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CONTEMPORARY BRITISH SOCIETY IN THE MAGIC WORLD OF J. K. ROWLING'S HARRY POTTER BOOKS 1997-2000

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Tutkielman tarkoituksena on tarkastella 1970-90-luvun brittiläisen yhteiskunnan heijastumia Joanne K. Rowlingin luomassa velhomaailmassa neljässä ensimmäisessä Harry Potter -kirjassa. Tutkimuksen taustan muodostavat yhteiskunnan tarkastelu fantasia- ja lastenkirjallisuudessa, jonka erityislaji ovat brittiläiset sisäoppilaitoskertomukset. Lastenkirjallisuuden tutkimuksen piirissä on esitetty, että lastenkirjoissa kuvataan usein menneen ajan yhteiskuntaa. Lähtökohtana Rowlingin kirjojen tarkasteluun on oletus, että ne eivät kuvaa mennyttä, vaan oman aikansa yhteiskuntaa, viime vuosikymmenten Britanniaa. Toisena oletuksena on, että vaikka Rowlingin romaanit ovatkin fantasiakirjallisuutta, jota on kirjallisuuden tutkimuksessa usein luonnehdittu eskapistiseksi, Potter-kirjoissa kuvataan brittiläisen yhteiskunnan piirteitä ainakin osin kriittisesti.

Analyysissä tutkitaan brittiläisen yhteiskunnan viittä eri osa-aluetta: 1) sisäoppilaitosjärjestelmää, 2) sosiaaliluokkia, 3) sukupuolirooleja, 4) etnisyyttä sekä 5) valtaa ja kontrollia yhteiskunnassa. Analyysi perustuu paitsi kirjoissa esitettyyn kuvaukseen velhoyhteiskunnasta myös henkilöhahmojen toiminnan, puheen ja asenteiden tarkasteluun. Yhteiskunnan rakenteiden lisäksi keskitytään näissä rakenteissa esiintyviin ja niiden aiheuttamiin mahdollisiin ongelmiin ja konflikteihin.

Rowlingin kirjat heijastelevat viime vuosikymmenten brittiläistä yhteiskuntaa eri tavoin. Kaikki viisi tarkasteltua osa-aluetta kuuluvat edelleen brittiyhteiskuntaan. Rowlingin romaaneissa ei esitetä tarkan realistista kuvaa näistä osa-alueista, sen sijaan kirjat heijastelevat samoja ongelmia, joita brittiläisessä yhteiskunnassa esiintyy juuri kyseisillä osa-alueilla. Toisaalta kirjojen voidaan nähdä kuvaavan tietyiltä osin joidenkin brittien ihanneyhteiskuntaa. Kaikin puolin Rowlingin kirjat ovat osoitus siitä, että lastenkirjallisuus ja fantasiakirjallisuus voivat toimia yhteiskunnan kuvaajina ja yhteiskuntakritiikin esittäjinä aivan yhtä hyvin kuin muutkin kirjallisuuden lajit.

Asiasanat: children's literature, fantasy, British society, boarding school stories

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

The Harry Potter books by J. K. Rowling are probably the most read children's literature at the moment in the Western world and beyond. There have been various explanations for their enormous success, including the rich language, the author's vivid imagination, and lively characters. Harry Potter, a child wizard, himself is a figure with whom both children and adults can empathise.

Joanne K. Rowling is a Scottish writer, a single parent, who began her writing career with Potter books. The first one, *Harry Potter and the Philosophers Stone* was published in 1997, and the following novels *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (1998), *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (1999), and *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (2000) soon after. The fifth book, *Harry Potter and the Order of Phoenix* will be published in June 2003. The books have sold over 25 million copies and been translated into over 30 languages already. The first Harry Potter movie came out in November 2001 under the same title as the first book, the second one in November 2002 and the rest will follow annually. Harry has also become the new means to attract tourists to Britain. Interestingly enough, in the U.S. some fundamentalist Christians have started a campaign against Rowling and Harry Potter, because of the bad influence that the witchcraft and wizardry in the books supposedly have on children. Similar kind of fears have been expressed also in Finland (see e.g. Helsingin Sanomat 11.2.2002). All this only shows the extraordinary phenomenon created by Rowling and Harry Potter.

There has been a lot of discussion about Rowling's books, and writers of various book reviews and articles have given their opinions of her work. I have found one full-scale study in Finland on the Potter books, which concentrated on ideology, morality and education in the first Potter book (Kyrönlahti 2001). The reason for the lack of full-scale studies could be that the phenomenon is new and there are still three more Potter books to come. Therefore, any commentary on the whole series cannot yet be given. However, in my opinion the books should be studied even now, since they are immensely popular and influential.

In this study I will examine the first four books in the Harry Potter series. What interests me most in these books is their depiction of the British society,

namely the way in which it is portrayed in the magic world of wizards. Harry's story begins when he receives a letter from a wizard school, Hogwarts, and finds out that he himself is a wizard. Soon after Harry leaves the ordinary world of 'Muggles' (normal people without magic skills) and enters the wizard world. The two worlds, the 'normal' or primary world and the secondary wizard world exist in a parallel relationship; they are in the same dimension, but the secondary world is hidden from Muggle-eyes by magic means. However, the wizard world is not that different from the primary one, and it actually resembles real-life Britain. Just as Harry seems to have the identity of a young British school boy, the wizard world seems to be a reflection of the social reality in Britain: boarding schools, social classes, women as housewives, the Ministry of Magic, ethnic minorities almost invisible in public schools, "high" culture, and so on. Although Harry spends his summer holidays in the Muggle world at his terrible foster parents' home, most events take place in the magic world, and thus this study examines the wizard society in the novels. Since the criticism of Harry Potter books has mainly concentrated on the characters and comparing the books to earlier children's literature (see e.g. Nye, 2001), I believe that examining the society in the books will add another point of view to the discussion.

Dixon (1978:33) claims that most fiction written for today's children reflects a situation that has passed. His claim dates back to the end of the 1970s, but similar opinions have emerged also later. Reynolds (1990:98), for instance, explains that there is a general conservatism characteristic of children's literature which extends from subject matter to a concern with conventional narrative strategies. Thus, she assumes that children's literature resists change at all levels. Her opinion may be due to the fact that she has studied mainly children's literature in the 19th century, although that does not explain why she feels that her claim should concern all children's fiction.

In the case of Harry Potter books, there is indeed certain nostalgic feeling about them. According to Stirling (2002:16), however, this means a certain literary nostalgia rather than a conservative nostalgia for an England that never existed. She is right in her claim, since the society Harry Potter lives is very modern, even if there are certain features that belong to earlier times (and literature). Thus, although Dixon and Reynolds insist that most children's

fiction reflects the past, my hypothesis is that the Harry Potter books reflect contemporary British society, even though there might be some aspects from the past. Also Nye (2001:140) believes that Rowling has based the world in her books on the one that she sees around her, which is in line with Hollindale's (1992:32) claim that a large part of any book is written not by its author but by the world its author lives in.

In Rowling's case this means the British society of roughly the past 30 years, which is also what I mean by contemporary British society in this study. I will focus on five aspects of the British society which I see reflected in the novels: the boarding school system, social class, gender roles, ethnicity, and control and power in the society. My aim is not to attempt to discuss nor decide what the reality in Britain is and try to compare the world in the books to it. I might have chosen to use statistics and detailed factual information about Britain, which, however, did not seem sensible, since the novels do not depict a society and life in statistics. Instead I have used texts by several contemporary writers and will discuss the books in the light of what they believe has been going on in the British society in the past three decades, and compare their views to Rowling's depiction of the fictional wizard society in Britain. The fact is that many of these writers explain that Britain still *seems* to be a class-ridden and conservative society, which today is also a multicultural one. This is the opinion of many citizens too, at least on the basis of public question polls (see e.g. Smith 1998 in Oakland 2001:55; McDowall 1999:95). The actual life in the country can be very different, which is really the point of many of these writers (see Oakland 2001:1-2). Obviously so, since Britain is far from being a homogeneous society, which is illustrated well in Oakland's (2001) collection of texts by contemporary writers.

However, the fact that these writers discuss the social class and boarding school, for instance, shows that the systems exist strongly, whatever the writers think about their importance. As a contrast, in Finland we do not have even the discussion about these issues, for they do not belong to our society. Similarly, the general opinion seems to be that the traditional gender roles and expectations based on them have not totally disappeared in Britain, even though the situation has changed a lot during the last decades (see e.g. McDowall 1999:96). Also ethnicity is an important issue in Britain, not only

because of the huge amount of immigrants moving into the country from the 1960s on, but because of the four long-existing ethnic groups inside Britain: the English, the Welsh, the Scots, and the Irish. These groups are not culturally that far from each other, but the people living in each country insist that there are differences and they rather identify themselves as English, Welsh, Scots or Irish than British (Oakland 2001:81).

I assume that these aspects do not only exist in the novels as background systems, but are reflected in the characters' behaviour, speech, and attitudes. Although the novels are fantasy written for children, they reflect different aspects connected with boarding school, social class, gender roles, ethnicity, and control in British society as discussed in the texts by contemporary writers. To quote the famous fantasist Lloyd Alexander: "[fantasy] is written by adults living in an adult world, trying to cope with it and understand it, subjected to and responding to all the pressures and problems of real life. If the writer of fantasy is a serious creator, his work is going to reflect this." (Alexander in Sullivan 1992:109.) This is indeed the case with Rowling.

The background section begins with some views on the novel and society in the earlier literature. The concept of mimesis is discussed in a separate section. Ideology in literature is also included, since obviously the view of society in the novels is affected by some sort of ideology in a wide sense. In addition, critics who have studied ideology in literature have made remarks on the way societies are depicted in novels. Secondly, I will give a short review of some of the work done in the field of children's literature, especially of the work on boarding school stories. The last part of the background section will give some information about the author, Joanne K. Rowling, a short summary of the novels, and a discussion of the genre of the Potter books.

The analysis concentrates on the chosen aspects of the wizard society: boarding school, social class, gender roles, ethnicity, and control. Each aspect is discussed separately and confronted with the ideas expressed by the writers on contemporary Britain. The analysis is not only based on the narrator's description of the wizard world but also on different characters' speech and actions. In the conclusion I will draw all the different aspects together and consider what sort of a picture the novels give of contemporary Britain.

I realise that I am looking at the issue from an outsider's point of view – from an etic perspective – but that might also be an advantage. Both boarding schools and boarding school stories have always been extremely rare in Scandinavia. Thus, as Löfgren (1993:14) points out, readers from those countries might find some aspects, for example the prefect system, exotic. Those same aspects might in Britain have been taken as a matter of fact, as natural parts of the particular social organisation of the English public school. Therefore I hope that I can track down some features that might pass without notice of a reader in Britain.

2. NOVEL AND SOCIETY

2.1 Theoretical standpoint

In her discussion of children's literature, Vandergrift (1990:19) divides literary theories into four main groups and several subgroups that either belong to the main groups or are in between them. Firstly, *formalist* studies analyse the text as an independent whole with no reference to the actual world, readers, nor the author. Secondly, interest in the author, or more precisely, in the effect that the author's personality and life have on his/her work leads to *expressionism*, while the third group involves reader-oriented studies, or *impressionism*. The fourth group consists of *mimetic* studies that deal with the world represented in literature, which can reflect both an ideal world or the actual world. According to Vandergrift (1990:19), mimetic studies can be divided into four categories: 1) historical or Marxist criticism (scholars such as Georg Lukacs and Terry Eagleton), 2) sociological criticism, 3) feminist criticism (Elaine Showalter), and 4) sociocultural criticism (Lionel Trilling). In this rather general model my study falls into the category of sociocultural criticism.

In a wider sense, my study is a content analysis study (as opposed to strictly formalist, author-biographical, and reader-oriented studies) that deals with the world depicted in the novels (as opposed to narratological studies, for instance, which concentrate on the story structure, characterisation, et cetera).

Vandergrift (1990:33) defines them as extratextual studies alongside impressionist and expressionist ones, and as opposed to intratextual studies, which usually are formalistic. In a content analysis study the emphasis is on the relationship of the literary work to the world outside that work, and it focuses often on contemporary sociological concerns. In other words, a content analysis study deals with the text's representation of an external reality.

The key to any content analysis study is the formulation of the rules of interpretation or analysis and the definition of terms. Terms which are precisely defined in another discipline may be difficult to apply to the aesthetic composition. For instance, terms that are strictly defined in sociologist studies, such as 'rural' and 'suburban', cannot be as strict in a study of literature, since there is probably not enough information in the studied novel to decide on these. (Vandergrift 1990:33.) The terms that I will be using are mainly based on a common-sense knowledge. I realise that almost every term has a vague side to it, but it would take absolutely too much time and space to try to define all the concepts here. I have already explained above what I mean by the modern British society, boarding school, social class, gender and ethnicity and therefore will not go into the definitions again. All the concepts, terms, expressions and words that emerge in my analysis and are necessarily not familiar to the reader will be explained as they appear in the text for the first time.

Vandergrift (1990:33-34) suggests that content analysis studies should also concentrate on the change in an author's work. She says that we must not forget that all people, including authors, are a product of their times and they, like the rest of us, grow and change in their views and in their awareness of social concerns and injustices. In Rowling's case the books have been written during quite a short period, the first being published in 1997 and the fourth in 2000. Rowling herself has said that she started planning the books in the beginning of the 1990s (Rowling in Radio CBC 2000), and therefore the period in her case is ten years at most. Thus, it is probably not surprising that there is not really much development in her wizard world throughout the books, nor any remarkable change in her views and awareness (which will not be in focus in this study, anyhow, since I try to avoid the references to the author's ideology). The books are discussed thematically, rather than in any

chronological order, which would suggest that there is some sort of development. The picture of the wizard world does become fuller and more detailed by reading all the four books instead of just one, but I do not see that as a real development, but rather as a limitation of space: it is not possible for the author to lay out every aspect of the wizard world in a single book.

The last point that Vandergrift (1990:33) makes concerns the coding system, or the way in which the study is actually conducted and written. She claims that this kind of study (which comments on sociological, historical or sociocultural issues) acquires at least two persons to write them, otherwise there is the danger that the study becomes too personal and biased; in the worst case it can even turn out to be propaganda. I realise that this sort of danger exists in any study, but I do not see how two writers would be any less personal or biased than a single writer would. Two writers cannot criticise each other's views objectively, although in an ideal case they will be able to comment on each others (and their common) work in a critical way and might have more insight to it than any one of them would have alone. However, that does not necessarily make the study less biased, since the two writers might be sharing exactly or almost the same views (which they in real life probably would, since it is difficult to imagine writing a study with someone who defines the basic concepts in a different way, for instance). A single writer's work will be assessed and criticised by others, too, at least in the stage when it is published. In this study, I will aim at a well-grounded analysis, but conduct the analysis in a personal and subjective way, which does not necessarily make it any less valuable. What makes literary studies fascinating is the fact that any book can be read in as many ways as there are readers. However, those readings which also others can accept must be well-grounded and based on evidence in the studied work(s).

2.2 Mimesis

Vandergrift (1990:8) states that the content analysis studies of family patterns, sex roles, racial and ethnic diversity, and the like are, for the most part, mimetic studies of literature as they attempt to determine if the characteristics

of the fictional world correspond with those of the actual world. The concept of mimesis can be tracked down to Aristotle and Plato, of whom the former defined mimesis as ‘imitation of the world’ (Vandergrift 1990:7). Mimesis can be questioned by pragmatic theories, which claim that the contents of children’s fiction should be good for children. Thus, according to the pragmatists, good children’s literature consists of only those books, which are educational and moral, for instance. To them mimesis in literature is not worth studying as such, since they are interested in the effects on the readers.

However, as Vandergrift (1990:8) points out, children’s fiction both entertains and teaches and cannot be analysed only through the “good for” ideology. She is right in her claim, though I would add that children’s fiction (as fiction in general) also has to offer its readers something recognisable which creates the basis for identifying and sympathising with the characters. If the reader does not identify or at least sympathise with the characters and the world in a novel, it is highly unlikely for the book to fulfil its entertaining or educational function. A text which is incomprehensible, strange or unpleasant to a child does not entertain or teach him/her by any means (excluding certain genres, such as nonsense poetry and nursery rhymes, which do not have much sense, but can still be extremely amusing). Indeed, Tolkien himself has claimed that secondary worlds in literature should combine the ordinary with the extraordinary, the fictitious with the actual, since no audience can for long feel sympathy or interest for persons or things in which they cannot recognise a good deal of themselves and the world of their everyday experience (Kocher 1972:1). Therefore, I claim that mimetic strategies – although not total mimesis, which is impossible – are a crucial issue particularly in children’s fiction, since it forms the basis for identification and other effects expected of literature for children.

