simply too severe to overcome:

"His old masters were - were - bad Dark wizards!" Dobby stood for a moment, quivering all over, horror-struck by his own daring - then he rushed over to the nearest table, and began banging his head on it, very hard, squealing, "Bad Dobby! Bad Dobby!" (GoF 417)

Out of all the Harry Potter characters that are allowed to express themselves in the novels, Hermione is the only one who does not condone the house-elf situation. Her protests against exploitation, however, falls on deaf ears. Other characters, the Weasleys for instance, not only ignore her objections and concerns for the welfare of house-elves because it is common knowledge that "They like being enslaved!" (GoF 247) and that "They think they've got the best job in the world-" (GoF 263) but completely fail to understand that slavery is morally wrong. Upon her research of the issue, she finds that "Elf enslavement goes back centuries." (GoF 247) Through Hermione, Rowling prioritises the needs of an exploited group

adopting a rights-based approach. Hermione starts an activist organization, "S.P.E.W. [...] Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare" (GoF 246), aiming to improve the situation of house-elves with focus on providing "decent wages and working conditions." (GoF 351)

The disinterest and blatant denial expressed by other witches and wizards in supporting Hermione's campaign proves that magical enslavement is regarded as socially acceptable and also perfectly legal. This attitude is reminiscent of the Georgian Era and also of the Victorian Era upon which the wizarding culture is modelled in terms of customs and values. While slavery in most of the British Empire was abolished in 1833, four years before Queen Victoria ascended the British throne, other social issues such as child labour and corporeal punishment of workhouse labourers prevailed until the late modern era. Rowling employs these images when portraying house-elves as pitiful, child-sized and downtrodden. Hermione as a muggle-born witch is well acquainted with modern history of the primary world and thus this status quo is absolutely unacceptable for her. However, she is unsuccessful in her crusade to free house-elves as her peers do not show compassion towards the abused creatures. "Your sheets are changed, your fires lit, your classrooms cleaned and your food cooked by a group of magical creatures who are unpaid and enslaved." (GoF 263) This ambiguous wizarding attitude towards house-elves is reminiscent of contemporary exploitation of third world labour as cheap textiles and other goods are imported from the East. In this respect, Hogwarts can be viewed as a purely consumerist community in which teachers and students enjoy commodities provided by house-elves and are unwilling to change the current system of labour division. Even Harry, who himself have been the object of various types of abuse for his whole life, is unable to relate to the house-elves plight and supports Hermione only because of their friendship and not because he finds the idea of slavery abhorrent.

As mentioned above, Rowling uses the pitiful image of house-elves' and their acts of self-harm for comic relief, however, at the same time she shows through Hermione's eyes some of the horrors of slavery. And thus, despite the protests of the enslaved creatures themselves and the continuing indifference displayed by other characters, Hermione as a determined equal rights activist continues to pursue justice for house-elves throughout the series. In an online webcast interview from 2007, Rowling revealed more information about Hermione's future showing her efforts were not in vain and that the post-war magical world has the potential to do away with at least some its the social ills. The adult Hermione becomes an advocate for reform working towards more than mere promotion of house-elves's rights as she is successful in implementing the proposed changes:

Hermione began her post-Hogwarts career at the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures where she was instrumental in greatly improving life for house-elves and their ilk. She then moved (despite her jibe to Scrimgeour) to the Department of Magical Law Enforcement where she was a progressive voice who ensured the eradication of oppressive, pro-pure-blood laws.¹⁰⁷

4.3 Centaurs, Merepeople and Giants

Through the Ministry of Magic and through individual character's relations with goblins, centaurs, merepeople and giants, Rowling explores the problematic issue of majority-minority relations. Generally speaking, the term minority defines a social group which is politically non-dominant. In the context of Harry Potter novels, it also encompasses the lack of equal status to that of witches and wizards. Delores Umbridge represents the negative side of the social spectrum and her words illuminate what wizards, both blood purists and their opposition generally think of centaurs. "Filthy half-breed! Beasts! Uncontrolled animals!" (OotP 665) Unlike the current situation, for example in France or in Germany,¹⁰⁸ in Harry Potter, the problem lies not with the opposing religious, cultural and political beliefs of particular ethnic groups threatening the norms of the majority, but in the legalized oppression of the aforementioned minorities based on creature status. While wizarding scholars, such as Newt Scamander, the author of *Fantastic Beast and Where to Find Them*, realize that the centaurs, "being intelligent and capable of speech, should not strictly speaking be termed a beast" (FB 6), centaurs are denied basic rights per laws laid down by the Ministry of Magic. In light of the classification proposed by the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures, the centaurs themselves have "objected to some of the creatures with whom they were asked to share 'being' status, such as hags or vampires, and declared that they would manage their own affairs separately from wizards. A year later the merepeople made the same request." (FB xiii) Thus, both centaurs and the merepeople have clearly stated that they may as well remain beasts because they refuse to be ruled by the Ministry of Magic.

