Stereotypes and Prejudices in the Magical World of Harry Potter

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Humanističke znanosti, filologija, teorija i povijest književnosti

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Abstract

This paper presents the analysis of stereotypes and prejudices in the *Harry Potter* series. The paper is divided into several parts, with the definition of stereotypes and the discussion about gender and house stereotypes in the first part of the paper and the definition and the discussion of prejudice, namely racial prejudice, in the second part. Stereotypes are challenged in the portrayal of many characters whose behavior calls into question traditional gender roles as well as the traits commonly associated with the four Hogwarts houses. Prejudices, on the other hand, exist as the social phenomenon connected to either a social class or a different magical race. The paper reaches a conclusion that the series exhibits a certain amount of stereotypes, especially in terms of house stereotypes, yet it also proposes the idea that it is difficult to write about gender stereotypes with the same certainty.

Key words: J.K. Rowling; Harry Potter; gender stereotypes; house stereotypes; racial prejudice; challenging stereotypes;

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Introduction

Books have always had a major impact on readers whether they are aware of it or not. When a reader is a child and a general idea of a book is conveyed in such a manner that a reader does not see it from the start but is rather subconsciously introduced to it, the author of the book usually employs all of his or her skilfulness to express a certain idea or a belief and to teach the reader about it. That is the manner in which the British author J.K. Rowling has presented her ideas and beliefs about stereotypes and prejudices in the world.

In the popular *Harry Potter* series, she writes about stereotyping and prejudices among schoolchildren. Though this is not the main theme of the series, stereotypes and prejudices have turned out to be a major topic, one that has been discussed since the last book was published in 2007. In some novels the topic of stereotypes and prejudices is not so obvious or overt (e.g. *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone, Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*), while some novels revolve around the problems of stereotyping and prejudices and many issues that the reader encounters along with the main characters stem from them (e.g. *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*).

However, many critics (Heilman and Donaldson 2009; Nikolajeva 2009; Eccleshare 2002) have stated that Rowling's work is laden with gender stereotypes, which are not fit for today's modern, open-minded, stereotype-free society. There are some (Cherland 2009; Smith 2010) who claim that even though some characters bear a faint mark of gender stereotypes their actions or characterisation do not fit into a strict category of their gender and, as such, cannot be taken as gender-stereotyped. The discussion about stereotypes in Rowling's books constitutes the first part of this paper. In the first chapter, stereotypes are defined and presented: what they are, how they form and develop, and what possible ways there are to eradicate them.

Rowling's imaginary boarding school for young witches and wizards is divided into four houses: Gryffindor, Ravenclaw, Slytherin and Hufflepuff. The students are sorted according to the various qualities each house endorses and it is only to be expected that certain group stereotypes arise from the division. This issue is further discussed in the second chapter on stereotypes.

The second part of the paper is closely focused on prejudices, more specifically, racial prejudice. Prejudice and racial prejudice are first defined and discussed in general (Stangor 2009; Zarate 2009) and then a broad insight into the world of Harry Potter and its social classes and races is given, alongside with a critical view (Lyubansky 2006; Horne 2010; Wolosky 2012; Dendle 2009; Nikolajeva 2009) on Rowling's presentation of her own ideas about prejudice and racial prejudice.

To sum up, the primary sources on which this paper draws the ideas and conclusions are seven novels on the young wizard hero, Harry Potter, and his adventures with his two best friends, Hermione Granger and Ronald Weasley. The aim of this paper is thus to identify stereotypes present in the series, both those which are clearly stated and those which are covert, and to discuss how they are portrayed. Also, prejudice and its various forms in the novels, being one of the reasons some main events are set in action, are to be presented and thoroughly discussed.

1 Introducing Stereotypes

According to Hogg and Abrams, stereotypes are generalizations about people which stem from their membership in a certain group (57). Stereotypes assume that all members of a group share the same qualities. When asked to generate a stereotype, people mostly generate negative stereotypes rather than positive ones. Also, it is assumed that people hold negative stereotypes when they express positive stereotypes. Stereotypes exist as cognitive structures (Stangor 2-3) and one of their most important features is that they are shared: large parts of society will agree on stereotypes about particular groups (Hogg and Abrams 57). While Stangor mentions positive and negative stereotypes (2), Hogg and Abrams write about neutral stereotypes – a stereotype that possesses neither positive nor negative evaluative connotation; it is associated with an intergroup categorization which has minimal subjective value or relevance to self, e.g. *Swedes are tall*. Such a stereotype does not reflect either positively or negatively on a member of a certain group (Hogg and Abrams 67).

There are three important functions that are served by stereotypes: (1) *social causality* where stereotypes are used to help members of society understand complex and large-scale social events; (2) *social justification* where specific stereotypes are used to justify committed or planned actions against a certain group, and (3) *social differentiation* which refers to "the tendency for ethnocentrism" (Hogg and Abrams 68). Stereotypes are a part of wider social explanations, which fulfil a human need to explain phenomena and as such are inevitable and their elimination would prove impossible and harmful to the individual. Stereotypes should not be eliminated but rather modified to avoid the oppression and derogatory and discriminatory behaviour (Hogg and Abrams 74).

Stereotypes are learnt early in childhood as a result of children's active and innate interest in learning about social categories and how to fit themselves into that system. Children are confident in learnt stereotypes and are highly resistant to change until after the age of ten when their beliefs soften (Stangor 8).

Stereotypes are shared within a society and preserved even when they are proven to be false and inaccurate (Lyons et al. 59). They are spread through a social network, which consists of relationships among individuals who communicate with each other (Lyons et al. 62). However, not all stereotypes will diffuse through a social network as the only way for a stereotypical piece of information to be diffused through a network is to be repeated by a large part of a group to one another (Lyons et al. 71). Stereotypes are also shared by members of the same group through the

coincidence of common experience and through coordination of their behaviour. Group members act to differentiate their group from others while at the same time they engage in the processes of social influence within their own group (McGarty, Yzerbyt, and Spears 6). There are two main ways in which stereotypes can emerge from expectancies: (1) the *kernel of truth* hypothesis, which deals with the theory that there are actual differences between groups which are then accentuated, and (2) the *self-fulfilling prophecy* hypothesis, which explains how stereotypes influence the way members of certain groups treat others, which in turn leads to the change in the behaviour of the stereotyped group (McGarty, Yzerbyt, and Spears 10). The only reason why a particular stereotype arises is because it is shared by many people. If every individual had a specific stereotype about a group, that stereotype would not be of much interest. When a stereotype becomes interesting enough, it is shared and it becomes important to understand the background of that stereotype (McGarty, Yzerbyt, and Spears 5).

Hornsey, too, touches upon the *kernel of truth* hypothesis in explaining a possible reason for internalising a stereotype: people internalise a stereotype as they believe it to be diagnostic of real-world characteristics; yet, he also proposes that people might internalise a stereotype because it suits their in-group agenda despite the fact that the internalised stereotype might not possess any evidence of being true (334). Even though negative stereotypes about a group can be constructive in a way that they can make a group change its way, they can still be run by a mean and abusive agenda such as stirring up hatred and mistrust (Hornsey 319). The way a group will accept a stereotype about themselves depends on the person delivering it – if it is an in-group member, it is more likely that the message will be accepted and the members will feel less threatened; if the same message came from an out-group member, it is likely that the message will be understood as offensive (Hornsey 322).