Other critics too find mimesis important. In her short article on mimesis, Paul (1992:72) writes that even though we live in what Terence Cave calls a ‘post-mimetic age’, children’s literature traditionally functions as the preserve of mimetic narrative, and oral narrative. To Paul (1992:73) mimesis is a kind of recognition scene that represents not the actual world but the world as already organised in discourse. Therefore, what mimetic narrative recognises is a kind of commonly held cultural code, not the actual reality. Cultural codes cannot be

exactly defined and thus mimesis is problematic for poststructuralist critics because, in Paul's words, "it is vague and smacks of soft-centred humanism".

Poststructuralist critics assume that the problem with mimesis is that it tends towards unity (there is some common knowledge of things in the world). According to Paul (1992:73-74), mimesis is not actually about unity, but by its very deference to nature, the possibility of multiplicity mimetic recognition makes it a very fractured and irregular form of knowledge. Thus, also mimetic narrative is actually taken up with fractured and fractional irregularities, not unity. Paul's claim seems to be correct, since obviously the purpose of a novel or any fictional work is not (only) to describe the reality as precisely as possible. Naturalist writers, such as Emile Zola, aimed at that, but even Zola always has a story to tell, and whatever he claims, he has chosen only certain aspects of reality to describe. Novels cannot be precise depictions, since the space is limited; thus the writer has to generalise, present some details and ignore others. Even so, the fractured and fractional irregularities, as Paul puts it, can form a reflection of reality.

Also Stephens (1992:244) speaks against the idea of verisimilitude, which the critique on mimesis often brings up. According to him, an approach which deals with verisimilitude is inadequate in the light of modern conceptions about literature and language. The capacity of language to represent a pre-existing reality is very limited, and even Aristotelian mimesis only claims to be an *imitation* of reality. (Stephens 1992:244.) As Paul above, Stephens (1992:249) notes that since a social structure is never strictly unitary, a linear presentation of it through text is impossible. What follows is that not even the "realist" books are real but a set of "realist" conventions.

It seems that the criticism of mimesis often sees it as a means of reproducing the world, which makes the whole concept rather ridiculous, since obviously literature *cannot* portray the reality exactly in the way it is. Although it seems easy to criticise the concept of mimesis, it should be kept in mind that the concept is not about reproducing, but imitating, and as such it appears to be a useful one.

In this study, I will consider the way in which Rowling has used mimetic strategies to portray British society in the wizard world. The novels do not involve 'total' mimesis, but there are certain elements, such as the school

system, which are clearly mimetic. Moreover, Paul's definition of mimesis consisting of irregularities rather than unity gives the possibility to examine the novels in great detail and to consider minor aspects (such as almost invisible ethnic minorities or a character's speech) alongside with the broader lines (such as the school system or social classes) in order to form a picture of the wizard society in the books.

2.3 Social criticism and different approaches to reality

Firstly, to be able to consider different literary approaches to reality, one must assume that there is a link between literature and consensus reality, or, moreover, society. Transcendentalists believe that there is no such link, since to them writing about reality is impossible, because reality is not unitary and can never be reached by literary means, since language itself cannot portray reality as it is. However, as Eagleton (1989:93) comments, to talk about how things are out there in the world is not necessarily to imply that things are ever only one way. Moreover, there is no reason to believe that such knowledge is transcendentally uncontaminated by interest and desire. Writers have to choose from different possible approaches to reality, and although that means that they cannot reach reality as such, it does not mean that they could not comment reality in different ways.

Fantasy and realism are often thought of as contrasting genres with different purposes. The genre of realism is seen as 'serious' literature, whereas fantasy is escapist literature, or literature for children, if considered 'Literature' at all. Fantasy and realism are, indeed, different poles, but not necessarily contrasting genres. In her much-cited book, Kathryn Hume (1984:20) suggests a wholly different approach:

> I propose a different basic formulation, namely, that literature is the product of two impulses. These are *mimesis*, felt as the desire to imitate, to describe events, people, situations, and objects with such verisimilitude that others can share your experience; and *fantasy*, the desire to change givens and alter reality – out of boredom, play, vision, longing for something lacking, or need for metaphoric images that will bypass the audience's verbal defences. We need not try to claim a work as a fantasy any more than we identify a work as a mimesis. Rather, we have

> many genres and forms, each with a characteristic blend or range of blends of the two impulses.

Thus, Hume claims that the divide between fantastic and realistic *works* is not a useful one, but the division between these two poles, fantasy and realism or mimesis, as *techniques* or impulses, as she describes them, is. Mimesis is the technique of realism, an attempt to imitate reality, whereas fantasy is the technique of imagination, an attempt to alter reality. There are no purely mimetic or fantastic works of fiction, but the contrasting modes of mimesis and fantasy coexist within any given work (Hume 1984:20, see also Attebery 1992:3). Since every piece of literature uses both of these techniques, genres and forms can be defined on the basis of the amount of each technique used in a literary work. Therefore there is a spectrum, as Sullivan (1992:98) calls it, with realistic fiction toward one end of the spectrum and fantasy fiction at the other. The approach adopted by these critics seems valid, since it is most certainly true that there are not purely realist or purely fantastic works, it is impossible to even try to figure out what such works might be. All works combine the two techniques and what follows is that, as Stephens (1992:243) describes, realists can write deeply humanist books and fantasists can be cultural relativists.

In any case, both fantasy and mimesis, as approaches to reality, can be used as tools of social criticism. To Stephens (1992:242) realism, or mimesis, represents a removal from consensus reality, thus not reproducing reality, but looking at it from outside. He explains that realism reflects society (physical phenomena, social structure, human behaviour), and in doing so by means of a fictional construct or representations, can offer its audience new experiences. In other words, readers can obtain a new insight into reality through a fictional character's or the narrator's perspective. Thus, realistic works can function also as a critical approach to reality by stepping outside of it.

Fantasy, in Stephens (1992:242) view, is presumably twice removed from the reality, since it is a representation of something which does not exist in the actual world. Fantasy does not only give pleasure and delight, but enables its readers to experiment with ways of seeing and thus reveals how reality itself is a particular social construct. Therefore, fantasy is also able to question and criticise consensus reality.

In Stephens' (1992:256) view realism and fantasy use different strategies to reflect and/or criticise contemporary social practice: realist writing often uses narratorial commentary, while fantasy does it by indirections, parallels, or allegory. Thus, although the discourses of fantasy and realism both reveal direct concern with the theme of language and power – or, more generally, social criticism – they encode this in quite different ways. Realistic fiction can be seen as a metonymic *mode*, since it uses straight allusions to social practice. Fantasy, on the other hand, is a metaphorical mode; it deals with more mythic dimension and symbolism. (Stephens 1992:263.) Stephens division between these two modes is a basic one and comparable to Hume's idea of two impulses. Although a basic division between modes is a useful starting point, a more thorough analysis of a literary work requires more accurate definitions.

Hume has a more elaborate model of approaches to reality. In her model the division is not only between fantasy and realism/mimesis but between approaches which each use both fantastic and mimetic techniques. In Hume's (1984:55) view a literary work can offer readers four basic approaches to reality, namely, what she calls illusion, vision, revision, and disillusion. Further, a work can attempt to disturb the reader's own assumptions, or reaffirm those assumptions and comfort the reader. The literature of illusion does the latter, reaffirms assumptions and comforts, whereas the other three approaches disturb the reader's assumptions in different ways. The literature of vision offers new insights to reality, while the literature of revision does not do only that but also presents ways of changing the reality. The literature of disillusion does not offer ways to change reality, its approach is pessimistic and it often shows reality in an ugly light.

Hume's division between four techniques has certain advantages to it, but it is questionable, whether it is possible to decide if a certain work involves only one approach or the other. In any case, her categories are such that it depends also greatly on each reader whether a book is seen as an illusionist or visionist work, for instance. This is the case especially in children's literature, since children read fiction mainly for entertainment, while adults can read many sort of things into children's books. Moreover, if we assume that most children's literature is illusionist (since because of its socialising function it should not question the existing reality), it is difficult to say whether it actually reaffirms

the reader's assumptions, since the young reader might not yet have any, about the injustices in society, for example. However, Hume's categories help to open up fictional works a certain amount, therefore they are here applied to Rowling's work.

Rowling's books probably fall between the first two approaches, illusion and vision. Hume (1984:81) explains that literature of illusion is escapist literature, comforting, passive enjoyment, which rarely challenges the readers to think. Literature of vision, on the other hand, is disturbing and expressive literature, in which the fictional world is commenting on reality by using three techniques: additive, subtractive, and contrastive (Hume 1984:83). Rowling uses them all in her books. Additive elements can vary from realistic details to fantastic gimmicks such as a magic carpet – or flying broom in Harry Potter's case – whereas subtractive technique involves giving narrow definitions of reality. In Rowling's case much of the world that the readers see is the world of school, which is indeed only one aspect of reality. In contrastive technique two worlds and thus two points of view are contrasted – in Harry Potter books these could be the wizard world and the Muggle or non-wizard world, although the more carefully one examines these two worlds, the more similar they seem to be.

Although Rowling's novels surely serve as passive enjoyment, and as such are rather typical children's fantasy, they also offer the readers a lot to think about. Much of this is filtered through Harry, who sees and experiences an awful lot of problems, not only personal problems of growing up, for instance, but also social problems such as social inequality and racism, which comes up in the clash between the pure-blooded wizards and mudbloods (people, whose both parents are not pure-blooded wizards).

2.4 Ideology

As we saw above, there is always a linkage between literature and reality, or society. It is obvious that society affects literature, but many writers believe that the effects go also the other way round. Dubois and Durand (1989:153) claim that literature does not only stand humbly before (or in) society as a

passive receiver of determining stimuli, which it then translates into symbolic classifications. They believe that literature is in the position of analysing, of dissecting and rearticulating the social system according to its own logic. Or, in according to the writers' logic, since literature is not an independent system, as Dubois and Durand seem to believe it to be, but it consists of active human beings, the writers, whose ideologies form the logic which they use in discussing the social system.

There is not a form of literature that would be free from ideologies. As Brown (1987:146) writes, "every form of literature or literary criticism has political import, for all texts draw upon a larger cultural context that they help to maintain or transform." By this he means that there are not writers nor critics without backgrounds; they are always tied up to certain cultural context, 'located' in a sense, which is reflected in their texts. Brown (1987:163) explains that fictional portrayal and political praxis are linked through social mimesis, thus art can reveal the prevailing conditions in society and even authorise the creation of new ones. Although Brown does not talk about ideology at this point, it is obvious that political praxis is always based on some sort of ideology.

However, it should be noted that the concept of ideology is understood here in a wide sense, not referring to rather narrow political ideologies, but rather to a person's (writer/ narrator) way to see and understand the world around him/her. In this sense ideologies are not necessarily undesirable, since, as Stephens (1992:8) states, social life would be impossible without them. It is obviously true that all people must have a certain way to understand and conceptualise the reality around them, without such ability, or ideology, the world would appear as incomprehensible.

Thus, it is not difficult to accept the assumption that ideologies are inseparable also from literature. The real problem is not even how to decide what the ideology reflected in a certain novel is, as hard as that might be, but to decide *whose* ideology it is. Firstly, as Vandergrift (1990:33-34) notes, casual attributions, such as author prejudice, are often erroneous, for the simple reason that editors and publishers have at all times made decisions about what is acceptable and marketable. Secondly, those who claim that books reflect their writers' ideologies are in serious trouble for the simple reason that good writers

can in their writing easily adopt a point of view even contrary to their personal views. It is also possible that a writer claims, for example, to defend equality in his/her writing, but does not actually succeed in that attempt in the actual works. Writers can even contradict themselves accidentally or for a textual purpose, for instance. Rowling herself is a good example of the latter case. Although her personal view is that she would never put her own child in a boarding school (Rowling in Radio CBC 2000), her books give an attractive view of such school, which to the protagonist becomes his real home. To Rowling the textual choices, in this case choosing a boarding school as surroundings to construct the plot, have been simply more important than her own personal views.

Although the ideology which sees boarding schools as wonderful places, is not Rowling's personal view, it is still part of the books. A useful concept here is the *implied author*, which refers to the supposed author of the book whose views are reflected in the text. The implied author can be seen as a role that the real writer has adopted while writing the book, and it might have nothing in common with the real writer. Thus, in most cases the references to the ideology of a book are references to the implied author's ideology. The concept is a convenient one, since by using it a critic can talk about the ideology in a book without a need to assume anything about the real writer's ideologies. Thus, the implied author in the Potter books can prefer boarding school to other types of schools, while Rowling herself can feel quite differently about them.

However, in most cases the implied author is not that far from the real writer. In the case of the Potter books, the implied author is a white, British, middle-class person, who is rather a conservative than a reformist. Therefore it might be said that the implied author of the Potter books reflects the contemporary British middle-class views. In Brown's (1987:147) opinion, this is true of most writers, since they live in their own time, reinforcing or extending contemporary assumptions.

Ideology can be detected in a story on several levels. In his book on ideology in children's literature, Stephens (1992) presents different ways in which books can be studied. Firstly, a story can be examined through a narratological analysis, which involves the means by which a story and its significance are communicated. This includes, for example, temporal

sequencing, focalisation (telling the story or describing the events from a certain character's perspective) and the narrator's relations to the story and the audience. (Stephens 1992:11.) Secondly, the representation of speech in fiction (especially of direct speech) and conversational exchange reveals the characters' attitudes, which often contribute to the whole ideology of a book (Stephens 1992:33-34). For instance, race, class or gender can be ridiculed by language used by characters, and thus they can be implicitly commented (Stephens 1992:278-279).

Finally, all sorts of intertextual elements can reflect the ideology. Intertextuality does not appear in the level of allusions to other texts, or even straight quotes, but it can also mean referring to or standing in some relationship to certain genres and conventions. Thus, a story might have the structure of a folktale or a school-story, for example, and often at the same time reflect the world through the conventions in these genres. (Stephens 1992:84-85.)

The school story, for instance, was at its time (as Rowling's books still are) popular fiction, and thus reflected, according to Richards (1992:1), the prevailing ideas, dominant role models and legitimate aspirations in society. Richards explains that popular fiction is a form of social control, since it both reflects popular attitudes, ideas and preconceptions and generates support for selected views and opinions. Thus, it simultaneously directs the popular will towards certain viewpoints and attributes deemed desirable by those controlling the production of popular fiction, and serves as a mirror of widely held popular views. The producers, aiming to maximise the profit, dramatise what they perceive to be the dominant issues and ideas of the day.

What follows is that popular fiction is throughout ideologically contaminated, reflecting both the producers views, and the "popular" views (or what are assumed to be popular by the producers). As Richards (1992:1) writes, this leads to a process of selection, which confers status on issues, individuals and institutions which regularly appear in a favourable light. It should be added that this is true of all literature, not only popular fiction, since the process of selection appears in all writing. In any case, it can be assumed that since Rowling's books are certainly popular fiction, they reflect some contemporary popular ideas and views to a certain respect.

Finally, it should be remembered that when a critic discusses the ideology of a book, his or her own ideologies are also reflected in that discussion. It simply cannot be otherwise, since, as Stephens (1992:115) reminds us, meaning itself is not the product of a self-contained linguistic system but a complex interconnection of language, society, and a variety of discourses. Thus, the meaning is constructed in a process between the author and the reader, which means that a single book can include several meanings. Rowling herself has commented on this by noting that people read all sort of things into her books: she is seen as very left-wing or very right-wing, supporter of boarding schools, or supporter of witchcraft, for instance (Rowling in Radio CBC 2000). The variety of possible interpretations makes studying ideology in literature – however fascinating it might be – a rather hazy area. Therefore I have chosen not to use the concept of ideology further in my analysis, but to concentrate on the mimetic dimension of the books, since through mimesis it is possible to conduct a sociocultural analysis without the restrictions related to the concept of ideology.

3. CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

3.1 General

Children's literature has been widely studied over the last decades, however, much of this study has not been a concern of "higher" academic circles. Since few children's books are considered part of the literature canon, also studies in that area have not been regarded as serious or important as studies in mainstream/adult or canonical literature. Peter Hunt (1994:6) suggests that this might partly be explained by the fact that since children's books are of and for childhood, they do not fit easily into the patriarchal world of literary and cultural values. Another reason for the lack of acknowledgement by the literary establishment can be that children's literature is mainly written and studied by women (Hunt 1994:6). To me it seems that the situation for the latter claim is changing, since previously neglected genres such as children's fiction, fantasy,

science fiction, popular literature and women writers are studied and taught in a wider scope than before, by women and men alike.