However, the wizarding government clearly ignored their claims of independence and classified them as "magical creatures who are deemed to have near-human intelligence" (OotP 665) and for that purpose established a "Centaur Liaison Office in the Beast Division of the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures." (FB xiii) Nonetheless,

¹⁰⁷ J.K.Rowling, *Webcast: Bloomsbury Online Chat*, 30 July 2007, Web. 2 Dec 2013.

<<http://www.the-leaky-cauldron.org/2007/7/30/j-k-rowling-web-chat-transcript>>.

¹⁰⁸ In the Harry Potter series, it is the human majority that poses a problem and creates social tension while the minorities are isolated and neither interfere in wizarding affairs nor wish to be dragged into the civil conflict.

centaurs have never interacted with the Liaison Office because they do not recognize wizarding governance. "We are an ancient people who will not stand wizard invasions and insults. We do not recognise your laws, we do not acknowledge your superiority!" (OotP 667) The centaur-human relations are further damaged by the Ministry of Magic asserting its control over centaur territory. "I would remind you that you live here – in the Forbidden Forest – only because the Ministry of Magic permits you certain areas of land." (OotP 665) Here, Rowling borrows from the history of the Native Americans. Similarly to centaurs, they had their own social structures, traditions and customs but were forced to submit to the rule of European invaders as they were perceived as inferior due to biological and cultural differences.¹⁰⁹

The merepeople were also designated creature status and their mobility was limited despite their protests and evidence that they, similarly to centaurs, have their own society independent on the wizarding one: "those wizards who have mastered the language of Mermish speak of highly organised communities varying in size according to habitat, and some have elaborately constructed dwellings." (FB 28-9) And although centaurs and merepeople generally remain outside the civil conflict refusing to associate with humans, they are affected by it nonetheless as they are subjected to racial prejudice from both sides. However, the racism goes both ways, not only are wizards and witches, such as Delores Umbridge who actively promotes genocide, prejudiced against centaurs, but centaurs are prejudiced against humans as well. "They are generally speaking as mistrustful of wizards as they are of Muggles and indeed seem to make little differentiation between us." (FB 6)

Not only are giants, centaurs, merepeople, etc. classified as beasts by the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures, some of the non-human races were also relocated to other habitats or their mobility was restricted, for example to the Forbidden Forest located in Scotland or to the Dragon reserve in Romania. While this was done allegedly for their own protection from Muggles, in the case of giants the exact opposite occurred as giants are now facing extinction. Hagrid, a half-giant himself, explains that it were precisely the actions of wizards, i.e. giants being forced out of their natural environment, that led to the giants' downfall because the lack of space causes giants to attack each other due to their aggressive nature:

Eighty left, an' there was loads once, musta bin a hundred diff'rent tribes from all over the world. [...] Wizards killed a few, o' course, bu' mostly they killed

¹⁰⁹ The Forbidden Forest can thus be read as a metaphor for a reservation to which the centaurs movement is restricted. The link between indians and centaurs is easily drawn as both are portrayed as noble savages. Also, centaurs "are reputed to be well-versed in magical healing, divination, archery and astronomy," (FB 6) arts which link them to nature and are similar to the skills attributed to the Native Americans.

each other. [...] They're not made ter live bunched up together. (OotP 377)

The isolationist attitude towards giants is reminiscent of the Highland clearances that occurred in the 18th and 19th century in Scotland. The historical forced relocation of Highlanders was spurred on by the agricultural revolution. The Scottish people were oppressed by the privileged class of British landowners and expelled from their homeland.¹¹⁰ Similarly, the giant's situation also refers to the establishment of Indian reservations in the US and Canada in the 19th century. Rowling builds upon the issue of expulsion and also on the political and cultural conflict between the Scots and the British which is in many respects reminiscent of the giant-wizard relations. She points to the reason behind the relocation and to its effects. However, Rowling's giants can in no way be linked to the highlanders themselves, as they certainly not fit the image of the noble rebel constructed by Sir Walter Scott, quite the contrary, as Rowling's description is much more closer to the extremely violent giant characters presented in the classical British fairy tale "Jack the Giant Killer".