2 Battling Stereotypes – the *Harry Potter* Series

The protagonist of the series is the homonymous Harry Potter, a young wizard who discovers his legacy on his eleventh birthday. He lives with his aunt, uncle and cousin, the Dursleys, in a cupboard under the stairs. He is neglected and abused and the Dursleys' care for him is only marginal:

> Perhaps it had something to do with living in a dark cupboard, but Harry had always been small and skinny for his age. He looked even smaller and skinnier than he really was because all he had to wear were old clothes of Dudley's, and Dudley was about four times bigger than he was. (*The Philosopher's Stone* 27)

Harry encounters a Cinderella-like fate: a stranger comes for him to take him to a place where he will be with people like him: young witches and wizards who discovered their talent for magic and need to learn how to hone that talent (*The Philosopher's Stone* 60).

For six years Harry attends a boarding school called Hogwarts and upon his arrival he is sorted in one of the four Hogwarts houses in which he remains for the duration of his education. The school is run by Albus Dumbledore, the Headmaster, until his death in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, when Severus Snape takes on the school and Minerva McGonagall remains a Deputy Headmistress. In the very first book, Harry learns everything about his past, a story his aunt and uncle kept hidden from him, and he encounters his arch-nemesis, Lord Voldemort, who will plague him for the next six years to come.

From the very beginning of the series, it is obvious that the reader will experience a complex world of witches and wizards that co-exists with today's Muggle[1] world. Since these two worlds are different only in their access to magic, or the lack of it, it is to be expected that the problems such as social castes and stereotypes will be a part of the magical world as well. Magic does not seem to be the guarantee for an idyllic world but rather the source of stereotypes and prejudice.

In her world, J.K. Rowling has openly stated the existence of stereotypes through the creation of four houses where students live while attending Hogwarts. The houses differ in their approach to the philosophy of life. It is easy to conclude that there are many stereotypes that arise from this division, which will be discussed in further chapters. First, there exists a more pressing stereotype – the one that deals with gender. As stated above, the main character is a boy, a male character, while his loyal friends and sidekicks are a girl and another boy. The headmaster is male,

[1] A Muggle is a person who possesses no magical ability and has no notion of the wizarding world (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* 62).

the deputy is female. There are many female professors in Hogwarts and the gender ratio is equal in that matter. Still, are the male characters better positioned than female ones? The next chapter will try to answer that question.

3 Gender Stereotypes – Are Wizards Better Than Witches?

Heilman and Donaldson claim that the series about Harry Potter does not only reinforce gender stereotypes but that boys have more fun when the trio has an adventure (139). According to them, in the series women are placed in secondary position and thus replicate the most familiar cultural stereotypes about men and women (Heilman and Donaldson 139). Even though the series progresses, the world develops and many new characters are introduced, they still claim that women are not only marginalised but also mocked and that it all reflects rather than battles patriarchy (Heilman and Donaldson 140). Speaking in numbers, in the first four books there are 35 male characters and 29 female characters while by the end of the series there are 201 males and 115 females. It is obvious that, in numbers, men dominate the series (Heilman and Donaldson 141). Truly evil characters are men while women are mostly irritating. Hermione Granger and Minerva McGonagall, the two smartest witches in the series, are branded as helpers and unimportant (Heilman and Donaldson 146). Rowling is criticised for creating female students as hazy characters: "Certain traits do not seem to be authoritatively owned by any one female character, but, instead, are presented in groups" (Heilman and Donaldson 150). The grouping encourages the reader to perceive females as a group rather than individuals at the same time enforcing the stereotype that girls are "communal and friendly," while boys are individualistic and competitive (Heilman and Donaldson 151). Heilman and Donaldson express belief that the series is so popular because the readers find the expressed gender stereotypes relatable (159).

Similarly, Nikolajeva asserts that the series promotes gender stereotyping in assigning boys and girls traditional cultural and social male and female roles. For instance, even though girls demonstrate valour in the final battle against Lord Voldemort, Neville Longbottom, Harry's good friend and a fellow Gryffindor, gets to kill Nagini, Lord Voldemort's snake. She furthers the issue by emphasizing that the girls, Hermione and Ginny, find happiness in marriage and taking care of their children (Nikolajeva 238). That is, however, hardly the case. Harry asks Neville to take care of Nagini in case something happens to Ron and Hermione and they fail to do so. Neville is just in the right spot at the right moment:

> And then many things happened at the same moment. (...) In one swift, fluid motion, Neville broke free of the Body-Bind Curse upon; the flaming hat fell off him and he drew from its depths something silver, with a glittering, rubied handle (...) With a single stroke Neville sliced off the great snake's head, which spun high into the air... (*The Deathly Hallows* 587)

As for the girls, they indeed marry Ron and Harry respectively but what a reader does not know from the books is that they both have achieved successful careers, Hermione in the Ministry of Magic and Ginny as a professional Quidditch player.

Nikolajeva further claims that Rowling chose a male protagonist on purpose as male protagonists are in privileged position by definition. She also states that Harry is not a typical male stereotype as he is occasionally emotional, caring and vulnerable and, because of these traits, he does not reach the complexity of some fantasy protagonists (231). Whereas Nikolajeva's first claim might be true, almost everyone would agree that Harry is not a typical male character. One of Harry's most praiseworthy traits is his compassion and care, which even Dumbledore compliments: "'You do care,' said Dumbledore. (...) 'You care so much you feel as though you will bleed to death with the pain of it'" (*The Order of the Phoenix* 759). He is sensitive to Dementors' attack[2] as he had experienced more sadness and misery than anyone else. Harry is often governed by emotion, and not reason, and it is Hermione who has to stop Harry from rushing headlong into something dangerous and life-threatening like saving his godfather (*The Order of the Phoenix* 675).

Eccleshare joins Heilman, Donaldson, and Nikolajeva by observing that female students are rarely mentioned even though Hogwarts is a mixed-gender school. The reader is introduced to several girls that are in Harry's year, who are mocked by Harry and Ron in different situations, especially for showing high interest in Divination (*The Prisoner of Azkaban* 121). What is missing in Hogwarts are feminine emotions, camaraderie and mutual support between the girls (Eccleshare 85). Eccleshare accuses Rowling of being pejorative in describing other females in Hogwarts, because the individual descriptions of female students are largely ignored (86). Female characters are capable of being intelligent and are competent but they naturally appear to be subservient. According to Eccleshare (87), Hermione is neither a resourceful leader nor humorous nor capable of adapting herself to situations. Hermione might not be a leader but she is far from being unresourceful, humorous or incapable of adapting herself to situations. It is Hermione who saves the boys from being strangled by the plant when they go to hunt for the Philosopher's Stone (*The Philosopher's Stone* 299). She is the first to react and escape the Death Eaters when they crash the wedding at the beginning of the seventh book (*The Deathly Hallows* 135). Hermione also shows courage and leadership in the early books when there were not so many female characters (Wolosky 205).

[2] Professor Lupin explains how Dementors operate: they are drawn to people who have experienced great sadness and misery and they feed on it until the person is so miserable that he or she cannot fight Dementors anymore (*The Prisoner of Azkaban* 197).