Writing for children began roughly in the 18th century, when 'childhood' was recognised as a special phase instead of considering children as small adults as had been done earlier (Hunt 1994:27). Richards (1992:2) explains that juvenile literature emerged in response to three developments: the discovery of adolescence as a distinctive phase in human life, technological advances facilitating the mass production of books and the Forster Education Act (1870) which established free elementary schools in Britain and paved the way for compulsory universal education, signalling to enterprising publishers the creation of a huge potential new market. The aim of the new juvenile literature was both entertain and to instruct, to inculcate approved value systems and acceptable gender images, in particular gentlemanliness for the boys and domesticity for the girls.

At the moment, there is a huge range of different sort of books written for children at different ages. The division between fantastic and realist books exists also in children's fiction and both critics and writers seem to prefer one over the other. According to Stephens (1992:241), in the criticism of children's literature there seems to be the urge to polarise fantasy and realism into rival genres, and to assert that children prefer one or the other, or 'progress' from fantasy to realism (or vice versa). If we accept Hume's view, presented above, there are not completely fantastic nor realist books and especially in children's literature the boundaries are blurred. For example, many writers for children, such as Roald Dahl, Susan Lewis, Diana Wynne Jones, and indeed J. K. Rowling, have mixed a seemingly 'realistic' milieu with fantastic events or characters. Moreover, children themselves are not that worried about these boundaries and, for instance, can figure out the morality of a story whether it is realistic or not. Thus, there is no reason to suppose that children should or that they would 'progress' from one genre to another, since both fantasy and realism can carry out the two most important tasks of children's fiction, which are to entertain and to teach.

Without going into the discussion about the difficulties to mark the boundaries of children's literature (see e.g. Hunt 1994:2-3), the Harry Potter books are here regarded as children's literature, as which they are also

marketed. The reasons for this are that in any case the books tell about the life of children and presumably they have been written primarily for children, even though they are read by people of all ages, which is the case with many other children's classics, too.

3.2 Society in Children's Fiction

Children's fiction has an important social function. Hunt (1990:2) writes that texts in that area are culturally formative and of massive importance educationally, intellectually, and socially. Since children's fiction is in some respect considered to be educational, it also reflects society in a certain light. Children's books often reflect society as it wishes to be, as it wishes to be seen, and as it unconsciously reveals itself to be (Hunt 1990:2). This might indeed be the case quite often, but there are children's books which are very realistic in their way of depicting society and its problems, rather than trying to present an ideal picture of society. Not all children's fiction is educational, nor does the fact that some of it is necessarily mean that it should reflect society in a pleasant way. This is true of both realism and fantasy. Of the British authors, Diana Wynne Jones, for instance, has dealt with divorces and their effects on children in her fantasy novels. The educational aspect does not only present the 'ideal' but it can also show what the problems are in society, families, et cetera. Therefore, even though it is true that children's fiction has an important social function, there are several ways to reflect society in books.

Gender roles are obviously part of children's literature, since those books have the socialising function, and they thus often include the society's view of culturally acceptable men and women, whether this view is contrasted or not. Most of the studies I have come across end up discussing the role of women and girls when discussing gender. This is most likely due to the fact that boys and men, both in real life and in fiction, have always been regarded as 'normal' or the 'norm' against which girls and women are judged, if considered at all. The following paragraphs are mostly concerned on girl and women characters in fiction, since many writers seem to assume that boys and men in fiction have several roles and types of character, whereas girls' and women's roles have

been more limited. Some critics, such as Reynolds (1990:155) claim that the roles are still the same as 50 years earlier: traditional and stereotypical.

Considering gender, or 'sex' in his writing, Dixon (1978:32) states that the children's books are not realistic in the way they portray girls and women. He concludes that in girls' fiction we have been presented with passivity, masochism and narcissism as 'female' characteristics. Although women's traditional role had changed in the 1970s, he says that there is almost no hint of this change in the children's fiction of the time. He (1978:33) claims that most fiction written for today's children reflects a situation that has passed, which is also the claim supported by Reynolds (1990:98).

As already stated in the introduction, I do not think that all children's fiction portrays a situation from the past, at least that is not the case with Rowling's books. Dixon might be correct when talking about the British society in the 1970s, but children's fiction has changed a lot, as has the British society. Strong girl characters have appeared since then, and actually have not been absent from the earlier literature either, as Foster and Simons point out. In their discussion of Angela Brazil's boarding school novel *The Madcap of the School* from 1917 they state that Brazil's schoolgirls are conceptually innovative, do not reproduce existing patterns of behaviour but initiate new approaches to girlhood and are thus strong girl figures compared to the gender roles at that time (self-sacrifice, service and domestic responsibility being connected with women) (Foster and Simons 1995:194). However, this rebellion can be seen in a different light. Reynolds (1990:94) offers another explanation for rebel girls, who were exceptional: "Only those who failed to achieve the status of mother and wife were encouraged to look for careers and independence." Reynolds is certainly right in that rebel girls were exceptional in Victorian times, however, the strong girl figures might not have been regarded as failures; actually they have probably served as models for later writers and girls.

Indeed, other writers have pointed out that there have been very strong and popular girl figures in the children's fiction at the end of the 19th century. Honig (1988:3) describes Lewis Carroll's bright and independent Alice in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), and Mark I. West's (1992:125) analysis of L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) shows that the character of Dorothy Gale in this book (and all the other, subsequent Oz

books) is an example of Baum's pioneering spirit in his portrayal of girls. Dorothy (as also Alice) has power and knowledge and her adventure can be seen as a heroic quest, which was at that time new in both American and British children's literature. These characters might have been exceptions, but they show that there never has been only one type of girl characters in children's literature.

A famous later example of a strong girl character is of course Astrid Lindgren's Pippi Longstockings who in the 1960s was an anarchist figure, which she continues to be even today. Thus, Rowling in the 1990s has had predecessors writing about both traditional and exceptional characters. As will be shown in the analysis, she has actually taken a rather traditional stand towards gender roles and is thus comparable to another British female writer of 1980s and 1990s, Diana Wynne Jones, who has been accused of depicting girls in a conventional and 'negative' way: princess-like, foolish and giggling (Stephens 1992:280). The issue will be discussed further in the analysis.

Children's literature is mostly written, published, reviewed and sold by people with a middle-class upbringing. Dixon (1978:48) also points out that the majority of books are written in standard language, which is linked with middle class (in the books). Working-class speech is usually represented in a kind of phonetic transcript (which sometimes shows the characters in a negative light), while forms of middle-class speech, though they may differ just as much from 'standard' English, are seldom treated in the same way. Moreover, in children's fiction working-class characters have until recently appeared usually in minor roles and in very few categories: objects of charity, repugnant characters, often criminals, who posed a menace to the social structure, or menials who were usually funny (Dixon 1978:48). In some books the class conflict is entirely absent, because working-class children simply do not appear. (Dixon 1978:55.)

Stephens (1992:280) explains that it is fairly typical of writers to reveal their assumptions of social class also by word choices. He discusses an example from Diana Wynne Jones's novel *Castle in the Air* (1990), in which, according to Stephens's claim, class is implicitly commented through the choices in vocabulary, for instance. He claims that such word choices as 'a more educated face' (in Jones's book referring to a noble young man, whose class is not explicitly mentioned, but apparently he belongs to the upper class)

are not explained in the novel and thus force the reader to make his/her own conclusions. ‘A more educated face’ refers, in Stephens’ opinion, to the more educated class, which again is the privileged upper class that raises its children in elitist institutions. In today’s world it is questionable whether education should be regarded as a privilege of upper social classes and thus Stephens’s claim here is not quite convincing. However, he certainly has got a point in emphasising the meaning of word choices connected to attitudes expressed in a text.

Dixon (1978:94) has a lot to say about racism in children’s fiction in the past and the present. Most of the racist features that he is worried about have disappeared from children’s books since the 70’s. However, a black child can find little to identify with in mainstream children’s literature and little that is recognisable as her or his own culture (Dixon 1978:116.), which is probably the situation with most children’s books written in the Western world even today. If one adopts Dixon's view, it seems that for a black person there probably is not much to identify with in Rowling’s novels, since the characters are mainly white. The same could be said of other ethnic minorities. Actually, the ethnic background of the characters is often blurred, since their names are in most cases the only indication of their ethnicity. The wizard society in which the characters live reflects the main white culture in Britain, but the majority of the members of ethnic minorities have in real life become part of that culture. When it comes to racism, the books themselves are not racist, but deal with racism and discrimination as problems in the wizard society. The issue of ethnicity and racism will be discussed further in the analysis.

3.3 Boarding School Stories

In Britain the genre of boarding school stories is very significant and prominent in juvenile fiction (Löfgren 1993:24). It has its own particular mythology and its own particular range of motifs and thematics: the young girl or boy leaving home for the first time, meeting new people and fresh experiences, and opportunities for proving oneself. (Löfgren 1993:26.)

The genre of school stories emerged in Britain during the 19th century. The fact that most stories at that time were boarding school stories, reflects, according to Richards (1992:2), the background and ideals of the writers and publishers of the early school stories, since even at that time only about three per cent of the school-going population went to public schools. Day school stories appeared not until 1960s and 1970s (Richards 1992:15), while at the same time the boarding school stories began to disappear (Townsend 1983:111). In Britain the tendency in the school stories, as in children's fiction in general, has been towards fantasy, as a comparison to the United States, for instance, where the tendency has been quite the opposite, towards realism (Townsend 1983:270).

The first British boarding school story is said to be Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, which was published in 1857 (Townsend 1983:111). The novel depicted a public school as a place to train character and produce Christian gentlemen. The book highlighted three classic themes: the socialisation of the schoolboy, the inculcation of manliness and the religious awakening, of which the last one diminished after mid-Victorian period while the other two remained constant factors in boys' school stories. (Richards 1992:3.) According to Richards (1992:3), Hughes's book is the most famous school story ever written, although it seems clear that at the moment the Potter stories are far more famous, an exceptional modern representative of the genre of boarding school stories.

The boarding school story embodies the myth of the "world of school", of a small secluded society with the same group of children and adults living and working together night and day for the greatest part of the year, a society with its own laws, traditions and hierarchies (Löfgren 1993:27). Many of the most popular motifs are conditioned by the boarding school setting: dormitory feasts, rivalry between houses, nightly climbs on the roof, adventures out of bounds, etc., while some, like the prefect system and the immense importance of games, are originally connected with the great public school in the Victorian era and later. (Löfgren 1993:27.) Indeed, as Richards (1992:5-6) points out, among the main themes introduced in the first public school stories were the prefectorial system and house loyalty, and the culture of sport, which was of an immense importance. More general themes, which Richards (1992:10) sees as

reasons for the popularity of the genre, are the atmosphere of timelessness, familiarity and order, the range of rounded characters, the depiction of friendship, which was central to the lives of students, and the idealisation of school life.

Richards (1992:11) states that the characters in boarding school stories have often been accused of being stereotypical. However, to Richards the idea that they are stereotypes, which some later commentators have advanced, is quite untenable. Richards claims that instead they are archetypes, something quite different. A stereotype is a carbon copy of a well-established model, while an archetype is the creation of a definitive idealisation. Richards claims that this is reflected in the attitude of boy readers, to whom the characters served as role models, due to the idealisation.

What is more, the situation in the girls boarding school stories has been somewhat similar. Löfgren (1993) has listed a variety a different types of girl characters in her study on girls' boarding school stories in Britain. Moreover, Foster and Simons (1995:194) have found exceptionally radical and strong girl characters in Angela Brazil's *The Madcap of the School* (1917). They assume that the fact that boys are absent in girls' boarding school stories gives the girls the opportunity to break bounds and have adventures, since they are thus liberated from the prescriptive conditions that determine gendered divisions in the heterosexual community (Foster and Simons 1995:202). Thus, the girl characters can experiment with female identities, can become leaders or active heroines, focus on sport, and what is more, reject discipline and break the rules, since a character's status in the hierarchy is dependent upon her disruption of order (Foster and Simons 1995:195, 201). However, by breaking the boundaries of femininity, it seems that these girls have become boyish characters, and the traditional femininity is actually mocked. Foster and Simons (1995:206) also point this out by stating that the "helpless" heroine (19th century romantic heroines) is ridiculed, since she is innocent, pleading, pathetic, babyish, incapable of fending for herself and incompetent.

In Rowling's novels the characters are not that straightforward, which is partly because the school is co-educational and there are both boys and girls. In addition, Rowling's main characters are not stereotypes, and not even archetypes. To be a strong female, one does not need to be a tomboy, nor a

cold blooded businesswoman, as we will see in the cases of Hermione Granger and Mrs. Weasley. The male roles in the Potter books are more traditional, even though there is a wide range of different type of characters (which seems to be typical of boarding school stories, or, rather, school stories in general). The section on gender will concentrate on the characters and their roles.

The traditional boarding school story has often been criticised for presenting a false picture of real school life. Although these stories often might give themselves out as presenting a true picture of "real" school life, Löfgren (1993:28) reminds that they do not represent the real life, since they are *fiction* and elements from real life are selected above all for narrative needs. If the story has any mimetic ambitions, it is not to depict school as it is, but an ideal world of school (Löfgren 1993:19). The seemingly realistic surface with its often vividly depicted settings and many realistic details gives a false idea of realism (Löfgren 1993:30-1).

As Richards (1992:13) points out, it is significant that the chief critics of the stories have been former public school boys who have denounced the lack of authenticity. In Richards's opinion the authenticity is irrelevant, since the writers of boarding school stories were writing in the main for boys who were not at and would never go to public schools. The readership consisted largely of the lower middle and upper working class boys. Therefore, although there in Richards's view can be little doubt that public school fiction created for boys going to public school a fully formed picture of what to expect, the largest audience for public school fiction remained boys who had not been and would never go to public school. Richards (1992:14) believes that for them the image was a glamorous substitute for the often grim reality of their own schools, a wish-fulfilment of a particularly potent and beguiling kind. Thus, the power of the stories is that they are in one sense unreal. They are "a distillation of elements of the public school story genre, transmuted into a dreamlike landscape, a mythic world, an alternative universe, whose surroundings and elements have a recognisable surface reality, but are subtly different, existing as it were out of time." (Richards 1992:13.)

The situation today has not changed that much, since also Rowling is writing for readers who have not, and will never attend a boarding school. Since her books have been a huge success, it seems that Richards has a point in

claiming that the unreal atmosphere of a boarding school attracts many readers. When it comes to the question of authenticity, Rowling's books are obviously not describing authentic conditions, firstly because they are fantasy, and secondly, as Löfgren stated, the boarding school stories are always fiction and not reports from real-life schools. However, Rowling's books are mimetic, since they portray a school that shares many features with real-life boarding schools. The fact that the books are mimetic, but not authentic, does not lead to their presenting an ideal world of school, as Löfgren suggests above, since the wizard world has that many problems and injustices that it is quite far from representing an ideal world. Mimesis does not lead to authenticity, nor does it always lead to idealism, but since it is a reflection of reality, it is able to comment on that reality in certain ways.

According to Richards (1992:7), portraying the real-life public schools in fiction can happen through three different stances. The conformists accept and celebrate the system as it is, while the reformers seek to retain the system with changes and modifications. The third group consists of opponents who seek to sweep the system away. Richards claims that the boys' school story was written on the whole by conformists. Rowling's case is somewhat different, since she is writing about wizards and thus the modifications in the system do not necessarily make her a reformist. Her novels are actually rather conformist, since the system in them greatly resembles real life and is not questioned in her books, although in real life she claims that she does not approve the discrimination and injustice connected with the public school system.

The genre of boarding school stories petered out in the 1960s, since, according to Richards (1992:14), it did not change with the real-life public schools. After the World War II, the gradual dissolution of the empire and the reduction in size of the armed forces had meant that far fewer public school boys were needed as officers and administrators. Instead they were drawn to industry, finance and the city, and the old public schools necessarily had to change to meet these needs. The same change did not, however, take place in the literary genre. It was replaced by the day school stories, which emerged at the same time. (Richards 1992:14.) The comprehensive school stories in 1970s and 1980s were significantly different from the earlier boarding school stories. They presented girls and boys in the same school, discussed relationships

between the two sexes (absent in the earlier school stories), and reflected wider changes in media, society and the image of adolescence introducing social issues ranging from immediate school problems to problems in the society (such as divorces, teenage pregnancies, unemployment, etc.). (Richards 1992:18.)

Rowling's books are a modern combination, since although they clearly are boarding school stories, they cover certain themes introduced in the comprehensive school stories, such as the boy-girl relationships, for instance. Actually, Rowling has succeeded in reforming and modernising the dying breed of boarding school stories. Thus, even though she is often accused of copying earlier fiction, she could be seen as a reformist, who has combined different elements from writers before her in a most successful way.