Generally, giants distrust wizards and given their experiences with aurors, their apprehension is understandable. "Giants like magic, jus' don' like us usin' it against 'em." (OotP 379) However, given how dangerous and socially inept giants are and the prevalent racial prejudice, the decision to relocate them far away from the human populated areas also makes sense. Unfortunately, this caused an irreparable rift between giants and wizards. When Dumbledore tries to convince Fudge to send envoys to the giants to "extend them the hand of friendship [...] before Voldemort persuades them that he alone among wizards will give them their rights and their freedom!" (GoF 767) The idea is immediately rejected by the minister on the account of the negative public opinion of giants: "people hate them, Dumbledore – end of my career." (GoF 767) Moreover, Hagrid's and Madame Maxime's visit to the mountains only cements the view that giants are too unstable to be integrated into the wizarding community as during their stay there the tribal chief Karkus, who was inclined to hear them out was brutally killed and replaced by Golgomath who favoured Voldemort's envoy instead of Dumbledore's. (OotP 382)

4.4 Werewolves

Rowling employs the archetypal figure of the werewolf as a threat to the society; however, she shifts the paradigm by endowing werewolves, Remus Lupin in particular, with

¹¹⁰ "To the people of the Highlands the clearances that dominated years between 1780 and 1885 were nothing less than a devastation of the old patterns of life. The foundations of their existence uprooted, the dispersed, disaffiliated peasantry met their fate without comprehension."
Eric Richards, *A History of Highland Clearances* (Taylor & Francis, 1985) 3.

human characteristics when not in the wolf form. While Rowling uses centaurs, merpeople and giants to represent minorities, werewolves are not afforded the same distinction. They are not excluded from the society on the basis of not being human but because the society fears their condition - an obvious allusion to real infectious diseases transmitted by direct contact or exchange of bodily fluids. Rowling herself has explained that "Remus Lupin's affliction was a conscious reference to blood-borne diseases such as the HIV infection, with the attendant stigma."¹¹¹ "Humans turn into werewolves only when bitten. [...] at the full moon, the otherwise sane and normal wizard or Muggle afflicted transforms into a murderous beast." (FB 41-2) Here Rowling clearly alludes to a psychiatric disorder, specifically the Dissociative identity disorder, which is characterized by a split of a person's identity. The social exclusion of werewolves is thus justified by the fear of contamination. In other words, werewolves are victimized on the basis of being dangerous due to the physical and psychological split of identity that they undergo during their transformation into a wolf and which may or may not cause them to spread the disease/the curse.

Furthermore, werewolves represent "hybridity and transgression of species boundaries"¹¹² which is unacceptable in society prejudiced against non-humans. And although lycanthropy cannot be cured, the affliction is manageable either through confinement or through the use of the "Wolfsbane potion"¹¹³ (PoA 258) which allows werewolves to retain their mind during the transformation. However, instead of promoting social inclusion policies, the government opts to constrain and further dehumanize werewolves by denying them equal work opportunities, education, etc. That in turn makes safely containing lycanthropy nigh impossible as those afflicted with it have no incentive to approach the authorities for medical assistance. Furthermore, their basic civil rights are severely restricted by their classification as dangerous beasts, who are required to register with the Ministry of Magic as per the "Werewolf register of 1947."¹¹⁴ (FB vi) Thus, werewolves are stripped of their human rights and their access to power is blocked solely because they were cursed with an affliction that

¹¹¹ The potion Snape brews him is akin to the antiretroviral that will keep him from developing the 'full-blown' version of his illness. The sense of 'apartness' that the managements of a chronic condition can impose on its sufferers was an important part of Lupin's character.

J.K.Rowling, "Illness and Disability," *Pottermore*. 31 Jul 2011, Web. 1 Aug 2014.
<<http://www.pottermore.com/en/book4/chapter36/moment1/illness-and-disability>>.

¹¹² Phillip Bernhardt-House, "The Werewolf as Queer, the Queer as Werewolf, and Queer Werewolves," Eds. Noreen Giffney and Mya J. Hird, *Queering the Non/Human* (Ashgate, Aldershot, 2008) 159.

¹¹³ Lupin describes the effects of the potion thusly: "It makes me safe, you see. As long as I take it in the week preceding the full moon, I keep my mind when I transform... I am able to curl up in my office, a harmless wolf, able to wait for the moon to wane again." (PoA 258)

¹¹⁴ Werewolves have been shunted between the Beast and Being Divisions for many years, at the time of writing there is an office for Werewolf Support Services at the Being Division whereas the Werewolf Registry and Werewolf Capture Unit fall under the Beast Division." (FB xiii)

causes temporary mental instability. To the wizarding community, it matters not that werewolves are human most of the time but that they turn into monsters every night of the full moon. Through this prevalent attitude towards werewolves, Rowling once again criticizes the intolerance of abnormality.