Later in the books, gender emerges as both the plot device and a symbolic center of core values. This is exemplified by mothers as heroes: Molly Weasley, Narcissa Black, and Lily Potter, who is not an active agent in the series since she died before the books' plot set in (Wolosky 209). Molly Weasley is briefly introduced in the first book: she is described as "a plump woman" who helps Harry get to Platform 9 and ¾ (*The Philosopher's Stone* 103). She can be vicious when she gets mad but is actually very kind and nurturing (*The Chamber of Secrets* 34-36). She is a housewife and stereotypically has a crush on a famous and handsome wizard novelist Gilderoy Lockhart (*The Chamber of Secrets* 37). Even though Mrs. Weasley is a housewife, she is a member of the Order of the Phoenix and in the final battle she is proven to be a very skilful duellist, managing to kill Bellatrix Lestrange:

> Harry watched with terror and elation as Molly Weasley's wand slashed and twisted, and Bellatrix Lestrange's smile faltered and became a snarl. Jets of light flew from both wands, the floor around the witches' feet became hot and cracked; both women were fighting to kill. (...) Molly's curse soared beneath Bellatrix's outstretched arm and hit her squarely in the chest, directly over her heart. (*The Deathly Hallows* 590)

Another contribution to the debate on gender stereotyping in the *Harry Potter* series is given by Anne Collins Smith. Smith lists contrasted pairs of characteristics, the first referring to the male and the second to the female, which help paint gender stereotypes: control/love, independence/interdependence, individualism/community, hierarchy/networking, domination/ sharing, competition/cooperation, aggression/compassion and reason/emotion (341-42). If we apply those characteristics to the series characters, Rubeus Hagrid should be a female character. Yet, he is a male half-giant, who loves and deeply cares for Harry. He shows a great deal of love, sharing, compassion and emotion. Hagrid makes Harry a birthday cake when he comes for him (*The Philosopher's Stone* 57), he looks after many animals on the Hogwarts property (*The Half-Blood Prince* 453), and he cries when he thinks Harry has died (*The Deathly Hallows* 582). His display of emotions is hardly fit for male gender stereotypes, especially when he starts to cry at Bill and Fleur's wedding (*The Deathly Hallows* 121).

If these characteristics were truly to define a character's gender, then Minerva McGonagall would be a male character instead. She is controlled, sometimes competitive (*The Philosopher's Stone* 166) and governed by reason instead by emotions. She punishes Harry, Ron, Hermione and Neville for breaking the school rules even though she is the Head of their house (*The Philosopher's Stone* 263-64).

When a man and a woman engage in an identical behaviour, they might be described differently because different standards have been invoked or "the same subjective description might mean something substantively different because it was made with reference to shifting standards" (Biernat 137). Such shifting standards are obvious in judgments of men's and women's job-related competence (Biernat 139). Aggression, financial standing, or competence in masculine work domains, are assumed to mean that standards are lower for women than men (Biernat 143). When a female applies for a masculine job, she may find herself judged favourably subjectively but she will still have to provide more evidence to meet confirmatory standards and even if she is hired, she will do less valuable tasks or be in a less valuable position (Biernat 149).

This gender stereotype is hard to prove as it is actually Hermione who does all the important jobs in the series. She does not face Lord Voldemort but not because she is too weak to defeat him but because Lord Voldemort is Harry's arch-nemesis, not Hermione's. In the second book, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (174), Hermione brews a potion for them to sneak into Slytherin's common room to find out something about the Heir of Slytherin and the Chamber of Secrets. If the potion had been brewed wrongly, they could have experienced life-threatening consequences. She organises *Dumbledore's Army*, a students' group revolting against Dolores Umbridge and she casts a spell that is beyond her age in difficulty, yet she does it without breaking a sweat (*The Order of the Phoenix* 302). While on their quest to destroy all Horcruxes,[3] Hermione also destroys one with the tooth of the Basilisk (*The Deathly Hallows* 501).

Another example that does not concur with the afore-mentioned stereotype is the character of Minerva McGonagall. At first, she is introduced as a tall, strict-looking woman with black hair in a tight bun, the Deputy Headmistress (*The Philosopher's Stone* 16). The only reason why she was a Deputy and not a Headmistress is that she was working in the Ministry of Magic somewhere around the time when a new Headmaster was being chosen. After Dumbledore's death, she remained as Deputy Headmistress under Severus Snape, who in turn gained the seat as a part of political agenda and not because Minerva was lacking in competence. When she duelled Severus, Minerva was proven to be the stronger one (*The Deathly Hallows* 481).

The books do not lack in examples where female characters are given highly regarded positions. For example, there is Angelina Johnson. She was a Chaser for her Quidditch team and she always corrected Oliver Wood, the team's captain, whenever he referred to his team as "men":

> Wood cleared his throat for silence.
>
> "Okay, men," he said.

[3] A Horcrux is a piece of a wizard's soul contained in an item, extracted from the body with dark magic with the goal of reaching immortality (*Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* 464).

"And women," said Chaser Angelina Johnson.

"And women," Wood agreed. "This is it." (*The Philosopher's Stone* 201)

She became the team's captain when Oliver left Hogwarts and she was as hard-pushing as Oliver was (*The Order of the Phoenix* 208). Angelina's competitiveness and a strong desire to win refute Heilman and Donaldson's claims that boys are those who are competitive (151).

Another strong female character from the series that breaks all gender stereotypes is Ginny. She is introduced in the second book, *The Chamber of Secrets*, where she is described to have a crush on Harry. In the book, she is the initiator of all action as she is the one who opens the Chamber and releases the Basilisk while being under the influence of Lord Voldemort (*The Chamber of Secrets* 341). Ginny grows up to be popular, athletic and beautiful and Ron expresses his worries about her behaviour with boys thus marking her as too free with her body (Cherland 277). Cherland, too, mentions the male/female binary, which is a cultural fiction and one which the *Harry Potter* series helps create and uphold. The binary, which considers the first to be worthy and normal and the second less so, helps to justify unequal power relations and hierarchical social order (Cherland 279). This most definitely cannot be true when taken into consideration that Ginny out-bested male characters in the trials for new Chasers for the Gryffindor Quidditch team (*The Half-Blood Prince* 212).

Another stereotype to contradict is Heilman and Donaldson's claim that evil and frightening characters are men (141-42). Bellatrix Lestrange and Dolores Umbridge obviously subvert this idea. Bellatrix Lestrange is a demented Death Eater who escapes Azkaban in the fifth book (*The Order of the Phoenix* 503). She is Lord Voldemort's most loyal servant and does not care about anything else other than pleasing her master. She loves to torture Muggles and Muggle-born witches and wizards (*The Deathly Hallows* 375) and she is so devoted to the dark side that she kills her cousin and Harry's godfather, Sirius Black, and shows no compassion or remorse (*The Order of the Phoenix* 700). Her evilness and wickedness can also be seen in her appearance: she was once beautiful but that was in the past when she was still sane: "Azkaban had hollowed Bellatrix Lestrange's face, making it gaunt and skull-like, but it was alive with a feverish, fanatical glow" (*The Order of the Phoenix* 721). She is aggressive beyond all compare and competitive for Lord Voldemort's attention. She meets her end at the hand of a character that is her complete opposite, Molly Weasley.