3.4 J. K. Rowling and the Potter books

3.4.1 The author

Joanne K. Rowling was born into an English family on 31st of July 1965. She went to study French at the University of Exeter right after school, but after her graduation she ended up in Portugal teaching English as a foreign language. After a short marriage with a Portuguese man, Rowling moved with her little child to Edinburgh to teach French at schools. (Rowling 2001.) She has sometimes been described as a Scottish writer probably because during the time she wrote the first Harry Potter book she lived as a single parent in Edinburgh. The stories about her rise from rags to riches – some of them true, others hugely exaggerated – tell about that time of her life.

Rowling has been writing all her life and was writing two adult novels and several short stories before starting the Potter books (Rowling in Scholastic 2000/B). However, her published work includes only the Potter books and two charity books related to the wizard world, *Fantastic Beasts and Where To Find Them* (2001) and *Quidditch Through The Ages* (2001). The first Potter book was published in Britain in 1997, and after it was published in the United

States a few months later, she was able to become a full time writer. (Rowling 2001.)

From her childhood on, Rowling has been a passionate reader, which may explain her various influences, which, according to Smith (2001:201), she has never sought to hide. That is probably true, since Rowling's books are filled with themes, motifs and creatures familiar to readers both from mythology, earlier children's literature and fairytales. Rowling herself has explained that some of the magic creatures appear in mythologies or folklore, as is the case with house-elves, for instance (Rowling in Scholastic 2000/A; Rowling in BBC 2001/A). Intertextuality is not necessarily a fault – all writers have some intertextual elements in their writing in any case – and Rowling's original combination of things makes them new and imaginative, as Nye (2001:144) has pointed out. Rowling's own favourites include writers such as J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, Elizabeth Goudge, Jane Austen, Roddy Doyle, E. Nesbit, Paul Gallico and other writers for children (Smith 2001:201; Rowling in Yahooligans 2000).

Rowling's mother was a housewife (as were many women at that time) and she has admitted admiring big families (see Smith 2001:208). She has, however, been concerned about the situation of single-parent families and has taken an active role in speaking on their behalf. In her article 'My Life as A Lone Parent' for the Sun in October 2000, she wrote about money being one of the main problems of single-parent families, since six out of ten British families headed by a single parent are living in poverty. The purpose of her article, which was based on her own experiences, was to show that even though Britain today is not a society divided by class and the accident of one's birth, but a society divided by money. (Smith 2001:11.) At the moment, she is a patron of the Council of One-Parent Families in Britain (Rowling in Radio CBC 2000).

Rowling herself has said that Harry's character reflects the modern world, since he is 'mixed race' – his father is a pure-born wizard while his mother is a Muggle-born witch (see Smith 2001:183). She probably refers to the marriages between different people from different ethnic backgrounds, the number of which has increased during the last few decades alongside with the growing number of immigrants coming in Britain (McDowall 1999:90). Rowling deals

with the racial issues in her novels namely through the clash between pure-blooded wizards and ‘mudbloods’, which will be discussed later on in the chapter on ethnicity.

The central place in her novels is the boarding school. Interestingly enough, Rowling herself has never attended one, but went to a local comprehensive with both working and middle class children (Smith 2001:53). Indeed, Rowling herself says that she does not believe in boarding schools and would never put her own daughter in one (Rowling in Radio CBC 2000). As already noted in the section on ideology, her own views are not necessarily reflected in the books.

Rowling (Radio CBC 2000) herself insists that she writes primarily stories, not moralities, since she does not set out to teach people specific things through her books. She says that the lessons that there are, grow naturally out of the book, and thus naturally from herself. Obviously, Rowling is not primarily teaching anyone, nor is she a political writer, but she is interested in what is going on in society, and she discusses societal and political issues in her books, as many writers for children before her (see Nye 2001:139). As said earlier, this should not necessarily lead to attempts to find out Rowling’s own ideologies through the novels, but rather exploring the ways the contemporary society is reflected in the books.

3.4.2 Synopsis of the four books

Harry Potter And The Philosopher’s Stone (1997) [from now on referred to as PS], *Harry Potter And The Chamber of Secrets* (1998) [from now on COS],*Harry Potter And The Prisoner of Azkaban* (1999) [from now on POA], and *Harry Potter And The Goblet of Fire* (2000) [from now on GOF] were all written during the 1990s, which is also the context for the events in the novels. The books are written in a fairly conventional way; the events are depicted by an omniscient narrator, although from Harry’s perspective. Basicly, the story is about Harry Potter, an ordinary boy, who finds out that he is a wizard. Harry’s parents have died when he was one year old and he lives with his aunt’s family, the Dursleys. The foster family is horrible and Harry hates them, therefore he

feels really lucky when he is invited to Hogwarts school for young wizards. At Hogwarts Harry learns magic skills and gets new friends, of whom the most important are Ron Weasley with his brothers, and Hermione Granger, the cleverest witch of their year. In the end, Harry turns out to be not just an ordinary wizard but a hero. However, underneath all the colourful and imaginative details the story is really about an ordinary boy, who learns what his strengths are and grows up a little.

Each book depicts one school year, which is typical for boarding school stories in general (Löfgren 1993:26). Every year there appears a new threat to the normal life at school and in each case the initiator behind the attacks or disturbances is Lord Voldemort, who represents the utmost evil in the books. Every wizard dreads even his name, which is why he is referred to as You-Know-Who. Harry is Lord Voldemort's main enemy, since as a one-year-old baby Harry managed to destroy his powers. After killing Harry's parents, Voldemort tried to kill Harry with a powerful curse, but it reflected back upon himself instead. The curse has left a lightning-shaped scar on Harry's forehead, for which Harry's famous of in the wizard world; it is a mark of his victory over the Dark Lord. Although Voldemort has disappeared, he is not dead and tries to regain his powers with help of loyal supporters. Some of his followers returned to the good side after his disappearance while others were condemned to the wizard prison, Azkaban. Some of the bad wizards are working all the time for Voldemort while waiting for his return, which actually happens at the end of the fourth book. Thus, the wizard world is, as typical fantasy worlds are, divided in two sides, which represent the utmost good and the utmost evil, which have an on-going battle. Harry and his friends, as well as the headmaster Dumbledore, represent the good wizards, whereas the evil side gets support most notably from the Malfoys, an old wizard family, and their friends. Draco Malfoy, who is the same age as Harry, is indeed Harry's main enemy at school.

Apart from defeating Lord Voldemort at the end of each book (except the fourth, in which Harry only escapes from his enemy), Harry's time is spent between normal school activities (such as lessons and exams); Quidditch, which is the most popular sport in the wizard world; and adventures connected to the evil side's attempts to regain power. Since the main interest in this paper is not the plot, there is no need to explain the story any further. Those

characters and events that reflect certain features of the society, are depicted in greater detail in the actual analysis.

3.4.3 On the genre of the Potter books

Harry Potter has the sense of familiarity, since he and his world have, quite a many predecessors in British fantasy and children's literature from C. S. Lewis's Narnia series and Tolkien's Middle-Earth trilogy (see e.g. Nye 2001), to Roald Dahl's and Diana Wynne Jones's (see above) books for children. Even the boarding school for witches and wizards is not a new idea, but has been introduced already in 1974 in Jill Murphy's *The Worst Witch*, which combines actually two genres: fantasy and school story (Löfgren 1993:307). This book and its two sequels tell about Mildred Hubble, who attends "Miss Cackle's Academy for Witches", where the school uniforms and the lessons with magic potions, spells and broom exercises resemble the school world in Rowling's novels. Whether Rowling is familiar with Murphy's book is not relevant, since I believe that the similarity in the books is not the result of copying but rather reflects the strong British tradition of boarding school stories.

When it comes to Tolkien – to whom any fantasist is compared – Rowling herself says that it is hard to tell, whether his work has influenced her or not. She has read *The Lord of the Rings* at her twenties, but did not read *The Hobbit* until after the first Harry Potter book was written. As she states, her books and Tolkien's work are not really comparable setting aside the obvious fact that they both use myth and legend. In her own words, 'Tolkien created a whole new mythology, which I would never claim to have done. On the other hand, I think I have better jokes'. (Rowling in Scholastic 2000/B.) Since Tolkien the genre of fantasy has grown greatly, and thus Rowling's book can be discussed in the context of other books and later theories.

Sullivan (1992:102-103) explains that the fantasy novel has the pattern of the märchen, or magic tale, in which and ordinary mortal (who is to be the hero) is drawn into a magical adventure during which he or she is challenged and tested, through which he or she matures, and after which he or she returns

'home' to dispense justice, marry and live happily ever after. If his ideas are adapted to Rowling's books, it can be said that Harry Potter is indeed this sort of a hero, with the exception that he does not return 'home' after his adventures, since his home is the wizard world in which the events take place (Harry does return to his dreadful foster parents, but that is not his real home). In addition, the justice or balance is not gained in the first four books of the series, but the battle between good and evil probably goes on until the end of the seventh Potter book, because it is the leading theme of the series.

Sullivan (1992:105) divides fantasy in several categories (adopted from Ruth Nadelman Lynn) of which the category of 'Witchcraft and Sorcery' could be the one for Rowling's novels. Sullivan mentions two examples that fall under this category: Ray Bradbury's *Something Wicked This Way Comes* and Diana Wynne Jones's *Fire and Hemlock.* Both of these novels resemble the Potter books in quite a few senses; they all have a young boy/girl as a hero, involve witchcraft/sorcery, which takes place in the 'real' world or in an secondary world that is linked to the real world very closely. Thus, all of these novels (including the Potter books) differ from the form of fantasy, which is often thought to be the most typical form of fantasy and referred to as 'High Fantasy'.

Sullivan (1992:107) lists such writers as Ursula LeGuin, Lloyd Alexander, Susan Cooper, L. Frank Baum, Lewis Carroll, and most notably J. R. R. Tolkien as the representatives of the genre. Sullivan explains that High Fantasy has a certain seriousness of tone, importance of theme, characters of noble birth or lineage (secondary if not primary characters), emphasis on magic and mystery (and an almost total lack of technology and machinery as effective devices in the action), and a generally clear presentation of good and evil, right and wrong. High Fantasy is about growing up, even if it does not feature a main character who ages chronologically. It derives much of its form and content from older literatures (medieval romance, myths, legends, folktales). In addition, the events take place in a secondary world that is separated from the 'real' world and not parallel to it. (Sullivan 1992:107.) Rowling's novels share many features with High Fantasy, such as the clear representation of good and evil and the theme of growing up. However, since the secondary world in the Potter books is very closely tied to the primary one (actually they exist in the

same dimension, but the wizards use magic to conceal their existence from the common people), the novels cannot be classified as High Fantasy.

The sort of fantasy in which the primary and secondary worlds are tightly combined has been attributed with several titles, such as ‘low fantasy’, ‘real world fantasy’ or ‘modern urban fantasy’ as Attebery (1992:126) lists. They are characterised by the avoidance of the enclosed fantasy worlds predominant in earlier fantasies, from Lewis Carroll’s Wonderland to Ursula K. Le Guin’s Earthsea. Instead, these fantasies describe settings that seem to be real, familiar, present-day places, except that they contain the magical characters and impossible events of fantasy. (Attebery 1992:126.) Attebery (1992:129) himself calls this genre ‘indigenous fantasy’, since “this fantasy is, like an indigenous species, adapted to and reflective of its own native environment.” His concept has certain advantages to it: firstly, it does not value the books (as ‘low fantasy’ seemingly does); secondly, there is not a combination of contradictory elements (as in ‘real world fantasy’); and, finally, it does not restrict the milieu in novels (as ‘modern urban fantasy’). He explains that indigenous fantasy is similar to former medieval or tribal storytellers way to mix real life and magic/mythical reality (Attebery 1992:133). Mixing those two makes it possible to discuss reality through parallelism or symbolism. In Harry Potter books, for instance, real-life problems appear also in the parallel magic world, where at least some of them can be dealt with, thus real issues can be discussed through fantastic mode.

4. BOARDING SCHOOL

The chapters four to eight examine Rowling’s novels in detail. Each chapter concentrates on one aspect of the wizard society. The analysis looks at the ways Rowling has imitated contemporary Britain in her fictional writing and confronts the novels with other critics’ views on modern British society.

4.1 General features

In Britain (excluding Scotland) children enter secondary schools at the age of eleven and stay there until age of 16 or 18 (McDowall 1999:147). In addition to the state-funded comprehensive schools (maintained by the local education authorities, LEAs), it is possible to attend to privately-maintained (or partly state-funded) public schools (Reid 1998:157). Irwin (1994:95) writes that there is no exact definition of a public school; originally ’public’ meant that a school was run by a governing body ’in the public interest’, as opposed to private schools that were run for the benefit of their proprietor. Today the term refers usually to those schools whose headmasters belong to the Headmaster’s Conference (the HMC), which means that they must have a certain degree of independence from the state (they receive no state support), a sixth form above a certain size, and a good proportion of pupils entering universities each year. Public schools draw their finances from the fees, from trusts and endowments, and from land and property. (Irwin 1994:95.) Thus, ironically enough, public schools are not actually ‘public’ but private schools with entrance fees. These schools are often considered as elitist or socially divisive institutions, which offer better education for those children, whose parents can afford expensive fees (see Irwin 1994:84; Reid 1998:180).

In any case, as McDowall (1999:151) writes in his recent view of the modern Britain, public school system is still strongly alive. The number of pupils in public schools has even increased during the last decades, however, this concerns mainly day-schools, since the number of boarding schools has decreased. Since year 1999, however, also the number of boarders has actually risen, first time since 1987 (see BSA 2002)). The interest in boarding has been explained by the schools’ investments in key facilities and training of staff (see BSA), but also by the efforts to modernise the schools. Probably the interest might be partly explained by the problems in comprehensive schools (or rather in some of them), which some critics see a national problem. Oakland (2001:209), for instance, acknowledges the improvements in schooling during the 1990s but lists many problems that still remain, such as large class-sizes, teacher shortages, indiscipline, violence, and shortages in results, which include even illiteracy (22% of the population). To avoid these sort of

problems, some parents want to secure a better education for their children in public school, even if it costs a lot. In addition, wealthy parents choose these schools for their children because of the élite or ‘snob’ value connected with public schools. Technically, a child must pass a ’Common Entrance’ examination to enter a public school, however, as Irwin (1994:96) remarks, few children, whose parents have the money to send them to public school, fail to gain a place, since factors such as family connections play a not unimportant part in the selection.

Pupils in public schools are a small minority, since roughly 90% of the children attend state-funded comprehensive schools. Better education, more qualified teachers, social prestige and even de-emphasising technology and industry mark public schools. (McDowall 1999:153.) Moreover, the elitist nature of public schools is also partly due to the fact that the majority of people working in Civil Service, government, courts and banks come from those schools (McDowall 1999:151).

Traditionally boarding schools used to be boys only and girls only institutions, but during the last decades there have been active attempts to modernise public schools. At the moment there are several possibilities for boarders. Firstly, apart from the traditional boys and girls only schools, there are now many schools which are coeducational, even though in some of them boys and girls are taught separately. Secondly, not all students are full-time boarders (even though a majority of them are) but there is also the possibility for weekly or flexible boarding, and day school. Finally, it is possible to attend boarding school at different ages, since there are preparatory schools for 7 to 13-year-old children, senior schools for children at the age of 14 to 16, and sixth grade for 16 to 18-year-old students. (Education UK 2001.) Only a small minority of children attend preparatory schools, while a great majority of the sixth graders have been boarding for only a year or two (BSA 2001).

Hogwarts, Harry Potter’s school, is in a sense a modern boarding school, since it is coeducational. Thus, Rowling’s story reflects the modern British society, and differs from most boarding school stories, which used to be about separate girls’ and boys’ boarding schools (see Löfgren 1993:11), mainly for the reason that there were no coeducational schools at that time. Hogwarts is, however, rather traditional in other respects: all the students are full-time

boarders and stay at the school for seven years (excluding summer breaks), which covers their whole secondary schooling. Both Harry and his cousin Dudley are about to start in secondary schools at the age of eleven, Harry in the local comprehensive (since his aunt and uncle are not willing to pay for his education) and Dudley in a public school, which his father also used to attend (PS:28). Harry's plans change, however, when on his eleventh birthday he gets a letter from his new school, Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, where he is to spend the following seven years (PS:42).