However, Rowling's interpretation of lycanthropy is not concerned with the dangerous nature of the condition itself but primarily with the negative reactions it inspires in people. Unlike the other discriminated groups in the Harry Potter series, werewolves are able to conceal their dual nature as they appear human most of the time. Despite that, Lupin is rejected and isolated by the society because of his animalistic side. For example, the prejudice forces Lupin to resign after Snape exposes him as a werewolf. "This time tomorrow, the owls will start arriving from parents - they will not want a werewolf teaching their children." (PoA 309) Although he is portrayed as a sympathetic werewolf, the fact remains that he is also a monster and thus must be isolated. Lupin himself admits that the parents' objections to his continual employment are justified. "I see their point. I could have bitten any of you... that must never happen again." (PoA 258) A sensible opinion applicable even in the real world as such dangerous diseases must be contained to avoid further spreading.

Lupin's character provides a unique challenge to the notion of normalcy promoted by the wizard-ruled society as he is neither fully human nor fully a beast. In this respect, Rowling's werewolves force the reader to question their expectations about the beast when contrasted with image of a man. Like a typical werewolf Lupin turns into a monster on the night of the full moon. "Before the Wolfsbane Potion was discovered, I became a fully fledged monster once a month." (PoA 258) Yet, his attempts at living as an ordinary wizard for the rest of the time are thwarted by the society's rejection. "You don't know how most of the wizarding world sees creatures like me! When they know of my affliction, they can barely talk to me!" (DH 175) The bigotry and ignorance displayed by wizards is contrasted with Lupin's kind and calm personality as he passively accepts his inferior status. Moreover, painfully aware of the prejudice aimed at his kind, he isolates himself from everyone including those who care for him. Even after he marries Tonks, Lupin is unable to escape the feelings of self-loathing and shame installed in him by years of discrimination. "I've made her an outcast! [...] Even her own family is disgusted by our marriage, what parents want their only daughter to marry a werewolf?" (DH 176) In this respect, his conditioning is as strong as that of the house-elves.

Nonetheless, Lupin is portrayed as an exception among the werewolf population for both his attempts to hold onto his humanity and also for his passivity at the unfair treatment

he receives at the hands of wizards. Furthermore, he is loyal to Dumbledore, who allowed him to attend Hogwarts despite his dangerous condition. "It seemed impossible that I would be able to come to Hogwarts. [...] But then Dumbledore became Headmaster, and he was sympathetic." (PoA 258) Lupin thus enjoyed the privileges of education that would have been otherwise closed to him. Other of his kind apparently side with Voldemort believing "that, under his rule, they will have a better life." (HBP 313) Thus, Lupin is a character on the edge of the society, ironically, he is rejected by both wizards and werewolves for the same reason, i.e. he is werewolf trying to live among humans:

I've been living among my fellows, my equals, [...] werewolves.[...] It has been difficult gaining their trust. I bear the unmistakable signs of having tried to live among wizards, you see, whereas they have shunned normal society and live on the margins, stealing — and sometimes killing — to eat. (HBP 313)

In opposition to the sympathetic werewolf stands Fenrir Greyback, the epitome of the monster feared by the wizarding community. "Greyback specializes in children. [...] Bite them young, and raise them away from their parents, raise them to hate normal wizards." (HBP 314) Greyback commits great evils in order to undermine the wizards' hold on power. "He regards it as his mission in life to bite and to contaminate as many people as possible; he wants to create enough werewolves to overcome the wizards." (HBP 314) His reprehensible actions, however, only cement the wizards' unyielding stance on the beast classification proposed by the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures.

5. Gender Roles in Harry Potter

In the previous chapters, I have outlined the basic structure of the magical society in regards to race distinction and related issues such as wizarding supremacism or blood purism. However, there is another viewpoint that must be mentioned when discussing the hierarchy and uneven distribution of power in a particular society¹¹⁵ and that is the notion of gender. "Feminism differentiates between our sex, which is our biological make-up as female or male, and our gender, which is our cultural programming as masculine and feminine."¹¹⁶ In other words, the social phenomenon of gender is in fact not natural but a socio-cultural construct dependent on the dominant ideology of a particular culture and era. Feminist reading of the Harry Potter novels suggests that Rowling's society is inherently patriarchal.¹¹⁷ While the narrative is indeed male dominated since female characters appear only in supporting roles, it is not necessarily a patriarchal text, i.e. a text illustrating the oppression of women in a society ruled by men. Rowling is not promoting patriarchal ideology, she merely uses the existing social order as she models her primary and secondary worlds on her own unique experience of contemporary Britain. Rowling's employment of social realism (see chapter two for further reference) allows her to portray a realistic image of gender roles that the reader is able to identify. Neither women nor men are absolute stereotypes¹¹⁸ since there are few notable exceptions who do not fully conform to societal expectations of how men and women should behave. Characters such as Hermione Granger or Rubeus Hagrid successfully manage to subvert traditional patriarchal gender constructs of femininity and masculinity.