Bellatrix might not be as scary as Dolores Umbridge as Bellatrix is crazy and everything she does, she does because she sees the world in her twisted way. Dolores is clinically sane and yet she does many monstrous things. She is from the Ministry of Magic, sent to spy on Dumbledore, always dressed in pink and with a forced smile on her face. Again, her ugly

appearance reflects the ugliness within: “she looked just like a large, pale toad. She was rather squat with a broad, flabby face, as little neck as Uncle Vernon and a very wide, slack mouth. Her eyes were large, round and slightly bulging” (*The Order of the Phoenix* 134). She holds deep hate for everything that is not purely wizard, which helps her get a job as an Under-Secretary in the Ministry of Magic controlled by Lord Voldemort (*The Deathly Hallows* 206). Her evilness is openly stated in the scene where she holds a trial for a Muggle-born witch under the presence of Dementors. She gloats in the misery of others and that is one of the evilest things possible: “The Patronus, he was sure, was Umbridge’s, and it glowed brightly because she was so happy here, in her element, upholding the twisted laws she had helped to write” (*The Deathly Hallows* 214). She is not only irritating but rather truly, completely, evil.

4 House Stereotypes – Is Bravery More Important Than Wit?

As it was mentioned in the introduction, Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry is a boarding school which sorts its students into four houses, namely Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw and Slytherin. The students are sorted there in their first year and they have to spend their six or seven years in Hogwarts in these houses, all the while working hard and trying to win points for their houses:

> your house will be something like your family within Hogwarts. You will have classes with the rest of your house, sleep in your house dormitory, and spend free time in your house common room. (...) While you are at Hogwarts, your triumphs will earn your house points, while any rulebreaking will lose house points. (*The Philosopher's Stone* 126)

There is no possibility of switching houses once the sorting has been made. Each house values a various set of traits. Gryffindor values courage, friendship and dauntlessness; Hufflepuff loyalty, kindness and justice; Ravenclaw knowledge, wit and learning, and Slytherin resourcefulness, cunningness and ambition (*The Philosopher's Stone* 130). Every house also has an animal as their emblem, which symbolises the nature of the house: Gryffindor a lion, Hufflepuff a badger, Ravenclaw an eagle, and Slytherin a snake (Eccleshare 62).

The main characters, Harry, Ron, Hermione and Neville, are all sorted into Gryffindor, the home of the brave. The antagonists, Draco Malfoy, Vincent Crabbe and Gregory Goyle, are sorted into Slytherin, the bad house (*The Philosopher's Stone* 133). It is clear from this point in the series that there will be a certain rift between these characters as Gryffindor and Slytherin stand on the opposing sides, their values being the opposite.

Singh explains that when people categorise themselves as members of a group they feel attracted toward each other merely because of the common membership and each member is viewed as a prototype of the group (194). McGarty, Yzerbyt and Spears assert that treating people as group members means that people can ignore all of the diverse and detailed information associated with individuals (4). This is the reason why there are tightly-knit groups of students who seldom socialise with students of other houses. It is easy to view all Slytherins as evil if one Slytherin is evil. If one Ravenclaw student is smart and acts like a know-it-all, all Ravenclaws are like that. A Hufflepuff is a good-natured student who helps everyone but is not able to be a leader.

Harry, who had been fed sparse information about the wizarding world by Hagrid, knew that Slytherin has been a bad house since Lord Voldemort was sorted into Slytherin many years before the plot of the first novel takes place: "There's not a single witch or wizard who went bad

who wasn't in Slytherin. You-Know-Who was one" (*The Philosopher's Stone* 90). That is why Harry, when the Sorting Hat, a magical item which performs the sorting, deliberates where to sort him, pleaded to be placed anywhere but Slytherin (*The Philosopher's Stone* 133). From that moment on, Harry himself held strong stereotypes about Slytherins. When Neville had his moment of doubt, Harry consoled him and told Neville he should be happy that he was in Gryffindor, and not in "stinking Slytherin" (*The Philosopher's Stone* 236). Harry's father James had the same reaction to the possibility of being sorted into Slytherin as Draco for Hufflepuff (*The Deathly Hallows* 538).

Slytherin is not the only house that has negative stereotypes held against them. Hufflepuff is possibly the second underrated house of Hogwarts. The Sorting Hat said that Hufflepuffs are "just and loyal, / Those patient Hufflepuffs are true / And unafraid of toil" (*The Philosopher's Stone* 130). Nevertheless, Hufflepuff is thought of as a second-rated house, even by Draco: "Well, no one really knows until they get there, do they, but I know I'll be in Slytherin, all our family have been – imagine being in Hufflepuff, I think I'd leave, wouldn't you?" (*The Philosopher's Stone* 88). Hagrid also considered Hufflepuff not worthy: "Everyone says Hufflepuffs are a lot o' duffers..." (*The Philosopher's Stone* 90). According to Heilman and Donaldson, Hufflepuffs are loyal and good workers but not intelligent leaders (156). Nobody, except Hufflepuffs themselves, seems to appreciate the Hufflepuff house.

The only house that remains deep in the shadows is Ravenclaw. It is the only house that does not provoke such strong stereotypes as the others. There is one glimpse of stereotype about Ravenclaw when, in *The Order of the Phoenix*, Hermione is asked why she had not been sorted there:

> "How come you're not in Ravenclaw?" he demanded, staring at Hermione with something close to wonder. "With brains like yours?"
>
> "Well, the Sorting Hat did seriously consider putting me in Ravenclaw during my Sorting," said Hermione brightly, "but it decided on Gryffindor in the end." (*The Order of the Phoenix* 369)

Ravenclaw is considered the house which gathers the most intelligent witches and wizards as the Sorting Hat sings: "if you've a ready mind, / Where those of wit and learning / Will always find their kind" (*The Philosopher's Stone* 130). Hermione is the cleverest witch of her age (*The Prisoner of Azkaban* 368), yet she had been sorted into Gryffindor, not in Ravenclaw. It was not Hermione's intelligence in question; it was probably her courage that was greater and prevailed to Gryffindor.

Gryffindor is the most famous house of Hogwarts as it has housed many famous wizards and witches, Albus Dumbledore and Minerva McGonagall amongst others. For Gryffindors, the most important thing is courage: "Where dwell the brave at heart, / Their daring, nerve, and chivalry / Set Gryffindors apart" (*The Philosopher's Stone* 130). When Harry was about to be sorted, the Hat was not sure where to place him as he possessed qualities each of the houses fancied. However, Harry had the courage to ask not to be placed in Slytherin, his courage prevailed and Harry was sorted into Gryffindor. There is a stereotype about Gryffindors that they are courageous but not very smart:

> "*Gryffindor, where dwell the brave at heart*! Like my dad."
>
> Snape made a small, disparaging noise. James turned on him.
>
> "Got a problem with that?"
>
> "No," said Snape, though his slight sneer said otherwise. "If you'd rather be brawny than brainy-" (*The Deathly Hallows* 539)

Even the Sorting Hat sings about the stereotypes depicting, and in the end dividing, each of the houses: "By Gryffindor, the bravest were / Prized far beyond the rest; / For Ravenclaw, the cleverest / Would always be the best; / For Hufflepuff, hard workers were / Most worthy of admission; / And power-hungry Slytherin / Loved those of great ambition" (*The Goblet of Fire* 150).

Even though the Sorting Hat chooses the students for different houses based on the most prominent qualities in an individual, sometimes that individual fails the beliefs of the house and acts as the complete opposite. For instance, Peter Pettigrew was sorted into Gryffindor the same year as James Potter and Sirius Black, yet Peter betrayed his friends, Lily and James, in order to gain some fame and glory with Lord Voldemort (*The Prisoner of Azkaban* 397). By betraying his friends and thus killing them indirectly, Peter defiled many of the traits a true Gryffindor should possess, courage and friendship being the most prominent.