As in real life, Harry has been signed up at birth (PS:47), which is also the case in many public schools in Britain, such as Eton, for instance, since the demand for those schools is so great that people want to ensure that their children get in (McDowall 1999:152). However, not all students at Hogwarts are signed up at such an early stage. Firstly, children from Muggle families are invited to the school only if they have magic talents. Such is the case with Hermione, who did not even know that she was a witch before receiving a letter from Hogwarts. A similar case is another Muggle student, Justin Flinch-Fletchley, who was actually signed up for Eton, before he learned about his magic skills (COS:73). It is also possible to be born into a wizard family and grow up without any wizarding skills – turn out to be a 'Squib', a wizard without any magic in him or her (see e.g. Rowling in Scholastic 2000/A). Neville Longbottom from Harry's year was long thought to be such kind of person, and if he had not showed any magic skills, he might not have attended Hogwarts. It remains a mystery what happens to wizard children without any magic skills, since Hogwarts is the only wizard school in Britain. There is no primary school for wizards (nor do they have to go to Muggle school before entering Hogwarts), and there is no University of Wizardry either (Rowling in Scholastic 2000/B; Rowling in Scholastic 2000/A). In any case, the Squibs bring shame on their families and are pitied, if not despised. Neville is often laughed at, since he is almost a Squib, as is the school caretaker, Argus Filch, who tries to learn magic secretly through a correspondence course (COS:97-98). How fascinating their fate might be, these possible outcasts are not the main concern here. However, the way differently talented students are treated by teachers and other students is discussed later on in the section about competition and ranking.

Hogwarts resembles a typical British boarding school. The boarders spend the greatest part of a year in the school and, as in real-life Britain, the year is divided into three terms with Christmas, Easter and summer breaks. The curriculum at Hogwarts includes mixing potions, transfiguration and herbology among others, while wearing the school uniform, home work, exams, dormitories, rules and punishments are not unknown in the real-life schools. Even though the wizard school has its own specialities, the basic structure of the school is quite common.

The most striking difference to real-life schools is that pupils do not have to pay any fees, even though they have to invest in school uniforms, books and other materials. Even though the money, or rather the lack of it, does not prevent parents choosing Hogwarts for their children, the school is not open for everyone. The pupils must have special gifts expected from witches and wizards. Therefore, even if social class or money are not restrictive aspects, the entrance is restricted by one's talents and in that respect Hogwarts reflects same kind of elitism as the real private schools. The issue could even be one of racial discrimination, since Rowling herself has claimed that wizards are a race different from normal people (Muggles). I will get back to this issue in the section of ethnicity.

John Nettleship (in Smith 2001:67) has claimed that Hogwarts is, broadly speaking, a state comprehensive school. His claim is a dubious one, since, as seen above, Hogwarts actually chooses its students, rather than the students would choose their school. Hogwarts is not, however, truly an elitist school, mainly because it is the only wizard school in Britain and thus there is not real choice nor competition between schools – inside Britain, since the schools from different countries do compete between each other. Since Hogwarts is the only British wizard school, the people working at the Ministry of Magic have all attended Hogwarts. Even though in real life this would imply that Hogwarts wa an elitist school, in the wizard world it rather reflects the smallness of the society. Thus, in a way, Nettleship has a point in regarding Hogwarts was a comprehensive school, since it is such a school for the wizard children (although it is not certain whether the Squibs may enter). However, as pointed out, Hogwarts is not open to all Muggle children, and thus it reminds us strongly of a public school.

According to Löfgren (1993:27) the schools in traditional boarding school stories form a world of their own without almost any contacts to the outside world. Rowling's creation is quite different. It is rather surprising that the way in which Hogwarts is controlled from above is mentioned in several points in the novels. For example, there are school governors, who supervise the headmaster's actions, while the Ministry of Magic is to some point at least responsible for the curriculum. Since this issue has more to do with the control in the wizard society than the life at the school, it will be examined further in the chapter on control and power.

4.2 Discipline

If it is not a surprise that indiscipline is one of the problems of British schools (since it probably is a problem in any country); more surprising is the fact that many children in Britain feel that the discipline in schools is too lax (McDowall 1999:97). Presumably, this claim concerns the comprehensive schools, since indiscipline is not listed by boarders as a major negative side in schooling. Instead, according to the study conducted by BSA, nearly a third of boarders found the lack of freedom as the major negative side of boarding (BSA 2001).

Hogwarts could be seen both as an reaction to the indiscipline in comprehensive schools and as a reflection of real-life boarding schools. Because of the fact that students spend most of their time in school, strict rules and rigid discipline are necessary in any boarding school, whether in real life or in fiction that reflects real life to certain extent. Obviously, a fictional wizard school could go on without any similar rules to real schools or no rules at all. However, this is not the case with Hogwarts, in which the discipline is highly valued.

There are all sorts of rules restricting students' life at Hogwarts. The students have to wear school uniforms, which consist of black robes, pointed hats and cloaks (PS:52). To mention a few other rules, magic is not allowed outside classes and during holidays, nor is roaming around the school at nights. It is also forbidden to leave the school area except on the special dates, on

which third-years and elder are allowed to visit the nearby village of Hogsmeade (POA:16). The latter is actually true also of real-life schools, since the British National Boarding Standards by the Ministry of Health include a part where it is suggested that the students are not to leave the school grounds except on special occasions (NBS 2002).

If the students break the rules, they either get detention, or, if their offence is serious enough, might get expelled. There are strict rules about the punishments and teachers are not supposed to use magic on students, for instance. Instead, they can give detentions or speak to the offender's Head of house (GOF:182). Heads of the houses are responsible for their students and are the ones who decide on the possible expulsion, in a case where the most severe punishment is needed. Thus, although he would be most delighted to do so, Professor Snape cannot expel Harry and Ron in book two after they have arrived illegally to the school with a flying car and damaged the very valuable Whomping Willow on the school grounds. Only Professor McGonagall has that right as the Head of their house.

> Snape looked as though Christmas had been cancelled. He cleared his throat and said, 'Professor Dumbledore, these boys have flouted the Decree for the Restriction of Underage Wizardry, caused serious damage to an old and valuable tree… surely acts of this nature…'
> 'It will be for Professor McGonagall to decide on these boys punishments, Severus,' said Dumbledore calmly. 'They are in her house and are therefore her responsibility.' (COS:64.)

McGonagall does not expel Harry and Ron, which shows that the punishment can vary depending on the teacher who is responsible for the students in question. In most cases, students follow the rules, or are cautious enough to not get caught, as Fred and George Weasley and Harry with his friends, since they manage to break dozens of school rules and are caught only few times. The caretaker Argus Filch's main duty is to supervise students and catch the offenders. He does not decide on the detentions, which depend on the teacher who happens to be in duty. Thus, detentions at Hogwarts vary greatly, from a dangerous visit to the Forbidden Forest (PS:181-182) to polishing silver in a trophy room or answering a teacher's fan mail (COS:91).

Harry as the hero has to break the rules for good purposes, and he is mostly forgiven for it. Moreover, the others who are not caught feel quite happy about

rule-breaking. The readers find out that all the Weasley family has at some point been breaking the rules at school, as have Harry's father James and his friends. Dumbledore himself provides Harry with an Invisibility Cloak that has belonged to James Potter (PS:148). The cloak proves out to be a very useful tool in rule-breaking. Therefore, although the discipline at Hogwarts is an important thing, it also becomes clear that it is quite acceptable to break the rules for the right purposes.

4.3 Competition and ranking

The competition and ranking inside Hogwarts have many forms. Head boy and girl are chosen from the last year students every year, while fifth year students can become prefects, whose task is to supervise younger students and who are also provided with certain benefits (GOF:399). The school year ends with final exams in which one has to get results good enough to move to the next grade in the autumn. This sort of competition probably is normal in real-life schools too. However, the competition between different houses, which is extremely important to both pupils and teachers in Hogwarts is a feature that is typical to boarding school stories rather than real-life schools. According to Löfgren (1993:47), competition between houses occurred in Victorian schools but has since survived only in boarding school stories.

The competition between Houses is an important way to both reward and punish students. There are four houses in the school, Gryffindor, Slytherin, Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw in which the students are divided when they attend the school in their first year and in which they will then stay the rest of their time at school. Professor McGonagall explains the system:

> 'The start-of-term banquet will begin shortly, but before you take your seats in the Great Hall, you will be sorted into your houses. The Sorting is a very important ceremony because, while you are here, 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.
> 'The four houses are called Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw and Slytherin. Each house has its noble history and each has produced outstanding witches and wizards. While you are at Hogwarts, your triumphs will earn your house points, while any rule-breaking will lose house points. At the end of the year, the house with the most points is

> awarded the House Cup, a great honour. I hope each of you will be a credit to whichever house becomes yours.' (PS:85-86.)

Since the students in each house spend a lot of time together, their team spirit is high and they are more eager to earn their house points, which again might affect their studies, since activity during lessons will be rewarded with points.

Teachers are extremely concerned about students' success. The students are forced to do a lot of extra work before the exams at the end of each year. Even more work is required for the exams at the end of the sixth year (at the age of sixteen or seventeen), which in the wizarding world are called O.W.Ls, Ordinary Wizarding Levels (COS:40). They are somewhat comparable to the exams in real-life Britain, General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), which the students take at the age of sixteen (Irwin 1994:91). While part of the young people in Britain enters sixth form college after GCSEs and spend two or three years preparing for Advanced level (A-level) examination which will give them an opportunity to enter higher education (Irwin 1994:92), wizards have N.E.W.T.s (Nastily Exhausting Wizarding Tests) at the end of the seventh year. N.E.W.T.s are the highest qualification Hogwarts offers and since there is no University of Wizardry, those who get top grades may enter the Ministry of Magic and start to build career there, as Ron's elder brother, Percy Weasley does (POA:231). Teachers' concern is understandable, since students' whole future may be dependent on their grades at school.

While those who do well are praised (GOF:205), the ones who do badly are told off, instead of trying to support them. Such is the case of Neville Longbottom, who does not get much support even from the head of his House, Professor McGonagall. Especially at the time when there are foreign students visiting Hogwarts, everyone is told to do their best to establish the good reputation of the school. During a Transfiguration class McGonagall tells Neville in front of everyone else that she hopes that he will not embarrass Hogwarts in front of another wizard school.

> 'Longbottom, kindly do not reveal that you can't even perform a simple Switching Spell in front of anyone from Durmstrang!' Professor McGonagall barked at the end of one particularly difficult lesson, during which Neville had accidentally transplanted his own ears onto a cactus. (GOF:208.)

The school's reputation seems to be more important than giving support to a weaker student who is left to survive on his own. Fortunately, there are two the Defence of the Dark Arts teachers, Professor Lupin and Alastair Moody, who help Neville and encourage him to play to his strengths (which is Herbology). However, Professors Snape and McGonagall judge and evaluate him in front of other students, which is humiliating. Neville is at the bottom of the ranking list, and an example of the tough competition at Hogwarts.

The competition occurs also in the form of sport, which in Hogwarts is Quidditch, a wizard game played on broomsticks (PS:113). There are two teams with seven players in each: a (goal) Keeper, three Chasers who try to score goals, two Beaters who disturb the other team's game by trying to hit the players with rough balls, and a Seeker whose task is to find and catch a tiny ball called the Golden Snitch. When the Snitch is catched, the game ends. Quidditch has a special status in the school, and in the whole wizard world. Each House has its own Quidditch team. Everyone watches matches but only the talented pupils play the game. Löfgren (1993:47) states that sport was not important only in boarding school stories but also in real Victorian boarding schools (see also Richards 1992:6). The situation is the same even today, which is not really a wonder, since Britain was the first country to organise sport as a national activity already in the middle of the 19th century, first namely in public schools (Richards 1992:6).

The initial purpose behind organised sport was to provide an outlet for youthful energies at public schools, and prevent vandalism and indiscipline. Organised sport was generally believed to have character-building qualities for future leaders, since it promotes manliness and chivalry through the ideas of team spirit, leadership, loyalty, bravery, fair play, modesty in victory and humility in defeat. (McDowall 1999:111; Richards 1992:6.) Most probably also Quidditch is supposed to promote these sort of qualities in the players. Richards (1992:7) writes that the organised sport lead to the birth of a whole athleticism cult, which realised itself in the prestigious house matches and in the role of sporting heroes. He also remarks that similar themes were brought from the real public schools into school stories.

Rowling (in Scholastic 2000/B) says that she invented Quidditch because sport is such an important part of life at school. She herself is apparently terrible at all sports but she wanted to give her hero a talent she herself would have loved to have. At the same time she has, perhaps accidentally, made Quidditch another means of ranking students. It is unfortunate that not all wizards are allowed to play, since Quidditch seems to mean an awful lot to Harry, who can truly relax only at the Quidditch pitch.

4.4 Community

While the contemporary boarding schools in Britain boast about their extra-curricular or free-time activities for students, at Hogwarts the chances to participate in sports, music or other hobbies are next to none, with the exception of students talented in Quidditch. One might argue, however, that there is no need for such activities, since the castle as such with its moving corridors, trapdoors and ghosts offers just enough activity as such.

In any case, the students spend most of their free time in the common room of their house – or at least are supposed to do that according to the rules, which forbid unnecessary roaming around the castle. If they are not keen on doing their homework there, they can read, play chess and socialise with each other. Being with others – or the community – is very important to the wizard children, which is seen especially clearly through Harry's perspective. The only friends he has ever had, he has found at Hogwarts.

Friends and social life are the most important thing for real-life students, too. According to the study conducted by the British Boarding School Association, nine out of 10 boarders (92.3%) say that boarding helps them learn to live with others, and seven out of 10 (69.5%) say it imbues a greater sense of community. Although the students also list gaining academic skills and being able to participate in all sort of activities as benefits of boarding, the friends are mentioned by the majority to be the most important thing. (BSA 2001.) Undoubtedly, boarding schools use these ideas to tempt new students, since comprehensive schools do not offer as tight societies as there are in boarding houses (obviously, comprehensive schools do offer friends and social

life, and it can be assumed that a survey among students in comprehensive would provide similar results as the study mentioned above).

As Rowling herself is not a supporter of boarding schools (Rowling in Weir 1999), she does not see her creation as a mere haven for wizard children. She says that it can be a sanctuary, but is can also be a frightening place, since children can be exceptionally cruel to each other. To Harry Hogwarts certainly is somewhat of a haven, since he hates his life at his foster family. However, also the latter part of Rowling's claim is true of Hogwarts, since there are wizard children who appear to be purely evil (such as Harry's worst enemy, Draco Malfoy). Hogwarts is neither a sanctuary, nor a totally horrible place, but in any case it offers Harry as an orphan a kind of surrogate family, as Rowling (in Weir 1999) puts it. She claims that there is something liberating in the school family, since relationships there are not as intense as in a real family and the boundaries are perhaps more clearly defined.

Rather than claiming that Hogwarts merely resembles real-life boarding schools in providing secure society for the students, it could be seen as a fictional reaction to the problems in real contemporary Britain, such as alienation. According to McDowall (1999:97), young British people today are more isolated than their parents' generation, and only one fifth feels that they are part of a community. McDowall sees this as a sad reflection on the atomisation of modern British society. As alienation tends to be a major problem in many western societies, his claim is easy to accept. Although Rowling's novels do not explicitly mention alienation, it is possible to imply that it is seen as a problem, since the community and close relationships between friends are highly valued in the books. What is more, the family-like tight community at Hogwarts can be seen as a reflection of many young Britons ideas of more secure society.

All in all, the wizard school clearly has its model in real-life British boarding schools. Not only are the main structures of boarding school imitated in the novels, but also the strict discipline and concern about students' success reflect the public schools, where most students are aiming at universities. Also the sense of community serves as a link between real-life schools and Hogwarts. However, the novels do not provide a realistic image of life at a British boarding school. It is also difficult to decide whether they resemble

more the contemporary schools or schools of Rowling's childhood, for instance, since the public school system has not gone through any immense changes during the last decades. Probably Hogwarts could be seen as an imitation of the British public school system, which has existed both in the past and still exists in the contemporary society.

5. SOCIAL CLASS

5.1 The concept of social class

Social classes exist in Britain strongly even today: not only do the Britons recognise the class system and easily place themselves in a class, but in 1995 81% of them believed that there is a struggle between different classes, whereas the number in 1964 was 48% (McDowall 1999:95, see also Reid 1998:31). People find the class-system a normal way to structure society. Though differences among middle-class people are small, the differences between the upper class and the working class are very great (McDowall 1999:16). Today there is mobility between classes, it is possible to climb the stairs of the class-system, since money is now more important social factor than family background (McDowall 1999:93; see also Obelkevich & Catterall in Oakland 2001:24).