Moreover, none of the characters display the belief that "anyone who violates traditional gender roles is in some way unnatural, unhealthy or even immoral."¹¹⁹ In other words, there is no attempt to actually enforce patriarchal values as they are not being challenged on purpose. And although Rowling does not intentionally promote gender equality, she also does not advocate the enforcement of established norms. And since "Gender can best be studied as a relationship – men are defined in relation to women and vice versa –

¹¹⁵ "In all societies, there are differences in power between persons. There is not a single society where all adults have exactly the same influence over every decision, where everyone has exactly the same rights and duties. Social differentiation and inequality are, in other words, universal phenomena." Eriksen 124.

¹¹⁶ Lois Tyson, "Feminist Criticism," *Critical Theory Today: A User Friendly Guide* (Routledge, 2011) 143.

¹¹⁷ "The word "patriarchy," broadly defined, refers to any society in which men hold all or most of the power." Tyson 139.

¹¹⁸ Stereotypes are defined as "relatively rigid and oversimplified conceptions of a group of people in which all individuals in the group are labelled with the so-called group characteristics."

Susan A. Basow, *Gender Stereotypes: Traditions and Alternatives* (Brooks/Cole, 1986) 3.

¹¹⁹ Tyson 142.

and this relationship is conceived of differently in different societies,"¹²⁰ Rowling uses exaggeration to reflect on the naivety of stereotypical portrayal of male-female relations. Thus, the focus of this chapter will not be on the characters themselves but their role in the society and how it is influenced by gender-based stereotyping.

5.1 Distribution of Power

The issue of power is crucial in the context of the social conflict as it is the driving force behind the main antagonists' actions as he believes that "There is no good and evil, there is only power... and those too weak to seek it." (PS 313) And yet, it can not be said that Rowling portrays one gender as morally superior to the other, quite the contrary. There are both male and female characters capable of heroism, such as Lily Potter or her son Harry Potter¹²¹ who ultimately sacrifice their lives to protect others, or on the contrary capable of great evil such as Voldemort or his devote follower Bellatrix Lestrange. According to Felman, a feminist critic, social roles assigned to women always place them in subservient positions,¹²² this is particularly true in the world of Harry Potter. From the beginning, it is the wizards and not the witches who dominate the narrative:

Nearly universally, men control the 'public domain', where 'universalistic' interests are expressed and managed, and, nearly universally, women are located in or confined to the 'domestic domain', charged with the welfare of their own families.¹²³

Thus, female characters are without an exception relegated to secondary positions in the context of socio-political power as there is a always male character to whom they answer. And while Rowling does not differentiate between "good or evil" distinction when it comes to portraying gender, it is men who hold positions of power and authority. Even women who occupy higher ranking positions, such as Amelia Bones, the head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement, Minerva McGonagall, the deputy headmistress at Hogwarts, or Bellatrix Lestrange, an infamous Death Eater, do not play a particularly decisive role within the current socio-political structure since their actions are limited by the decisions of their

¹²⁰ Eriksen 125.

¹²¹ Although here we must differentiate between the base motivations behind the two acts of self-sacrifice since Lily Potter was driven by maternal love whereas Harry Potter dutifully follows his hero conditioning when he intentionally allows Voldemort to kill him.

¹²² "From her initial family upbringing throughout her subsequent development, the social role assigned to the woman is that of serving an image, authoritative and central, of man."
Shoshana Felman, "Women and Madness: The Critical Phallacy," *The Feminist Reader: Essays in Gender and the Politics of Literary Criticism*, Eds. Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore (London: The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1989) 134.

¹²³ Sherry B. Ortner and Harriet Whitehead, "Accounting for Sexual Meanings," *Sexual Meanings* (Cambridge University Press, 1981) 7.

superiors, i.e. Cornelius Fudge, the Minister of Magic, Albus Dumbledore, the headmaster of Hogwarts and Voldemort, the Dark Lord and primary villain of the narrative.