A Ravenclaw that stands out quite much from the mass of the intelligent, intellectual students is Luna Lovegood. Her cleverness is undeniable but she is not a typical Ravenclaw. She is always in a dreamy state and is described as giving off "an aura of distinct dottiness" (*The Order of the Phoenix* 170). She also proves to be extremely courageous when she followed Harry to the Ministry of Magic in his attempt to save Sirius (*The Order of the Phoenix* 700); when she fought the Death Eaters that invaded Hogwarts (*The Half-Blood Prince* 544); when she fought to protect Hogwarts and other students in the final battle (*The Deathly Hallows* 468).

Hufflepuffs are not just hard-workers. There are many noble students who reside in this house, the most prominent of them being Cedric Diggory. In the fourth book, the Goblet of Fire

had to choose a contestant worthy enough to represent Hogwarts in an international tournament called the Triwizard Tournament. Even though many of the Gryffindors had applied, the Goblet chose Cedric as Hogwarts's representative (*The Goblet of Fire* 215). One of the most important moments when Hufflepuffs showed immense courage was, too, during the final battle. First, Ernie Macmillan asked to stay and fight (*The Deathly Hallows* 489) and then the Hufflepuff students were the second, the first ones being Gryffindors, to stand in front of Harry as a human shield, protecting him from being turned into a Death Eater (*The Deathly Hallows* 490).

Not all who belong to Slytherin are evil and power-hungry. The best example for that is Severus Snape. Even though he had proven himself to be extremely mean towards Harry and Neville (and other Gryffindor students as well), Snape made a decision to play a double agent for almost nineteen years. It is true that he wanted to protect Harry for his own reasons – Snape had been in love with Harry's mother for all his life and he felt responsible for her death (*The Deathly Hallows* 544). Yet, his act cannot be diminished by his motives because it required a great deal of courage and dedication.

5 Prejudice and Racism

According to Stangor, prejudice is defined as a negative attitude toward a group or its members (2). There exists an idea that prejudice is actually evolutionary because people stigmatise those who appear to be unable to contribute to social development – either they are poor partners for social exchange or they may threaten a group and its values (Collins et al. and Maner et al. qtd. in Stangor 9). Racism is a special form of prejudice whose main premise lies in the superiority of one race as the basis of group characteristics is assumed to rest on biology (Jones qtd. in Zarate 387). One of the possible ways to determine whether racism still exists is to document any differences in the quality of life across groups, income being the easiest to document (Zarate 388).

A person is not always consciously aware of holding prejudice and thus unaware of his or her wrong ways. This phenomenon is explained by the existence of implicit attitudes which are either below conscious awareness or well-practiced and therefore automatic (Zarate 391). If the belief of supremacy of one group over another is taken as the main element of racism, it is easy to conclude the possible and most probable source of racism – basic genetic differences between groups (Zarate 393). In order to reduce prejudice, one must find a way for minority groups to achieve radical social change. This is clearly a political issue and some of the proposed ways of dealing with prejudice are propaganda and education (Hogg and Abrams 75).

The presence of prejudice in the *Harry Potter* series can be traced to the main conflict in the series, namely the conflict between Harry Potter and Lord Voldemort. Lord Voldemort is an evil and extremely powerful dark wizard whose wish is to dominate the wizarding world and purify it from all who are not Pureblood wizards.[4] In order to achieve his goal, he formed a group of followers called the Death Eaters, mostly Pureblood witches and wizards who shared Lord Voldemort's belief in the supremacy of Purebloods (*The Goblet of Fire* 121). He also employed others in his combats – monsters and werewolves as well, but they were not of pure blood or magical for that matter so they were never branded with a Dark Mark[5] (*The Order of the Phoenix* 85).

Even though this prejudice against witches and wizards who are not of Pureblood origin begins to display actively in the second book, *The Chamber of Secrets,* and continues throughout the series, it is not the only prejudice that exists. There is also prejudice against house-elves, magical beings which serve wealthy wizarding families and are treated no better than slaves. Also,

[4] Pureblood wizards are those who have never intermarried with Muggle-born witches and wizards (*Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* 122).
[5] A Dark Mark is a tattoo in the shape of a skull swallowing a snake given by Lord Voldemort to his followers (*Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* 120).

there is strong prejudice and dislike between wizards, with no regards to their blood status, and goblins, another race of magical beings in the world of Harry Potter. Further chapters will investigate these prejudices, how and by whom they are displayed, and what is undertaken to fight them.

6 If You Are Not Pureblood, You Are Not Worthy

As mentioned before, prejudice against witches and wizards who are of Muggle origin begins openly in the second book and escalates in the last. The crimes, the propaganda, and the way the politics against Muggles and Half-bloods is led remind the reader of the worst genocides in history (Nikolajeva 228). There is a clear link between those who hold prejudice against Muggles and Half-bloods considering them as unworthy and those who follow Lord Voldemort (Eccleshare 78). Even though Dumbledore said that not all of Lord Voldemort's followers sided with him because they had previously held prejudice against Muggles and Half-bloods (*The Half-Blood Prince* 338), those who rose to be the most prominent and cruellest of Death Eaters were the prejudiced ones. Death Eaters are a hooded, masked group of people who persecute their *enemies* with no mercy, with an ill desire to harm them in the most humiliating way possible:

> A crowd of wizards, tightly packed and moving together with wands pointing straight upward, was marching slowly across the field. (...) They didn't seem to have faces... Then he realized that their heads were hooded and their faces masked. (...) One of the marchers below flipped Mrs. Roberts upside down with his wand; her nightdress fell down to reveal voluminous drawers (...) the smallest Muggle child, who had begun to spin like top, sixty feet above the ground, his head flopping limply ... (*The Goblet of Fire* 102)

The gang of Death Eaters and their actions against a Muggle family in this case is closely modelled on the Ku Klux Klan in the South of the United States. Outside of Hogwarts, this blood prejudice evolves into hate, wild and untamed and it is no more a thing to be laughed at and waved off (Eccleshare 80). The idea that wizards are supreme to others of their race based on their blood status and treating all those who are not the same as second-class citizens parallels the oppression of African Americans and the rejection of interracial marriages of that time. There are two important ideas conveyed in this prejudice: Half-bloods and Muggles are subhuman and thus undesirable and their presence threatens ethnical purity of the wizarding world (Lyubansky 237). Lyubansky claims that Rowling has made it clear that only Slytherins or Lord Voldemort's supporters hold those kinds of prejudice, that all the other *good* characters explicitly denounce them, and that there is a clean division between the evil racists and the good egalitarians (238). However, that is not quite true.

First of all, there is Horace Slughorn, a Potions professor at Hogwarts, who becomes the Head of Slytherin house when Severus Snape becomes the Headmaster of Hogwarts. He is, as Dumbledore described him, a man who likes comfort and being in the presence of famous and

influential people but he is far from being evil (*The Half-Blood Prince* 75). When Horace met Harry, he told him that Harry's mother had been his favourite student and that he was surprised to learn that Lily was Muggle-born. He reacted wildly when he thought Harry found him prejudiced because he liked his Muggle-born students as they had achieved great things in life (*The Half-Blood Prince* 71). Horace's attitudes and beliefs can be supported by the phenomenon of implicit attitudes, for if Horace had completely been prejudiced, he never would have picked Muggle-borns as his favourite students, no matter their potential and qualities.