Reid (1998:10) defines social class as 'a grouping of people into categories on the basis of occupation', by which he does not suggest that social class is simply or only based on occupation, nor any other single criterion such as income or education. However, in British studies, both in sociological treatments and in reports by government, occupation has been seen and used as the best single indicator of a person's social standing and socio-economic circumstance; actually it has been almost the sole criterion of social class. There have been some multidimensional scales, using combinations of factors such as occupation, income and education, and a few that have included more unusual factors such as participation in the community, or family prestige. Most of these scales have been, however, developed for a particular study, and

their general use has been very limited. Occupation works well as a general indication of class, since it is in any case linked with both income and educational background. Thus, in most British studies the social class means actually ‘occupational class’. (Reid 1998:11.)

Reid (1998:246-247) lists several different divisions between classes based on occupation, but himself uses the Registrar General’s social classes, since they form the basis of all the commonly used social class classifications in Britain. There are six classes: I) Professional occupations (e.g. judge, lawyer, doctor, engineer, management consultant); II) Intermediate/ managerial and technical occupations (e.g. author, journalist, manager, nurse, schoolteacher); IIIn) Skilled non-manual (e.g. clerk, secretary); IIIm) Skilled manual (e.g. bus driver, cook, electrician); IV) Partly skilled occupations (e.g. bar staff, bus conductor, gardener); V) Unskilled occupations (e.g. cleaners/ domestics, labourer, road sweeper, unemployed). (Typical occupations listed in Reid (1998:249).) In some studies certain of the classes are combined so that classes I-IIIn represent the ‘middle’ or ‘non-manual’ class, and the remaining three the ‘working’ or ‘manual’ class (Reid 1998:248).

In the wizard society there is a limited number of occupations, and thus a delicate division between social classes in the novels based on occupation cannot serve as the only means of analysis. Therefore, here a simpler division is used. As McDowall (1999:93) explains, British society is principally divided into three classes: upper, middle and working class, of which the last two are often further divided into smaller units. The division is based on income, occupation and education. In general, the upper class consists of senior civil servants and senior management and finance staff, whereas middle and junior managerial, clerical and non-manual workers represent the middle class. The rest, skilled or semi-skilled workers, occasional part-time workers, and the people dependent on state benefit fall into the working class. The boundaries between different classes are not clear, except when it comes to the upper class, which tries to protect its own elitist culture especially with the system of private schools. (McDowall 1999:93.)

In studies on the public opinion about class, occupation was the major indicator for middle and working classes, while status and income were the most commonly used criteria for upper class. Moreover, education was not felt

to be an important factor, while a three quarters of Brits believed that people are born into a class. (Reid 1998:35-36.) The public view that education is rather unimportant to one's class is rather surprising, since the studies, such as Reid's (1998:178), claim that obviously the existence of independent, fee-paying schools as an alternative to those provided by the LEAs has and continues to segregate education along class lines. In the novels, there is only one wizard school in Britain, thus education does not play an important role in defining social class. The other three main indicators, occupation, status and income can, however, be used to decide which class a person belongs to. Furthermore, other indications of class are used as the basis of analysis. Reid (1998:2) points out that at the everyday level differences in social status are recognised in, for example, people's appearance and speech, where they live and come from, what they do for a living, how they spend time and money and what they interests are. In the novels, these sort of things are reflected in the character's attitudes, which again show in their speech, as will be seen below.

5.2 Indicators of middle and working class: occupation and language

Since all the wizards are educated in the same institution, Hogwarts, and there are not wizard universities, it is a bit surprising that there are all sorts of occupations in the wizard society. Major employers are the school, Ministry of Magic and the Gringotts bank that is run by goblins. It can be assumed that people working in these institutions all belong to middle-class; teachers and clerks representing the 'middle' middle class, while managers (e.g. headmaster, Minister of Magic, and other managers in upper position) belong to the upper middle class. Most of the wizard children belong to the middle class, on the basis of their parents' occupation.

Besides the positions in the institutions, mentioned above, there are many other sorts of jobs. Some of them would probably represent the middle class, such as occupations requiring certain skills (e.g. Mr. Ollivander, who is a maker of magic wands, Rita Skeeter, a journalist, Madam Pomfrey, a nurse). Others can be regarded as working class jobs, such as a bartender, a bus driver, or lower middle class occupations, such as the Keeper of Keys and Grounds

(Hagrid) and the caretaker at Hogwarts (Mr. Filch). The variety of occupations makes it sensible to argue that both the middle class and working class are represented in the wizard society. There is also an upper class, but as in real-life Britain, it cannot be defined on the basis of occupation, but by other factors, which will be discussed further on.

Whereas the middle class occupations form the majority of the jobs described in the novels, those characters that have working class occupations form an interesting group, since their occupation is not the only factor which hints at their class. As Dixon (1978:48) notes, it is fairly typical in children's fiction that an accent is an indicator of class, since in many children's books working class people have an accent, while middle and upper class people use 'standard' language. Such seems to be the case with Rowling's novels. The majority of the characters having working class jobs also have an accent, while the other characters use 'standard' language.

Firstly, Hagrid, who represents the lower middle class or working class even (he himself has been as a pupil at Hogwarts but is now working as a gamekeeper), has a West country accent (Smith 2001:76) which he uses throughout the novels. An example is when Hagrid comes to pick up Harry from his foster parents, the Dursleys, and mocks Harry's horrible cousin to his parents.

> 'Yer great puddin' of a son don' need fattenin' any more, Dursley, don' worry.' (PS:41.)

Hagrid is made a very sympathetic character right from the beginning, since Harry hates Dudley and is glad that Hagrid feels the same way. However, the fact that he has an accent and works as the gamekeeper makes him different from the 'normal' middle class wizards.

Other working class characters are a bus driver Ernie and a bus conductor Stan. Harry meets them as he escapes from the Dursleys and accidentally stops the magic Knight bus that drives wizards from one place to another. In the quote below Stan explains to Harry about the bus.

> 'Yep,' said Stan proudly, 'anywhere you like, long's it's on land. Can't do nuffink underwater. 'Ere, he said, looking suspicious again, 'you did flag us down, dincha? Stuck out your wand 'and, dincha?'

> ‘Yes,’ said Harry quickly. ‘Listen, how much would it be to get to London?’ (POA:31.)

One can easily note the difference between Stan’s accent and Harry’s standard language. Both Stan and Ernie use the accent throughout their conversation with Harry, while Harry does not give up standard speech. Moreover, Stan and Ernie appear as rather simple-minded by their use of accent. Again, one cannot help the feeling that although they are seen as sympathetic and funny characters, they are socially different from other characters, in this case from Harry, who belongs to the middle class.

In addition to the accent, another way to reflect a character’s lower social status can be done by using grammatically-poor language. The house-elves are a whole group of working class characters that not only work as servants, but also use ‘a servant’s language’. All the house-elves speak similarly, but since Dobby, who is Harry’s friend, has the biggest role in the novels, his speech is presented below. Dobby has come to work at Hogwarts kitchen, and explains to Hermione why house-elves are not paid for their work.

> ‘Thank you, miss!’ said Dobby, grinning toothily at her. ‘But most wizards doesn’t want a house-elf who wants paying, miss. “That’s not the point of a house-elf,” they says, and they slammed the door in Dobby’s face! Dobby likes work, but he wants to wear clothes and he wants to be paid, Harry Potter… Dobby likes being free!’ (GOF:330.)

Dobby’s grammatical errors appear mostly as incorrect verb forms (‘wizards doesn’t want’, ‘they says’, ‘likes being’), which make his speech sound uneducated and thus lower class. Moreover, his position is reflected in his use of ‘miss’ (and elsewhere ‘sir’) of everyone whom he considers to be above him, including under-aged middle-class wizard children, such as Hermione in the above extract.

Actually, it seems that everybody except other house-elves are superior to these creatures, since they work as slaves (they are not paid, as Dobby explains above), and form a whole working class of their own. Dobby is an exceptional elf, since he was freed from his masters (the Malfoys) and now wants to work independently and get paid. In book four Dobby gets a position at Hogwarts, and the headmaster Dumbledore agrees to pay him; however, all the other house-elves see that as a disgrace.

Hermione, who considers the treatment of house-elves outrageous, starts a campaign (‘the Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare’) to improve their working conditions (see GOF:198). She does not succeed, however, since everyone else believes that if the elves are happy in their present conditions, there is no point in trying to change them. The elves themselves consider it honourable to work without being paid. Since they clearly represent a different social class (and even a different race or species, which will be discussed in the chapter on ethnicity), it is difficult to decide, the sort of attitudes the books reflect. On the one hand, poor working conditions of the elves or working class are discussed and Hermione takes serious actions to fight against the injustices. On the other hand, the general opinion among the characters is that such actions are pointless, as long as the lower (occupational) group is content with what it has. It seems that the books reflect a society where the social injustices and hierarchy exist very strongly, but even though they are recognised, nothing is done to alter the situation, since it is seen as a necessary or ‘natural’ state of things.

On the basis of occupation and language, working class children are absent in the novels. There are no child characters whose parents would have working class jobs, nor do any of the pupils at Hogwarts speak with an accent or use language otherwise differently from its standard use. Moreover, since the three central child characters, Harry, Ron and Hermione all belong to the middle class (Harry’s parents left him a lot of money; Ron’s father works at the Ministry of Magic; Hermione’s parents are dentists), the reader is left with the feeling that most of the other pupils belong to that class too (excluding those that represent the upper class: see below). The absence of working class children is, according to Dixon (1978:55) typical of children’s literature. Dixon claims that the class conflict is thus absent too, but in Rowling’s novel the conflict appears between upper class and middle class (Malfoy and Ron Weasley); in the case of Hagrid and Malfoy probably between working class and upper class. This conflict will be discussed in the following.

5.3 The upper class: money and social status

As McDowall (1999:93) pointed out, social mobility in Britain has increased and a thus person's birth does not define his/her class for the rest of their lives (even though the public view seems to disagree). Instead, money is now a more important factor in class divisions than anything else. Money divides people in Britain very harshly. According to a Labour government report in 1999, the gap between rich and poor in Britain has increased since the late 1970s and is worse than in other developed countries, such as France, Germany and Italy (Oakland 2001:191). Inequality in Britain is one of the highest among industrialised countries, with 20% of the population owning 43% of the nation's wealth and the poorest 20% having 6,6%. In addition, poverty indicators have increased since 1979. A lot of people live with incomes below the poverty line, including single-parent families, people on benefits, and young people that are unemployed, because they have left school without basic skills. Since money is such an important social factor in real-life Britain, it is not surprising that it is important also in the fictional British wizard society.

Whereas the middle class and working class can be separated on the basis of occupation and language, the upper class in the novels differs from the other two namely by money – and social status. The upper class in the Potter books is represented mainly by the Malfoy family.

The Malfoys are very rich, which comes up at several points, as when Draco Malfoy, the son, boasts about his family being well-off. Also the fact that they have a house-elf as a servant reveals their prosperity, since only old and rich wizarding families have house-elves as servants, for 'they only come with big old manors and castles and places like that', as the Weasley brothers explain to Harry, who has seen a house-elf for a first time (COS:27-28).

The first time Draco appears, he talks about bullying his father to buy him a racing broom, which is expensive (PS:60). Even Harry, who has been left with a small fortune from his parents, does not dare to buy one for himself. Moreover, in their second year at Hogwarts, Lucius Malfoy, the father, buys the whole Slytherin Quidditch team brand new and expensive brooms (COS:86). Boasting about money, or using it to buy acceptance, is not seen as a good thing, and Hermione expresses this very plainly: 'At least no one on the

Gryffindor team had to *buy* their way in,' Hermione said sharply. '*They* got in on pure talent.' (COS:86.) Thus, Draco is seen as an arrogant character, and reflects more generally the whole upper class, which is, from the middle-class point of view, seen in an unfavourable light.

This comes up more clearly in situations where Draco does not only talk about his family's money but mocks other people, in each case sympathetic characters, for the lack of money. His main targets are Ron and Hagrid, whom he calls 'riff-raff' right from the beginning (PS:81). Later on Draco mocks Ron at several points for being poor, while Hagrid is his target mainly because he is supposedly a stupid servant. Draco's attitudes sprang from his home: 'My father told me all the Weasleys have red hair, freckles and more children than they can afford.' (PS:81). Indeed, Ron and Draco hate each other as much as their fathers hate each other. The two fathers end up having a physical fight at a store in the second book, after Lucius Malfoy insulting the whole Weasley family (COS:51).

Even though prosperity can be connected to the upper class, even more important to the Malfoys are the family name, reputation and social status. This shows clearly in their attitudes towars their "inferiors". For instance, Hagrid, the keeper of keys and grounds at Hogwarts is merely a servant to Malfoys. This comes up already when Draco Malfoy is introduced the first time in the novel. While talking to Harry he gives his opinion of Hagrid, with whom Harry has already become friends:

> 'Yes, exactly. I heard he's a sort of savage – lives in a hut in the school grounds and every now and then he gets drunk, tries to do magic and ends up setting fire to his bed.'
> 'I think he's brilliant,' said Harry coldly.
> 'Do you?' said the boy, with a slight sneer. 'Why is he with you? Where are your parents?' (PS:60.)

There is no question about Malfoy's attitudes; he is not very sympathetic to people with no name nor high social status. Malfoy goes on about "newcomers" or children, who are not from the old wizarding families. In that respect he reflects the snobbery in the upper wizard class.

> 'I really don't think they should let the other sort in, do you? They're just not the same, they've never been brought up to know our ways. Some of them have never even heard of Hogwarts until they get the letter, imagine. I think they should keep it in the old wizarding families. What's your surname, anyway?' (PS:61.)

Since Harry himself has just heard about Hogwarts and the reader's sympathies lie with him, Malfoy appears as a proud and arrogant character. It should be noted here that Draco does not only talk about rich wizard families, but actually refers to people who are not 'pure-blooded- wizards. The issue will be discussed further in the chapter on ethnicity.

The Malfoys enjoy a position on the top of the wizard society. Lucius Malfoy is one of the school governors and is not hesitant in using his position for his own purposes. In book three, Draco gets injured during Hagrid's lesson on Care of Magical Creatures, which gives him a reason to try to get Hagrid sacked. Ron and Harry are furious about it, since not only is Hagrid their friend, but Malfoy is only pretending about the injury and thus tries to get Hagrid sacked by foul means.

> 'Seen your pal Hagrid lately?' he [Draco] asked them quietly.
> 'None of your business,' said Ron jerkily, without looking up.
> 'I'm afraid he won't be a teacher much longer,' said Malfoy, in a tone of mock sorrow. 'Father's not very happy about my injury – '
> 'Keep talking, Malfoy, and I'll give you a real injury,' snarled Ron.
> ' – he's complained to the school governors. And to the Ministry of Magic. Father's got a lot of influence, you know. And a lasting injury like this – ' he gave a huge, fake sigh, 'who knows if my arm'll ever be the same again?'
> 'So that's why your putting it on,' said Harry, accidentally beheading a dead caterpillar because his hand was shaking with anger. 'To try and get Hagrid sacked.' (POA:95.)

Even though Lucius Malfoy does not succeed in getting Hagrid sacked, he does get Hagrid's pet hippogriff – the creature that caused Draco's injury – executed. Therefore, he really does have a certain amount of influence, even if it is corrupt influence. As can be seen in the extract above, the main characters do not approve using one's influence for foul ends. Thus, the upper class is also here shown as an arrogant group using its status for its own good. McDowall (1999:93-95) claims that this is also true of the real-life upper class, which obtains a sense of social superiority through the public schools' élitist culture, and remains wealthy partly through inheritance, which is a means to minimise the effects of taxation. He says that the top 1% of the upper class élite has enormous influence and control, and only a handful of outsiders get access to this élite (McDowall 1999:93). Thus, the Malfoy family can be seen as a reflection of the old families that form the British upper class, which from the

middle-class implied narrator's point of view is seen as a snobbish and arrogant group of wealthy people.

The implied narrator's middle-class views show also in that positions in the Ministry are not considered bad things, since after all, most of the Ministry is middle class. However, those who have the top contacts, or at least claim to have them are the upper class, or in this case, the Malfoys. In book four the great contest, Triwizard Tournament, is kept a secret until a later point of the school year. The Ministry of Magic partly organises it, and the employees at Ministry are supposed to keep the secret. Mr. Weasley and Ron's elder brother Percy do so, and have not told Ron about the contest, while Lucius Malfoy has told Draco about it. When Draco finds out that Ron does not know it, he mocks Ron's father and brother not having the top contacts at the Ministry.

> 'Don't tell me you don't know?' he said delightedly. 'You've got a father and a brother at the Ministry and you don't even know? 'My God, my father told me about it ages ago… heard it from Cornelius Fudge. But then, Father's always associated with the top people at the Ministry… maybe your father's too junior to know about it, Weasley… yes… they probably don't talk about important stuff in front of him…' (GOF:150.)