Furthermore, there is an unspecified 'higher supernatural power' that puts men at the forefront of the narrative through the means of a prophecy.¹²⁴ The prophecy is particularly important, although its importance is not fully revealed until the fourth book, as it basically sets off events leading to everything that happens in the Harry Potter series. Moreover, it refers to male characters only, i.e. the two boys of the prophecy, Harry Potter and Neville Longbottom, and the Dark lord. Also, the prophecy is made to Albus Dumbledore and overheard by Severus Snape, both male characters both in positions of power and authority. The only female participant in this life-defining scene is Sybil Trelawney, a prophet whose only role is to make predictions about the future but who is ultimately unable to act upon them as she has no memory of the prophecies she has made. She is also portrayed as an eccentric teacher and an alcoholic who is not respected by anyone and is fully dependent on her employer for both financial support and protection.

5.2 The Traditional Role of a Mother

Women in the Harry Potter series generally do not deviate from traditional categories which present them primarily as wives, mothers¹²⁵ and healers regardless of their allegiance. However, they are not in a submissive position, although it may appear to be that way at first. Furthermore, not all witches are housewives, some are professors, aurors, shop owners, etc. And yet, it is motherhood that plays a vital part in the story. While husbands and fathers are also shown as protective and loyal, only the female characters who can eventually make the ultimate sacrifice,¹²⁶ i.e. forsake their own life. Lily Potter is the symbol of motherly love and sacrifice. It was her actions that saved not only her son but also the wizarding community. However, her selfless act of love at the same time shows her weakness as she is overpowered by a man. When we look at the scene from an outsiders' viewpoint, James Potter assumes an

¹²⁴ A prophecy made by Sybill Trelawney to Albus Dumbledore in 1980 at the Hog's Head Pub: "The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches ... born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies ... and the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not ... and either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives ... the one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the seventh month dies ..." (OotP 740-741)

¹²⁵ "According to traditional gender roles, men are naturally rational, strong, protective, and decisive. In contrast, [...] women are emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing, and submissive. [...] Gender roles have been used to justify many inequities, which still occur today. For example, women today are still excluded from equal access to leadership and decision-making positions."

Tyson 142.

¹²⁶ In the last instalment of the series, Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallows, Harry Potter makes a sacrifice similar to what his mother did on the night of Voldemort's attack, however, his actions are spurred on by heroism not by parenthood.

active role of the protector, while Lily remains passive as she begs for her sons life. In contrast to Lily's passiveness Nymphadora Lupin is portrayed as brave and pro-active. As an auror she protects the community and as a member of the Order of the Phoenix, together with her husband Remus Lupin, actively fights Voldemort's forces. Not even becoming a mother stops Nymphadora from joining the war effort. Nonetheless, despite her bravery and extraordinary set of skills,¹²⁷ she dies in the Battle of Hogwarts along with her husband.

Lily Potter, Molly Weasley, Narcissa Malfoy and Nymphadora Lupin are all portrayed very differently, their socio-cultural backgrounds, their personalities and aspirations, etc., place them in different social circles. However, when it comes to motherly instincts they are all portrayed as stereotypes. Mothers in Harry Potter have one thing in common, they are willing to go to great lengths to protect their family no matter the cost. For example, Narcissa, who is portrayed as a typical snobbish pure-blooded lady, opposes Voldemort when she lies to him about Harry being dead. However, she does not do this because she had a change of heart but because "There is nothing she wouldn't do anymore!" (HBP 27) to protect her son Draco. Nonetheless, as a witch and as a woman, she is powerless when faced with the danger that Voldemort presents to her family. After her husband's incarceration in Azkaban, she is forced to seek out the help of another man, Severus Snape. Not only does she actually beg him, a half-blood, to protect her son, she is distraught and hysterical, i.e. her character conforms to the stereotypical representation of a woman as weak and emotional:

Narcissa gave a little scream of despair and clutched at her long blonde hair. [...] She flung away her glass; it skidded across the table as she slid off the sofa into a kneeling position at Snape's feet, seized his hand in both of hers and pressed her lips to it. (HBP 39-40)

In contrast to Mrs Malfoy we have the character of Mrs Weasley, stereotypical housewife who devoted her entire life to her family. While being a pure-blood herself she is a blood-traitor and a member of The Order of the Phoenix. Thus, similarly to Narcissa's situation, her children are also threatened by the upcoming war. Both women, although they stand on opposing sides, fight to secure a better future for their children. However, while they are capable of assuming the role of the protector, they only do so well within their roles as mothers. Their actions are not driven by greed for power or aspirations of grandeur like the men's action are but by motherly love.