Another example is Albus Dumbledore himself. In the series, he is presented as a wise old wizard, powerful and just. Harry was shocked to learn that Dumbledore was not as perfect as he had believed. In his youth, Dumbledore's sister was attacked by Muggle boys for performing magic and harmed in such a way that she never was sane again. This was the motivation which led Dumbledore to fall in allegiance with another wizard in order to install wizard dominance over Muggles under the guise of *greater good* (*The Deathly Hallows* 291). Of course, Dumbledore saw the error of his ways, defeated his once-friend and started advocating equality in the wizarding world. Nevertheless, the fact that Dumbledore once held prejudice against Muggles still stands.

The whole anti-Muggle political system that Rowling has created in her books reminds the reader of the anti-Semitism and racial ideology of Hitler and the Nazis (Lyubansky 240). When Harry, Hermione and Ron break into the Ministry of Magic to retrieve a lost Horcrux, they get the chance to see the insides of anti-Muggle politics. There is a special commission for the registration of the Half-bloods, with Dolores Umbridge in charge (*The Deathly Hallows* 172). The Ministry issued special pamphlets that were anti-Muggle-born political propaganda:

> Its pink cover was emblazoned with a golden title:
>
> MUDBLOODS
>
> And the Dangers They Pose to
>
> A Peaceful Pure-Blood Society
>
> Beneath the title was a picture of a red rose with a simpering face in the middle of its petals, being strangled by a green weed with its fangs and a scowl. (*The Deathly Hallows* 205)

In the great Atrium, where once stood a fountain with a wizard, a witch, a goblin, a centaur and a house-elf, all happy and in harmony (*The Order of the Phoenix* 116), there stood a statue of black stone:

> this was sculpture of a witch and a wizard sitting on ornately carved thrones (...). Engraved in foot-high letters at the base of the statue were the words MAGIC IS MIGHT. (...) what he had thought were decoratively carved thrones were actually

> mounds of carved human: hundreds and hundreds of naked bodies, men, women, and children, all with rather stupid, ugly faces, twisted and pressed together to support the weight of the handsomely robed wizards.
> (*The Deathly Hallows* 198-99)

Having in mind the horrors which were done in the past, under the same excuses of supremacy and *greater good*, the reader is relieved to find a character that advocates the fight against such prejudice and pleads to others in the books to fight and protect others, no matter the blood status. Kingsley, one of the members of the Order of the Phoenix, says: "it's one short step from 'Wizards first' to 'Purebloods first,' and then to 'Death Eaters' (...) We're all human, aren't we? Every human life is worth the same, and worth saving" (*The Deathly Hallows* 357). Wolosky connects Kingsley's statement with that of Pastor Martin Niemöller's about his, and indirectly human, passivity against Nazi politics (202).

Not only half-blood wizards are being prejudiced against. There are also those who are Purebloods but have had the misfortune of being bitten by a werewolf. When Harry first saw Remus Lupin, they were on a train to Hogwarts. What Harry did not know was that Remus was travelling to his position as a teacher at Hogwarts as Remus was wearing "an extremely shabby set of wizard's robes that had been darned in several places" *(The Prisoner of Azkaban* 78). This was the first sign that Remus is extremely poor, and when Harry sees him again in *The Order of the Phoenix*, Remus looks even worse: "he had more gray hairs than when Harry had last said goodbye to him and his robes were more patched and shabbier than ever" (43-44). Harry later found out that Remus had been unable to find a job because of a law that Dolores Umbridge drafted (*The Order of the Phoenix* 281). The character of Remus Lupin and prejudices against his kind critics described as allegories on discrimination and prejudice against AIDS sufferers (Green 100). The reason to do so lies in the fact that it is easier to deny humanity to those who are affected rather than trying to understand the one who destabilises reality, makes boundaries fluid and categories and interpretations problematic (Bynum qtd. in Green 101).

Another character that has minor prejudice displayed against him is Rubeus Hagrid. He is described in the first book as "a giant of man" with "a shaggy mane of hair and a wild, tangled beard" (*The Philosopher's Stone* 55) but his giant blood is not revealed until the fourth book when a nosy journalist, Rita Skeeter, reveals his background and his half-blood status (*The Goblet of Fire* 370). Hagrid got a job as a teacher at Hogwarts and his blood-status did not pose a problem until Dolores Umbridge came, with her strong prejudice against half-bloods: "It's her thing about half-breeds all over again – she's trying to make out Hagrid's some kind of dim-witted troll, just

because he had a giantess for a mother...” (*The Order of the Phoenix* 416). Otherwise, Hagrid has not encountered other problems connected to prejudice.

7 S.P.E.W. or the Attempt to Abolish Slavery

In her books, Rowling has created and written about many magical races and creatures such as kelpies, thestrals, Dementors, etc. What stands out from these creatures is the race of house-elves. They are humanoid creatures bound into servitude to wealthy wizarding families. Harry's first encounter with a house-elf occurs in the second book, *The Chamber of Secrets*, when a house-elf named Dobby comes to warn Harry not to go to Hogwarts that year:

> The little creature on the bed had large, bat-like ears and bulging green eyes the size of tennis balls. (...) The creature slipped off the bed and bowed so low that the end of his long, thin nose touched the carpet. (...) it was wearing what looked like an old pillowcase, with rips for arm- and leg-holes. (12)

They are basically slaves, having to serve a family until they die or are liberated by their family with the presentation of clothes (*The Chamber of Secrets* 187). They are, more often than not, loyal to their families and if they in some way fail them, they are forced to punish themselves by ironing their hands, hitting their heads against house objects, etc. (*The Chamber of Secrets* 14). Even though Harry helps Dobby get his freedom (*The Chamber of Secrets* 356-7), it is Hermione who is the first to realise how wicked it all is. She comments on the injustice of it all: "'You know, house-elves get a very raw deal!' said Hermione indignantly. 'It's slavery, that's what it is! (...) Why doesn't anyone do something about it?'" (*The Goblet of Fire* 106). Others seem to accept house-elves as their subordinates and consider them only as objects. Percy, Ron's older brother, expresses this kind of attitude when his boss's house-elf is found with a wand in her hands:

> "Well, Mr. Crouch is quite right to get rid of an elf like that!" he said. "Running away when he'd expressly told her not to...embarrassing him in front of the whole Ministry... (...) Hermione, a wizard in Mr. Crouch's position can't afford a house-elf who's going to run amok with a wand!" (*The Goblet of Fire* 120)

Even Mrs. Weasley and Ron hold the prejudice that house-elves are there to serve the wizarding population. Mrs. Weasley said that it would be nice to have a house-elf to help her around the house (*The Chamber of Secrets* 30) and Ron believes that house-elves love to be bossed around and are happy when they serve their families (*The Goblet of Fire* 106). Their attitudes are quite surprising since they are both *good* characters, they fight on Harry's side and denounce any kind of blood prejudice. Yet, they still consider house-elves unworthy of the same treatment as wizards. Their attitudes can be explained with the help of the theory about implicit attitudes (Zarate 391), which partially relieves them of guilt.

Lucius Malfoy, Draco's father, made a mistake of underestimating his house-elf, Dobby. He mistreats him, beats him and, in the end, loses him to Harry. Because of his malice, Dobby turned Lucius in, risking his own life, to warn Harry against the plot to bring back Lord Voldemort and thus preventing it from happening (*The Chamber of Secrets* 354-5).