Again, this incident does not show the upper class in a favourable light. Lucius Malfoy has clearly broken a promise by telling about the Tournament to outsiders, while the Weasleys have been honest and loyal and kept their mouth shut. It seems that the upper class is not only arrogant but also mischievous, which comes up in several points elsewhere. The greatest proof of this comes up when at the end of book four Lucius Malfoy returns as a loyal servant to the source of all evil, Lord Voldemort, who has risen again.

All in all, the novels are clearly very middle-class with a sympathy for the working class and dislike (or even contempt) for the upper class. Moreover, the working class and the upper class are depicted in a stereotypical way, since a few characters serve as representatives of these classes: the simple-minded or at least not too clever Hagrid, Stan, Ernie and house-elves for the working class; and the arrogant (or evil) Malfoys for the upper class. Although there are no explicit mentions about class in the novels, the division between the three classes is easy to make. Whether Rowling is deliberately reflecting the class-system is difficult to say, since she might only be commenting on the gap between rich and poor people. However, in Britain people's wealth is in most

cases linked to their class, and thus the class system is (at least) implicitly part of the novels. What is more, the attitudes reflected in the books have not only to do with wealth but also people's position and influence, which are also tightly connected with the class system in real-life Britain.

Whether or not people in real life share similar attitudes cannot be considered here. In any case, one could assume that a majority of British children, who represent the middle class, have no difficulties in adopting and approving the middle class attitudes reflected in the books. However, it would be difficult to try to claim that upper or working class children would have such difficulties, since probably all children enjoy mostly the plot and the central characters without paying attention to their social background. Whatever the case, social classes and the conflicts between them do exist in Rowling's books as has been shown above. Since social classes exist also in real contemporary Britain, it can be said that the books do reflect the contemporary reality to certain respect. Moreover, the clash between rich and poor (as between the Malfoys and Weasleys) can be seen as reflecting the deeply divided, money-based social reality in Britain.

6. GENDER ROLES

6.1 Men and women

Gender roles among men and women in Britain have not been very traditional during the last decades. Most women are working, even though they do not necessarily earn as much as men, despite the Sex Discrimination and Equal Pay Acts (see McDowall 1999:16; Irwin 1994:96, 134). This is partly because women tend to work part-time or in jobs that only attract low wages. It is also clear that it is difficult for women to obtain promotion in both the public and the private sectors and there are still relatively few women in top jobs and in the civil service, industry or education. (Irwin 1994:126; McDowall 1999:96.) Women have not been wholly excluded from power, however, as Obelkevich & Catterall (in Oakland 2001:23) note by referring to Margaret Thatcher as a

prime minister and women holding the posts of director of public prosecutions and of director of MI5 (part of the Secret Services organisation, traditionally concerned with internal intelligence matters within Britain). However, Oakland (2001:23) points out that women hold no longer the posts in these two cases. Nevertheless, there is a reason to believe that there are not that many women in leading posts if it is possible to mention those few who hold them. Obelkevich & Catterall (in Oakland 2001:23) assume that all working women do not want to pursue careers and are not thus only held back by 'glass ceilings' imposed by men, although such barriers have surely existed and still exist. They claim that the primary commitment for many women is often still not to work but to their traditional role in rearing a family. Undoubtedly, this sort of women exist, but, what is more, in reality many women are actually committed to both roles inside and outside the home.

Thus, although most women go to work, domestic work is still mainly women's responsibility (McDowall 1999:96), therefore the traditional ideas of women's responsibilities have not wholly changed. Thus, one might assume that men's role has not changed as much as women's. However, since women are working also outside home, men do not have any longer the responsibility to earn a living for their families on their own. Actually, while women's role outside the home has become stronger, some men are facing difficulties. McDowall (1999:97) claims that women are not the ones experiencing most problems in society today, it is young working class men that are becoming more and more alienated.

Also in the family the roles are changing for both men and women. The institution of marriage has been in decline in recent years and has been replaced by alternatives, such as cohabitation, single people living alone, lone-parent families and same-gender relationships. In the future, married couples will be outnumbered by the unmarried both because an increase in the divorce rate and by a rise in the number of people who will never marry (Oakland 2001:224). Moreover, as early as the year 2000, nuclear families could be outnumbered by stepfamilies. By the year 2020, with present trends, one in three people in Britain will be living alone and most women will be single, only 48% of them being wives as such. (Selbourne in Oakland 2001:238.) It is

reasonable to assume that in that case most men will be single too, without the traditional roles as husbands and fathers.

Even though the traditional roles are now accompanied by alternative roles in Britain, Rowling's novels carry signs of the former ones. In an interview for Radio CBC, Rowling was asked about creating a magical society where men and women play such traditional roles, women working at home and men taking on action. Rowling answered that the case is not that simple, since Professor McGonagall and Mrs. Weasley are very strong characters. In addition, there are exactly as many women in the Hogwarts' staff as there are men, as has been the case with headmasters and headmistresses. Thus, she claims that the roles are not traditional, which will become clearer in the following novels. Therefore, she insists that her novels should not be discussed at this point at all, since there are still three to come. (Rowling in Radio CBC 2000.) Actually, there is no reason why the novels should not be discussed already at this stage, since people are reading them in any case. In the four published Potter books, the gender roles for men and women in Rowling's novels are quite traditional. We will first look at the different occupations and then discuss some of the characters in detail.

Since the books deal most of the time with the school, obviously most of the adults are teachers and therefore a full picture about the male and female roles cannot be obtained. However, coincidence or not, the only woman outside the school that is described in detail (Mrs. Weasley) is a housewife, and almost all the rest are teachers, whereas the men are working in different occupations (unemployment does not seem to exist in the wizard society, nor do divorces). There exists a certain 'traditional' division between women's occupations (e.g. school nurse, librarian, housewife) and men's occupations (e.g. gamekeeper, caretaker at school, bus driver). When it comes to the teachers, the more 'dangerous' subjects such as Defence against the Dark Arts and Care of Magical Creatures are taught by males, while 'safe' subjects such as Herbology and even nonsense subjects such as Divination, are women's responsibility. Even so, the situation is not that simple, since there are exceptions, for instance, Professor Minerva McGonagall, who teaches the difficult and skilled art of Transfiguration; Madam Hooch, who teaches flying on brooms and is the referee in Quidditch games; and Professor Binns, (a male ghost) who teaches

History of Magic, which everyone considers extremely boring. In any case, the post of the Defence against the Dark Arts teacher is quite revealing; there have been four different teachers for that subject, all of them males. This post is tightly linked with the action in the books, since their main theme is the battle between good and evil; thus it reflects the overall situation in the wizard world, which is that the men in most cases take on action, while women remain almost invisible.

At the time Harry is at Hogwarts, the headmaster is male, the Minister of Magic is male, and the only school governor the readers get a chance to meet is male. The readers also learn that the Minister of Magic was chosen from two male candidates (PS:51). There are mentions about headmistresses too, thus women are not totally excluded from the top, although the two last heads of the school have been males. Besides, the head of Harry's house, Professor McGonagall is the deputy headmistress of the school.

Even though the ratio between men and women in the school staff is 50:50, that is not certainly the case in the Ministry of Magic. Only two women working for the Ministry are mentioned in the first four books (Mafalda Hopkirk (COS:21) and Bertha Jorkins (GOF:82)), while several males and their positions in the Ministry are represented (e.g. Mr. Weasley in the Department of Misuse of Muggle Artefacts, Ludo Bagman, head of the Department of Magical Games and Sports, and Mr. Crouch, head of the Department of International Magical Co-operation). This leads to male domination in other instances too, for instance in the panel judging the Triwizard Tournament, only one of the five members is female, because men from the Ministry are chiefly organising the event (GOF:225).

Thus, as far as occupations and positions are considered, the gender roles are very traditional. Nevertheless, this does not follow that all men and women would be depicted as stereotypically traditional characters, although the minor characters often are, since the readers learn in most cases only their occupations.

Firstly, the comparison between Mr. and Mrs. Weasley shows how the roles in the family are not that straightforward (one might ask though whether the idea of man as the head of family has ever been exactly to the point, since strong women in the family are not a new phenomenon). Mrs. Weasley, the

housewife, seems to be the real head of her family, and is far from an angelic image of mother when she tells her boys off. Along with this, she does many womanly things such as cooks, knits and fusses. However, as Rowling (in Radio CBC 2000) herself has commented, Mrs. Weasley does not 'pitter and patter round the house,' as someone has described the character, since anyone who has raised seven children knows that it is serious and hard work. Mr. Weasley, again, is not that strong person and is a bit afraid of her wife, for instance, in a situations where he should tell his sons off. An example of this is when, to fetch Harry from the Dursleys', the boys have secretly taken their father's illegal flying car, which he has been fixing up for a long time.

> '*Your sons flew that car to Harry's house and back last night!*' shouted Mrs. Weasley. 'What have you got to say about that, eh?'
> 'Did you really?' said Mr. Weasley eagerly. 'Did it go all right? I- I mean,' he faltered, as sparks flew from Mrs. Weasley's eyes, 'that- that was very wrong, boys – very wrong indeed…'
> 'Let's leave them to it,' Ron muttered to Harry, as Mrs. Weasley swelled like a bullfrog. (COS:35.)

Mr. Weasley is boyishly excited about the idea that his flying car has been working, while Mrs. Weasley is worried about the fact that they have broken against the law by flying a Muggle car. Rationality seems here to be a womanly thing, compared to the male interest in all sorts of technical devices, without thinking twice about the effects such devices or using them might have. Also, bringing up the children is almost wholly Mrs. Weasley's responsibility, which probably is the reason why she is tougher than all the men in the family together (the Weasley boys are quite afraid of their mother too).

Another comparison can be done between two teachers, Professor McGonagall and Gilderoy Lockhart, who is the Defence against the Dark Arts teacher. As a deputy headmistress, McGonagall has a lot of influence and she is an active character in the school. She is strict, fair and rational, although 'under that gruff exterior, Professor McGonagall is a bit of an old softy', as Rowling (in Scholastic 2000/B) puts it. This comes up, for instance, in a situation, where Harry and Ron have rescued Hermione from a mountain troll, and McGonagall cries a bit, because she is touched by their bravery. McGonagall is strict about the rules and also concerned about students success. Gilderoy Lockhart is almost a total contrast to her. Lockhart is a vain character,

who is more concerned in his winning the smile of the week contest in a Witch Weekly than taking care of any of his responsibilities as a teacher. Lockhart lies and boasts about his bravery and wit, while actually he is a coward, who escapes when real action is at hand, as demonstrated in the following extract, where the teachers discuss who will face the monster that has been attacking pupils at the school.

> 'I certainly remember you saying you were sorry you hadn't had a crack at the monster before Hagrid was arrested,' said Snape. 'Didn't you say that the whole affair had been bungled, and that you should have been given a free rein from the first?'
> Lockhart stared around at his stony-faced colleagues.
> 'I… I really never… You may have misunderstood…'
> 'We'll leave it to you then, Gilderoy,' said Professor McGonagall. 'Tonight will be an excellent time to do it. We'll make sure everyone's out of your way. You'll be able to tackle the monster all by yourself. A free rein at last.'
> Lockhart gazed desperately around him, but nobody came to the rescue. He didn't look remotely handsome any more. His lip was trembling, and in the absence of his usually toothy grin he looked weak-chinned and weedy.
> 'V- very well,' he said. 'I'll- I'll be in my office, getting – getting ready.'
> And he left the room.
> 'Right,' said Professor McGonagall, whose nostrils were flared, 'that's got him out from our feet. The Heads of Houses should go and inform their students what has happened.' (COS:218.)

This extract not only shows that incapable men are left outside the action, but it shows how strong women, here McGonagall, take on action when needed. In the above case Professor Dumbledore is suspended and thus McGonagall as the deputy headmistress takes the lead and gives orders to others.

The characters are one of the most fascinating elements in Rowling's novels and thus the discussion on all of their roles would probably fill another book. In addition to the exceptional or more rounded characters (few of them presented above), there are more traditional characters, such as the headmaster Dumbledore, for instance, as a wise old man, or Bertha Jorkins as a nosy, but inconsiderate woman, who has an excellent memory for gossip (GOF: 293, 462). Unfortunately, a thorough discussion is here limited and therefore a few generalisations must be made.

Firstly, as a whole there are more male that female characters in the books. That probably is the main reason why most of the action is male responsibility. While there are active women characters, such as McGonagall (and Hermione), they are a minority. In the wizard society men are far more active than women,

who are in general either passive or invisible. Another point that goes for almost all the characters is that men are not that worried about breaking the rules as women are. McGonagall, for instance, knows no mercy on rule-breakers even if they are from her own house, Gryffindor, while some male teachers, such as Professor Lupin, Harry's father's friend, even encourage the children to break the rules (POA:310). Women seem to be more concerned about students' success and 'passive' studying by the rules, while men believe in developing one's skills and bravery through action (which sometimes might involve breaking the rules). Again, it must be noted that this is not the whole truth, and there are exceptions: Mrs. Weasley herself has broken rules during her time at Hogwarts, while Professor Snape and the caretaker Filch are obsessive about rule-breaking and enjoy punishing those that are caught. However, one might ask why a female writer has given most of her women characters passive roles and put the men in charge of the action. One reason might be that the implied narrator (if not Rowling herself) believes in the traditional role models, since they provide a certain sense of order and security in people's lives, which is, however, a very limited point of view.

All in all, the roles in the novel resemble more of those in the past that those that exist in modern British society. This concerns mainly the adults, while the situation with the child characters is not that simple. Considering the gender roles, Dixon's claim about children's fiction often describing a situation that has already passed seems to have certain sense to it. The wizard society is quite different from the contemporary British society when it comes to gender roles. The problems in families, such as divorces, are not reality in the wizard world. It can be considered though, whether the wizard society could be seen as a reflection of contemporary people's *ideal* values. This could indeed be the case, if we are to believe McDowall's (1999:97) claim that many young people in Britain at the end of 1990s aspire to the traditional values in regard to gender roles and family. In any case, this issue is an important one in Britain. According to Oakland (2001:223), a central question in Britain today is whether schoolchildren should be taught these realities [divorces, different types of families compared to the nuclear family] or whether marriage and traditional values should be emphasised and reinforced. Certainly, Rowling's book is an example of emphasising the latter, but whether that is a good or a

bad thing is not a concern of this study. In any case, the books provide a whole range of different male roles, while the female ones are only a few, which can be seen as a shortage in children's fiction meant for both boys and girls.

6.1 Boys and girls

In this section we will firstly look at the way the boys and girls are depicted in the novels in general by discussing the minor characters. Secondly, we will examine the three main characters, Harry, Ron and Hermione in greater detail.

Elizabeth Heilman, an American educationalist, has claimed that Rowling's books give off the wrong signals to children by teaching that boys are better than girls (Smith 2001:183). She has said that Harry always has to rescue Hermione from dangerous situations, making her out to be helpless. This part of her claim is not true at all, which will be shown below. Heilman goes on to claim that the books show girls to be giggly, emotional, gossipy and anti-intellectual, whereas boys are made out to be wiser, braver, and more intelligent and fun.

Before examining the novels, Heilman's comment as such can be considered. Her argument is based on the assumption that giggling, emotionality and gossiping are negative features (what she means by anti-intellectual, is uncertain, since anti-intellectual does not necessarily mean 'stupid'). Thus, Heilman sees these features that are often considered girlish as negative characteristics, while actually there is not necessarily anything negative about giggling, being emotional, and gossiping (if meant in a harmless sense). Heilman criticises girls in Rowling's novels for being girlish, and probably expects that girls should be more like boys to be acceptable. When it comes to the attributes she gives the boy characters in the stories – wisdom, bravery, intelligence and humour – we will see that these characteristics (which are not 'boyish' in the same sense as the above features can be seen as 'girlish') are not restricted to boys in Rowling's books. If Heilman believes that acting 'girlishly' is a negative thing, her claim about the books might be correct to certain extent. Similarly, one could argue that boys are acting stupid and childish in the books by making bad jokes, acting unreasonably (e.g.

breaking rules), and being interested in games in situations that would rather enquire severity. If, however, one does not assume that ‘girlishness’ (nor ‘being boyish’) is a negative thing as such, we may reject Heilman’s claim of the books regarding boys as better. On the contrary, the novels present a variety of different boy and girl characters that are lively and recognisable.