¹²⁷ "I'm a metamorphmagus [...] It means I can change my appearance at will. [...] I got top marks in Concealment and Disguise during Auror training without any study at all, it was great." (OotP 52)

5.3 Subverting Gender Stereotypes

"Culturally defined personality traits, physical attributes, abilities, and occupational preferences among other things, all contribute to one's gender identity in unique and individualized combinations."¹²⁸ While Rowling's portrayal of gender is at times stereotypical, she has also managed to create complex characters who challenge these stereotypes and by doing some break the norms of masculinity and femininity. To be able to examine the cases in which men and women behave contrary to their gender characteristic and thus subvert the stereotype, I have used Stephen's list of personality traits ascribed to them.

Male characteristics: strong, violent, unemotional, aggressive, transgressive, competitive, rapacious, protective, powerful, player, independent, active, rational.

Female characteristics: beautiful, non-violent, emotional, submissive, obedient, sharing, caring, vulnerable, powerless, prize, dependent, passive, intuitive.¹²⁹

When Harry first meets Rubeus Hagrid, he sees him as a "giant, fierce and wild" (PS 56), the epitome of masculinity. However, it becomes clear very early on in the narrative, that while Hagrid is extremely strong physically, due to his giant heritage, he behaves very emotionally which removes him from the stereotype of masculinity. Furthermore, he assumes the role of a mother when taking care of animals, his pet dragon in particular and actually refers to himself in terms of motherhood multiple times. "Norberty! Where's mommy?" (PS 255) He treats the dragon with affection as if it was his own child. "Mummy will never forget you!" (PS 259)

Hermione Granger is a perfect example of a character who rejects social constructs of femininity. At first, she conforms to the basic characteristics of her gender, i.e. she is obedient, respects authority and is very emotional and vulnerable. Hermione measures her significance as a person in terms of academic success, proud of her intelligence yet isolated from her peers because of her thirst for information. However, as the narrative progresses so does Hermione as she gradually outgrows her stereotype as she discovers that she has other strengths than intellect. Eventually, she challenges not only authority but actually mocks the subject of Divination and the teacher's lack of abilities. "This is such a waste of time, Hermione hissed." (PoA 219) She even expresses violent traits and a lack of self-control when particularly angry. "She had slapped Malfoy around the face with all the strength she could muster." (PoA 216) While that fits with the stereotype of a hysterical woman, in her case it is an expression of a righteous anger and protectiveness rather than hysteria. Moreover, as

¹²⁸ Janet T. Spence and Linda L. Sawin, "Images of Masculinity and Femininity: A Reconceptualization," *Women, Gender, and Social Psychology*, Virginia E. O'Leary, Rhoda K. Unger, and Barbara S., eds. (Wallston, Psychology Press, 1985) 38.

¹²⁹ John Stephens, "Gender, Genre and Children's Literature," *Signal*, vol. 79 (1996) 18. Print.

Hermione grows into a woman, she becomes confident in her abilities and extensive knowledge does not rely on her male friends to protect her. She is fully capable of saving herself, in fact, it is her ability to use logic that very often saves Harry Potter who himself acknowledges her talents on several occasions. "You were incredible. I'd be dead if you hadn't been there to help me." (DH 288) And even though she is always in a secondary position to the hero, her help is absolutely crucial in Harry's quest to destroy Voldemort and end the war. Thus, from a socially inept "know-it-all" (PoA 129) she transforms into an independent, fierce and strong young woman, assuming distinctly male characteristics while retaining her feminine traits, such as beauty, intuition and empathy. Hermione becomes the ultimate modern female role model as she has both, a family and a career. "A Deputy Head of the Department of Magical Law [...] and is also a mother to son and daughter. Does Hermione Granger prove that a witch really can have it all?"¹³⁰

The only time Rowling gives women direct power over men is when she introduces the magical race of veela. "Veela were women... the most beautiful women Harry had ever seen... except that they weren't - they couldn't be - human." (GoF 116) Rowling criticizes the objectification of women based solely on their outward appearance while at the same time she uses it to empower them. Upon seeing the veela dance, "Harry's mind had gone completely and blissfully blank. [...] He wanted to do something very impressive [...] Jumping from the box into the stadium seemed a good idea." (GoF 117) The veela are able to enthrall all men on such a deep level, that they become completely powerless. However, as it is through magic that veela beauty is enhanced to be able to influence men's mental faculties, it is also through magic that their true animal-like nature is revealed although they remain just as powerful:

The veela lost control. Instead of dancing, they launched themselves across the field and began throwing what seemed to be handfuls of fire at the leprechauns. Watching through his Omniculars, Harry saw that they didn't look remotely beautiful now. On the contrary, their faces were elongating into sharp, cruel-beaked bird heads, and long, scaly wings were bursting from their shoulders- (GoF 126)¹³¹

At first glance, it would seem that Fleur Delacour, introduced in the fourth novel *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, is a one-dimensional character defined by her external

¹³⁰ J.K.Rowling. "Daily Prophet," 31 Jul 2011, *Pottermore*. Web. 9 May 2014. <<http://www.pottermore.com/en/daily-prophet/qwc2014/2014-07-08/dumbledores-army-reunites>>.