Another character which made the same mistake of underestimating a house-elf was Sirius Black. He is a *good* character, which makes it even more shocking to learn that he treats his house-elf, Kreacher, with contempt (*The Order of the Phoenix* 100, 108, 443). Sirius had had a difficult childhood, surrounded by his Pure-blood and prejudiced family, and Kreacher was a remainder of those times. Yet, Dumbledore does not see it as a justification and in his conversation with Harry explains the source of prejudice against house-elves and all those who are not wizards:

> I do not think Sirius took me very seriously, or that he ever saw Kreacher as a being with feelings as acute as a human's. (...) Kreacher is what he has been made by wizards, Harry. (...) Yes, he is to be pitied. His existence has been as miserable as your friend Dobby's. (...) Indifference and neglect often do much more damage than outright dislike... the fountain we destroyed tonight told a lie. We wizards have mistreated and abused our fellows for too long, and we are now reaping our reward. (*The Order of the Phoenix* 766-67)

The most important way to fight racism is to treat house-elves kindly, as equals (Horne 81). Still, Harry does not do anything to improve the status of house-elves and does not speak up in the face of elf oppression. He sees how much the wizarding world relies on the slave work of house-elves but he is not ready to talk openly or do anything about it (Horne 83).

That is what Hermione does. When she learns that there are house-elves even at Hogwarts and that they are not paid for their work (*The Goblet of Fire* 154), she starts up a campaign to fight for better rights of house-elves and names it Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare or S.P.E.W. (*The Goblet of Fire* 188). She makes badges and forces Harry and Ron to join her in her battle for justice presenting them with her aims:

> "Our short-term aims," said Hermione, speaking even more loudly than Ron, and acting as though she hadn't heard a word, "are to secure house-elves fair wages and working conditions. Our long-term aims include changing the law about nonwand use, and trying to get an elf into the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures..." (*The Goblet of Fire* 189)

Her just battle does not prove to be very successful as all those who are approached, namely Hagrid, the Weasley twins and other Gryffindor students, are reluctant to join (*The Goblet of Fire* 201). However, Hermione does not give up on her organisation and the following year she takes

things into her own two hands and starts knitting clothes for Hogwarts house-elves claiming they want their freedom but they just do not know it yet (*The Order of the Phoenix* 237). Even though she is constantly insulted by Kreacher, she never treats him rudely but with kindness and understanding (*The Order of the Phoenix* 99; *The Deathly Hallows* 162).

Dendle comments that Hermione's fight for elf rights decreases towards the end of the book thus criticising Rowling for losing interest in the topic (165). According to him, Rowling also regularly introduced lesser creatures, who were exploited by wizards, for comic effect (Dendle 166). House-elves' speech is compared to 1930s and 1940s Hollywood misconceptions of *darky* dialect rather than to any actual African-American speech pattern. Dobby, who gains his freedom in the second book, is often more an object of humour than a model of what a free elf can accomplish – the reader is asked to laugh at Dobby's bargaining over wages with Dumbledore and his unbreakable devotion to Harry (Horne 81).

From what a reader experiences, it seems that house-elves like their enslavement. Winky, a female house-elf, was given her freedom when she "disgraced" her master and she reacted wildly to it:

> "Winky has behaved tonight in a manner I would not have believed possible," he said slowly. (...) And I find that she disobeyed me. This means clothes."
>
> "No!" shrieked Winky, prostrating herself at Mr. Crouch's feet. "No, master! Not clothes, not clothes!" (...) Winky was crying so hard that her sobs echoed around the clearing. (*The Goblet of Fire* 117-8)

Even before her forced freedom, Winky expressed her opinion on free elves: "'House-elves is not supposed to have fun, Harry Potter,' said Winky firmly, from behind her hands. 'House-elves does what they is told.'" (*The Goblet of Fire* 84). Lyubansky, drawing on Dumbledore's words about wizards mistreating their fellows (*The Order of the Phoenix* 767), mentions that the possible reason why the house-elves prefer enslavement to freedom is because it is a product of oppression rather than an exercise of free will (245). When Harry sees Winky again, she is in Hogwarts but she does not handle her freedom well. Her clothes are dirty and damaged and she is mentally unstable (*The Goblet of Fire* 318). She still cares for her former master, Mr. Crouch, and behaves like she is still a slave. She is insulted by Hermione's question about how much she earns replying that even though she is disgraced by being free, she is "not sunk so low as that! Winky is properly ashamed of being free" (*The Goblet of Fire* 321).

Possibly the biggest case of prejudice against house-elves happens in the sixth book, *The Half-Blood Prince*, when Dumbledore teaches Harry about Lord Voldemort's past. He showed Harry how Lord Voldemort had acquired magical items for his Horcruxes and one of the stories

included a house-elf named Hokey, who was accused of accidentally poisoning her mistress, whereas it was Lord Voldemort who killed her in order to get the magical cup. This incident made Harry sympathetic to Hermione and her work in S.P.E.W. (*The Half-Blood Prince* 410-11), but nothing is mentioned of S.P.E.W. later in the book, much less Harry's engagement in the organisation's work.

8 Goblin Prejudice Is (Not) Justified

There are many magical races in the wizarding world and goblins are introduced among the first. Harry met them in the first book, *The Philosopher's Stone*, when he went to Diagon Alley to buy his school books, his wand and everything else he needed for Hogwarts: "The goblin was about a head shorter than Harry. He had a swarthy, clever face, a pointed beard and, Harry noticed, very long fingers and feet" (*The Philosopher's Stone* 82). Goblins are hereby described similarly to villains of traditional British fantasy and adventure novels. They are physically shorter and that, together with their long fingers and feet, marks them as *others* (Horne 91). Goblins are included in the everyday life of wizards as they run the only wizarding bank, Gringotts, and Hagrid warns Harry never to mess with goblins (*The Philosopher's Stone* 73). With the description of a goblin combined with their profession and Hagrid's warning not to mess with them, it is hard to wrestle from the idea that goblins are wizarding synonyms for Jewish moneylenders or even Italian mafioso (Horne 91; Dendle 165).

Even though Hagrid was only hinting at the existing prejudice against goblins, it is clear that the prejudice exists and that this prejudice is a rather negative one. Just like house-elves, goblins are considered lesser beings by wizards, good only for counting and taking care of money. Many of the characters show prejudice against goblins, Ron being one of them. In *The Goblet of Fire*, Ron shows his lack of respect towards goblins by not even trying to learn the names of the goblin rebels but rather categorises them all: "Couldn't remember all the goblin rebels' names, so I invented a few. (...) they're all called stuff like Bodrod the Bearded and Urg the Unclean; it wasn't hard" (520). It is not so surprising that such a thing comes from Ron because it has been previously discussed how Ron suffers from harbouring prejudice. His prejudiced attitudes are shown once more later in the series when Harry, Hermione and Ron discuss the idea of giving the sword of Gryffindor to Griphook, a goblin who helps Harry, Ron and Hermione break into Gringotts.