¹³¹ Here, Rowling clearly employs the femme fatale archetype when portraying the race of veelaas literally 'deadly women.' "The most striking characteristic, perhaps, is the fact that she never really is what she seems to be. She harbors a threat which is not entirely legible, predictable, or manageable." Both their forms, that of a beautiful woman /femininity and the raging beast / masculinity, present a tangible threat only to men as women are not susceptible to veela's magic. Furthermore, Rowling draws on ancient mythology to provide her veela with a magical allure, similar to, for example, the sirens from Homer's *Odyssey*. Mary Ann Doane, *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis* (Routledge, 1991) 1.

beauty, but there is more to her than her veela heritage. This becomes clear when she, the epitome of femininity, is chosen as the Beauxbatons' Champion in the Triwizard Tournament, becoming the only female contestant in the inter-school competition. Based on her being selected as the representative of the french magical school, "Beauxbatons Academy of Magic" (GoF 139), we can safely assume that she is brave and talented. Also similarly to full blooded veela, Fleur is magically powerful which she proves during the first task when she enchants a dragon into sleep. And even though she comes last in all three tasks while the male champions take the lead, it is not because of her gender but due to a hostile interference of Voldemort's spy within Hogwarts. However, it is not until Fleur replaces her original role of a Beauxbatons' Champion for that of a wife that her character develops even further. From a somewhat arrogant teenaged girl, she becomes a passionate woman invested in protecting her family and friends. As a citizen of France, she could have chosen not to come to London, to stay safe instead of fighting in what is essentially Britain's war, but Fleur decides to leave her country to be with her husband, Bill Weasley. Moreover, she joins the Order of the Phoenix and fights against Voldemort's forces in the Battle of Hogwarts. And although her actions are spurred on by romantic feelings, her heroism is no way reduced by her emotional investment.

6. Conclusion

The Harry Potter series has become a world-wide literary, cultural and economic phenomenon since the publication of the first book *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* in 1997 expanding from literary text into other media such as film or computer games. The narrative tests the boundaries of various literary genres and, most importantly, intentionally blurs the line between fiction and reality through the means of intertextuality and authorial intervention. In the context of social criticism, it is vital that the author retains connection with the real world as it would not be possible to comment on the state of things otherwise. The Muggle world clearly mirrors the real world and the secondary world is also modeled on reality albeit imitating a more old-fashioned past as she juxtaposes the modern world with the Victorian era. The novels appeal to both children and adults alike since readers find it easy to relate to the narrative on one level or another as Rowling manages to make the supernatural appear familiar and natural. At the same time however, Rowling shows a disturbing image of our own society and although her perspective is subjective by design, it is in no way any less honest or insightful. In her works, Rowling explores a number of themes that are relevant not only for their literary value but in the context of social sciences as the Harry Potter series present provoking issues of race, inequality, labour exploitation, corruption, gender stereotyping, etc. Additionally, Rowling questions the ambiguous concept of morality and authority especially in regards to the position of minorities within a particular society. Therefore, it can be argued that the Harry Potter narrative ranks among works of social criticism.

However, while Rowling evaluates the nature and basis of racist ideology and supremacist beliefs displayed by all parties involved in the Second Wizarding War, as demonstrated in chapters three and four, she does not offer any possible solutions that would enable the magical society to effectively heal itself of its prejudice based anxieties. In fact, she maintains an ambivalent attitude throughout the series as at the same time she both exposes and criticizes social flaws while remaining noncommittal in perpetuating certain behavioural patterns and stereotypes. In the epilogue of *Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallows* we can actually see that not much has changed. It was not until after Rowling had published the seventh and final novel that she decided to release additional information about the future of her characters in which the magical community appears to have rid itself of some of its social flaws such as corruption. What the author does with the primary text instead, is to present the severe consequences of leaving pressing social ills grow into a civil conflict and at

the same time questions the morality or rather immorality of a person's deeds committed under the banner of the subjective notion of "the greater good" (DH 24) of a particular society. Thus the resulting discourse represents an alternative view of contemporary social flaws presented through the medium of children's fantasy novel. Having identified the analogies between Rowling's ficitonal construct and reality I hope that I have managed to prove that both fantasy and children's fiction can provide convincing and realistic social commentary on modern society.

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