While Hermione was reluctant to say whether Griphook had lied about the sword being stolen from goblins, Ron was quicker in his judgement: "It'll be one of those goblin stories (...) about how the wizards are always trying to get one over on them" (*The Deathly Hallows* 409). It sheds light on how many wizards, Ron being here only an example, are severely prejudiced against goblins. In their fourth year at Hogwarts, witches and wizards learn about goblin rebellions in wizarding history, yet neither Ron nor Harry tried to remember at least the most important facts (*The Goblet of Fire* 520; *The Order of the Phoenix* 669). They seem not to have thought of it as significant for their future careers. Ron suggested that they should double-cross Griphook, promise

him the sword and then never give it to him and was rebuked by Hermione standing up for Griphook (*The Deathly Hallows* 410). Ron holds strong dislike for goblins calling them "ickle goblins" and mocks Hermione's organization, S.P.E.W., by saying that she might start up a new organization "...S.P.U.G. or something. Society for the Protection of Ugly Goblins?," to which Hermione replied that goblins do not need a wizard's protection since they are clever and, unlike the house-elves, stick up for themselves (*The Goblet of Fire* 378-79).

There is a significant difference in the quality of life between the wizards and goblins, which signalises the existence of not only prejudice but also racism (Zarate 388). Goblins are denied the right to carry a wand and Griphook mentions that as one of the main reasons why goblins strongly dislike wizards: "The right to carry a wand (...) has long been contested between wizards and goblins," to which Ron replies that goblins can do magic without wands and that angers Griphook even further: "That is immaterial! Wizards refuse to share the secrets of wandlore with other magical beings, they deny us the possibility of extending our powers" (*The Deathly Hallows* 395). Even though Harry meets only Griphook, it is safe to say the whole goblin population feels the same as Griphook when it comes to the rights to carry a wand. They envy the wizards and are angered by wizards' lack of desire to share secrets of wands with them. It is not only that wizards do not want to share wands with goblins. Goblins are prohibited from carrying a wand, just like house-elves. That was the reason of many goblin rebellions throughout wizarding history (*The Goblet of Fire* 379).

When Lord Voldemort came back at the end of the fourth book, everybody tried to guess with whom the goblins will side. Even though Lord Voldemort had terrorised goblin population and killed a goblin family from Nottingham the first time he was in power, (*The Order of the Phoenix* 79), there was a possibility that goblins might side with Lord Voldemort this time. Remus said that the goblins might be tempted to join Lord Voldemort "If they're offered the freedoms we've been denying them for centuries..." (*The Order of the Phoenix* 79). He thus acknowledged the existence of prejudice against goblins and the imposed supremacy of the wizarding race. Nevertheless, goblins had not sided with Voldemort but neither had they sided with Harry. According to the words of Gornuk, a goblin Harry meets indirectly, they decided to take no sides as the war is between wizards and they recognise no wizard master (*The Deathly Hallows* 243-44).

Goblins do not forgive easily and they are a secluded race (*The Order of the Phoenix* 79). It seems that prejudice goes both ways. Even Griphook, who had previously been saved by a wizard, has an ill opinion about the wizarding race. He calls wizards "wand-carriers" and criticises wizarding population for not standing up for all that are not wizards: "As the Dark Lord becomes

ever more powerful, your race is set still more firmly above mine! Gringotts falls under Wizarding rule, house-elves are slaughtered, and who amongst the wand-carriers protests?" (*The Deathly Hallows* 395).

The possible source of prejudice against goblins, aside from the rebellions from the past, can be found in the goblins' bloodthirsty nature. Even Harry, who saved Griphook, being one of the most open-minded characters in the series, started to develop feelings of unease and distaste for Griphook because he "laughed at the idea of pain in lesser creatures and seemed to relish the possibility that they might have to hurt other wizards to reach Lestranges' vault" (*The Deathly Hallows* 412). Since the book is told from Harry's perspective, it is not known how Hermione felt about this but, if Harry is to be trusted, she too developed distaste for Griphook (*The Deathly Hallows* 412).

Conclusion

It is difficult to say with certainty that there are gender stereotypes in Rowling's books. She has created a rich universe with such vividly painted characters; one cannot firmly state that Rowling's female characters reflect general gender stereotypes. True, the protagonist of the series is a male character. The most powerful wizards in the world, both the good one and the evil one are men. Also true. But that does not mean that female characters are left aside or given less meaningful roles.

Hermione is the only thing that kept Harry and Ron safe and guided them on their hunt for Horcruxes. Had it not been for her, it is safe to say those two would have had a much more difficult time of getting around and accomplishing their task with such success as they have done it with Hermione. What is not known from the books is that Hermione is the only one of the three of them who goes back to school to finish her formal education. Academic success is usually linked to male characters and here a female character obtains a higher education level than a male character. Female students are rarely mentioned in the books but so are male. There is not more information on male students available than on female. Female characters can also be evil not just irritating as it has been proven on the example of Bellatrix and Umbridge. When the reader first encounters Dolores Umbridge, she does come off as irritating but at the end of the book it is obvious how wicked and corrupt she is with her obsession with blood purity. Ginny, Ron's younger sister, is also an example of how Rowling's female characters break gender stereotypes. She is intelligent, plays sport successfully and accomplishes a career along with having a family.

Rubeus Hagrid is a perfect example of breaking male gender stereotypes, all the more because of his giant blood. If a character is to be judged by his or her outward appearance, Hagrid is supposed to be strong and tough, not displaying his emotions openly. Yet, he is the one who connects with Harry the best and cares for him deeply. Hagrid often displays his emotions, one example being him crying during a wedding. Just like Hagrid, Harry is there to break male gender stereotypes. He is also caring, emotional and sensitive, the traits one would not expect in a male character that conforms to gender stereotypes.

Unlike the gender stereotypes, one is very aware of the stereotypes depicting Hogwarts houses. It is inevitable for stereotypes to develop seeing that the sorting is made according to the compatibility of an individual's traits and the traits a specific house values the most and the inter-house competition for Quidditch cup and House cup. However, even here Rowling has shown that stereotypes are wrong because there are many examples which break the house stereotypes. The

best results are achieved when all houses work together, but sadly there had to have been a war to unite all houses and help lift the stereotypes.

Prejudices are also omnipresent in the books and it is one of the issues the characters have to deal with throughout the story. First, there is the prejudice against everyone who is not a Pure-blood. Lord Voldemort's whole campaign rests on the idea of blood purity and the very battle against him is a battle against blood prejudice. Second, the prejudice against house-elves in the books serves the purpose of facing the reader with the slavery history in the real world. House-elves are severely underappreciated and molested and because of generations and generations of oppression they do not desire their freedom. Hermione is the first to see the problem and do something about it. She initiates an organisation to fight for house-elves' rights and that carries on to be a minor subplot in the books. Nothing is resolved concerning that matter when the books finish but Rowling has stated multiple times that Hermione continued her work with S.P.E.W. and did everything in her power to improve the lives and conditions of house-elves.[6] Third, the goblin prejudice is probably the most difficult to discuss as it is displayed only in the last book and the issue, together with any further solutions, has little source to draw from. There are prejudices against goblins, mostly depicted through Ron's point of view, but no plan of action to reduce and eradicate them has been found.

Critics have accused Rowling of giving up on subplots such as prejudice against house-elves and the battle against it as well as underdeveloped and meagre female characters. From what has been found, it can be concluded that Rowling's books are constituted in a way the reader will be introduced and made aware of the most pressing problems in today's society, such as discrimination based on race and gender.

[6] In 2012, J.K. Rowling opened Pottermore, an interactive web page that follows the actions of all seven books, and there she had posted various stories about the characters' background, their future, the 19-year gap, etc.

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