Heilman’s claim might have been partly caused by the fact that, similarly to adult characters, there are far more boys than girls as characters. It is difficult to decide why this is the case, since Rowling herself is a woman. When it comes to the protagonist, Harry, being a boy, Rowling has said that she has not consciously made that choice, since the main character in her books ‘appeared’ to her as a boy, and if it had appeared to her as a girl, she would have been happy with that (Rowling in Radio CBC 2000). The fact that the protagonist is a boy might partly explain the fact that there are more boy characters. The events are told from Harry’s perspective and at the age of eleven it would be perhaps rather odd if Harry would notice all the girls around him (this will not explain though, why Harry’s best friend has five brothers and only one sister). Rowling herself explains that ‘Harry is becoming more girl-fixated, shall we say, as he gets older. He's 14 now, and you will find that girls become a lot more real to him.’ (Rowling in Radio CBC 2000.) Whatever happens to Harry, remains to be seen, but there are reasons to assume that all the characters become more fascinating when they grow up.

There is a huge variety of minor boy characters in the novels. Most of them are rather flat, and actually only Harry and Ron appear as fully-rounded characters. The types are familiar from other children’s fiction: beside Harry the hero and his loyal friend Ron, there are the utterly mean boys (Malfoy with his stupid companions, Grabbe and Goyle), the funny rebels (Fred and George Weasley), a bossy and ambitious prefect (Percy Weasley), and helpless, almost pitiful failures (Neville Longbottom, Colin Creevey). Whereas boy characters apply to this sort of stereotypes (or archetypes), girls are depicted more as a group, which indeed consists of young ladies who giggle, whisper and act emotionally in many cases. Apart from Hermione, there are a couple of characters that separate from that group, for instance, the mean and ugly Pansy Parkinson, who is from Malfoy’s house, Slytherin; and Ginny Weasley, Ron’s sister, who is very shy but bravely survives Voldemort’s enchantment in the

book two (see COS:243). In school classes both boys and girls participate and comment during the lessons, but when it comes to the favourite sport, Quidditch, boys are the ones who are in charge. Even though there are girls in the teams (three in Gryffindor, one in Ravenclaw, none in Slytherin, while the novels do not depict the Hufflepuff team apart from its captain), most of the players are boys, as are all the captains. The readers do not learn much about girls' free time activities, which might again be explained by the fact that stories are told through Harry.

Harry himself is to certain respect a typical boy, as is Ron, his best friend. Both of them are fascinated by sports and sporting devices (brooms in the wizard world), tend to break rules, are not too keen on studying and not very considerate as regard to social relationships. Both of them often act first and think afterwards, especially Ron, who is very eager to take on action even though in most cases he does not have any plan at all. Both of them are suffering from a lack of self-esteem; Harry because he does not really know where he comes from, and Ron because his elder brothers have brought honour to the family. They also feel very insecure about the girls. Both of them are absolutely horrified about the idea of inviting a girl to the great ball that is arranged at Hogwarts in their fourth year. Harry's confused feelings are described in the following extract, but without doubt Ron feels quite the same.

> This year, however, everyone in the fourth year and above seemed to be staying, and they all seemed to Harry to be obsessed with the coming ball – or, at least, all the girls were, and it was amazing how many girls suddenly seemed to hold; he had never quite noticed that before. Girls giggling and whispering in the corridors, girls shrieking with laughter as boys passed them, girls excitedly comparing notes on what they were going to wear on Christmas night…
> 'Why do they have to move in packs?' Harry asked Ron, as a dozen or so girls walked past them, sniggering and staring at Harry. 'How're you supposed to get one on their own to ask them?' (GOF:338-339.)

A bit later, Harry thinks that 'giggling should be made illegal' (GOF:345), since he feels that girls are giggling at him all the time. Girls' giggling makes boys nervous, since the latter feel that girls are more in control of the situation, since they are judging the boys and have the chance to refuse to be a boy's dance partner. Harry and Ron are feeling insecure, because the girls are always packed together, and the boys are afraid to ask them while all the other girls are around. Finally, they manage to get partners for the dance but end up treating

the girls quite badly by refusing to dance with them and ignoring them totally. All in all, Harry and Ron appear to be much more insecure, less considerate, and immature as compared to the girls at their age.

Furthermore, neither Harry nor Ron are too keen to study and they do worse at school than Hermione. Whether the other girls do better than them, does not come up in the novels, in any case in real-life Britain girls are doing better at school than boys (McDowall 1999:97). Hermione could be seen as a reflection of girls' success at school. Actually, she is a real swot, who does all the work she can and tries to do even more. At a point where others have not had the slightest thought on the becoming exams, she is revising all her free time.

> Hermione, however, had more on her mind than the Philosopher's Stone. She had started drawing up revision timetables and colour-coding all her notes. Harry and Ron wouldn't have minded, but she kept nagging them to do the same.
> 'Hermione, the exams are ages away.'
> 'Ten weeks,' Hermione snapped. 'That's not ages, that's like a second to Nicolas Flamel.' [a six-hundred-year-old wizard]
> 'But we're not six hundred years old,' Ron reminded her. 'Anyway, what are you revising for, you already know it all.'
> 'What am I revising for? Are you mad? You realise we have to pass these exams to get into the second year? They're very important, I should have started studying a month ago, I don't know what's got into me…' (PS:167.)

In her third year, Hermione is allowed to have a magic device, a time-turner, which gives her the possibility to be at several places at the same time (POA:289). Thus, she can attend three lessons at time and has more subjects in her timetable than anyone else. She is a sort of prototype of a 'bossy know-it-all' (see PS:121) type of girl, who does, and wants to do well at school. At times she drives Ron and Harry mad, but most of the time she is their dear friend, who takes part in their adventures.

Hermione is not at all a heroine in danger (as Heilman sees her), but as brave as the two boys. Her cleverness and plans save herself, Harry and Ron from many dangerous situations. She is always a few steps ahead in solving the mysteries and mostly the one who makes up the plans for action. Hermione tends to remind the boys about the school rules on every occasion, although the is prepared to break them if her plans require that. She also offends the teachers if she feels she is right. On her third year, for instance, she walks out from a Divination lesson and quits studying the whole subject since she thinks it is rubbish (POA:220). Hermione is not really funny, but she is very brave and

clever. Though she has some prototypical features, she is not a one-sided figure. At times she is acting in a very cold and rational way, which is could be seen as a manly feature, while, on the other hand, she is just a little girl that cries secretly in the girls' toilets, after Ron has insulted her.

> 'It's no wonder no one can stand her,' he [Ron] said to Harry as they pushed their way into the crowded corridor. 'She's a nightmare, honestly.'
> Someone knocked into Harry as they hurried past him. It was Hermione. Harry caught a glimpse of her face – and was startled to see that she was in tears.
> 'I think she heard you.'
> 'So?' said Ron, but he looked a bit uncomfortable. 'She must've noticed she's got no friends.'
> Hermione didn't turn up for the next class and wasn't seen all afternoon. On their way down to the Great Hall for the Hallowe'en feast, Harry and Ron overheard Parvati Patil telling her friend Lavender that Hermione was crying in the girls' toilets and wanted to be left alone. (PS:127.)

A bit later Hermione is attacked in the toilets by a huge mountain troll, but Harry and Ron manage to save her. When the teachers arrive at the scene, Hermione lies about the incident to save Harry and Ron from detention. After that the three of them become good friends, since the boys realise that Hermione is not too strict about the rules if there is a good reason to break them.

Rowling (in Weir 1999) tells that Hermione has been very easy to create because she is based almost entirely on herself at the age of 11. Rowling describes Hermione as a caricature of herself: 'I wasn't as clever as she is, nor do I think I was quite such a know-it-all, though former classmates might disagree. Like Hermione, I was obsessed with achieving academically, but this masked a huge insecurity. I think it is very common for plain young girls to feel this way.' The picture that the readers get from the book, is actually quite like the one Rowling describes. Girls that strive for success at school are in many cases very insecure, and Hermione is a fictional reflection of such girls. Hermione appears as a very serious-minded character in the first novel, but is relaxing with time, and becomes 'more of a rule breaker', as Rowling (in BBC 2001/B) describes. In her fourth year she is even able to laugh at a nonsense rumours written about her in the wizard magazine, and at that point appears more self-confident than Harry, who is quite upset about the rumours (GOF:445).

Hermione is probably the most fully-rounded character in the books and thus balances the lack of other major girl characters. She is both clever and emotional, and does not hesitate to participate in the action; she is, in any case, the one that makes the plans according to which also Harry and Ron act. It remains to be seen whether she is going to have an even greater role in the following novels, since she has become a more important character in the last two novels.

To summarise, boys in Rowling's novels are more involved in the action, while girls (excluding Hermione) are left in the background. Even so, girls seem to be more confident about themselves, at least if we compare Hermione to Harry and Ron. Although the child characters in Rowling's books are not that clearly representing the British society (since they could appear also elsewhere), they are representatives of a society where boys and girls have (almost) equal chances, although boys are given more attention than the girls. The latter is true in contemporary British classrooms, at least (see McDowall 1999:97). However, the same problem that concerned the adult characters – the lack of female roles compared to the several male ones – exists in regard to the child characters, and thus the books are unbalanced in a sense.

Certain unbalance can be also noted in the depiction of different ethnicities in the novels, which is the concern of the following chapter.

7. ETHNICITY

7.1 Ethnic minorities in the British wizard society

As Parris (in Oakland 2001:82) reminds us, Britain has always been a place of several ethnicities. In addition to the four biggest and oldest ethnic groups inside Britain, the English, Irish, Scots and Welsh, after the Second World War a growing number of immigrants has arrived from different parts of the world, including Chinese, West Indians, Indians, Bengalis, Greeks, Nigerians and Albanians. At the moment the immigrants form 6% of the population in Britain (McDowall 1999:90), while their numbers are greater in London (20%) and

West Midlands (15%) (Parris in Oakland 2001:82). The three biggest ethnic minorities are Indians, Caribbeans and Pakistans. Ethnic minorities have their own subcultures though many people have become part of the main (white) British culture. (McDowall 1999:108.)

Bevan and Rufford (in Oakland 2001:230) claim that most ethnic minorities now are getting very well educated. Even young black men are much more likely to stay on in education after the age of 16 than their white peers. Taken as a whole, ethnic minorities are now twice as likely to go to university as whites. According to McDowall (1999:47), ethnic minorities are, however, few in numbers in the public schools, since few people from these groups belong to the upper class or even to the upper middle class. Moreover, these minorities do not have many representatives in the Parliament nor working in the Civil Service (McDowall 1999:47), although the situation in London is different; there more than 20% of civil servants come from the ethnic minorities (Bevan and Rufford in Oakland 2001:230). Bevan and Rufford (in Oakland 2001:230) also lay out numbers according to which blacks and Asians are also well represented in medicine, law and media, for instance. It seems that ethnic minorities have been absorbed into British society quite well and they are, in most cases, guaranteed equal chances with the white Britons.

However, Bevan and Rufford (in Oakland 2001:230) remind us also of institutions that still are racist, such as the armed services, which employ 1% from ethnic minorities. This seems to be possible even though there are laws against racism: the Race Relations Act of 1976 makes discrimination on grounds of colour, race or ethnic or national origin unlawful, and it also established the Commission for Racial Equality, which replaced the Community Relations Commission that had been set up by the Race Relations Act 1968. (Irwin 1994:127.)

Despite the legal situation, racism still exists to a certain level. Irwin (1994:127) writes that there are some areas where there has been friction between the ethnic minorities and their white neighbours, and the situation has not been helped by the fact that a number of right-wing politicians have made speeches suggesting that repatriation schemes should be introduced. Racism is also a central theme in Rowling’s books and it will be discussed in the separate section below.

In Rowling's novels, the 'real-life' ethnic minorities are almost absent, but not totally. Actually, Rowling introduces a few minor characters that represent, interestingly enough, the major ethnic minorities in Britain. Lee Jordan, whose name already suggests that he is black, is identified as "a boy with dreadlocks" (PS:71), which probably makes most of the readers think of him as a black person. There is no mention about his skin colour, therefore it might be that he is not black at all (the young Finnish readers, for instance, might easily think of him as a white boy, since Lee Jordan's name hardly brings any connotations to their minds). He has a small role in the novel, as the owner of a giant spider (PS:71) and as the commentator of a Quidditch game (PS:137). It might be that these small issues have something to do with his ethnic background (exotic spider – exotic race; blacks' oral culture). According to McDowall (1999:99), in the real British boarding schools blacks are absent, since they are expected to remain at the bottom of the educational and economic scale in the British society.

Another two other characters from an ethnic minority group are Patil twins (Indian or Pakistani name), whose names appear when the pupils are sorted into the houses (PS:90). Their role is, more or less, to be part of the milieu in the first three books. In the fourth book, Parvati and Padma Patil spend a while in the spotlight when they end up being Harry's and Ron's dance partners. The girls dress up in colourful robes and wear golden bracelets, which marks their exotic quality (GOF:358). However, unlike Lee Jordan, they could also appear in a real British boarding school. According to McDowall (1999:99), especially Indian parents make great sacrifices for their children to be educated privately and to have the possibility to rise to leading positions in the British economy. Coincidence or not, the most frequent name on the register of Dulwich college, South-east London's most prestigious private school is an Indian one, Patel (McDowall 1999:99).

Finally, another representative of ethnic minorities is the Ravenclaw seeker, Cho Chang, who is first mentioned in the book three, but becomes more important in the fourth book, since Harry is attracted to her. However, Cho does not feel the same and is left in the background as a minor character. Her ethnic background (probably Chinese) does not show in her appearance or behaviour in any way. That again could be seen as a mark of Chinese modesty,

but accepting that assumption would probably lead to overinterpretation. The certain thing is that all of the characters from ethnic minorities play minor roles in the novels.

It might be that Rowling has included these characters only to add a few details to make the group of children seem perhaps more “real” or authentic. On the other hand, she might have introduced them as an act of solidarity or as “token ethnics”. Whatever her purpose has been, Rowling presents these ethnicities in a very stereotypical way, which she also does in the case of other nationalities. Nevertheless, the group of children in her book reflects to some respect the real situation into British society (excluding the wizard children). There is no clash between these ethnic groups and the white Britons, which could be the author’s way to show that these ethnicities can live together without any problems (at least if the minorities remain almost invisible!). Although well (some perhaps not that well) adapted in the British society, these groups remain minorities that are much less visible than the mainstream white culture, and they are also close to invisible in Rowling’s novels.

As mentioned in the introduction, the English, the Scots, the Welsh, and the Irish form the four ‘old’ ethnicities in the British Isles. It would be interesting to look at their differences too, but in the books it is impossible (at least for me as a Finn) to decide to which of these four groups the children belong. Since no one ever tells where they come from, nor speaks any dialect, the names are probably the only hints to divide children in different ethnicities. The only exception is Harry’s classmate Seamus Finnigan, whom the readers learn to be Irish during the Quidditch World Cup in book four (his name probably serves also as a hint). During the Cup it comes up that there are separate teams for England, Scotland, Wales, and obviously, Ireland (while there is not any mention of Northern Ireland). Wizards are indeed loyal to their own ‘ethnic’ teams; Charlie Weasley is disappointed because England is not in the finals, while the Finnigan family support their own team, Ireland, in the finals (GOF:59, 76). Actually, every British wizard supports the Irish team in the final game, since England, Scotland and Wales are dropped out. In any case, although there are problems and claimed differences between these ethnic groups in real life, those do not show in the novels, where all these groups are happily mingled at Hogwarts, at least.

7.2 Other nationalities, races and species

Other nationalities emerge in the fourth book, firstly at the Quidditch World Cup, which takes place in England and is organised by the Ministry of Magic. Secondly, two groups of pupils from abroad come to spend most of the school year at Hogwarts to attend the Triwizard Tournament, which is organised in every three years by one wizard school as a friendly contest between the three largest European wizard schools (GOF:165). In addition, there are other races, or species, depending on how humanlike one sees these creatures, which include most notably the house-elves and giants. Whether the difference is between nationality or race/species, there remains the division between 'us' (British wizards) and 'them' (all the others) throughout the events in the books.

Wizards from all over the world come to see the finals in the Quidditch World Cup. The largest groups are the Irish and the Bulgarians, since their teams play in the final game. As already noted, all the British wizards support the Irish, which in this case become the 'us'. Surprisingly or not, in the actual game Irish play a fair, fine Quidditch, while Bulgarians commit fouls and even their team mascots are driven from the Quidditch pitch, since they are disturbing the game (GOF:100). The only Bulgarian that gets any sympathy is Viktor Krum, who is amazingly good player and known for that quality all over the Quidditch world. Ireland wins the game and the joy is enormous on the British side. From an outsider's point of view it seems rather strange that the other team has been made absolutely unsympathetic and suspicious, which is an extremely stereotypical view. However, that appears to be the way wizards see other nationalities. That is not a surprise, though, if one considers the fact that during the Cup Harry finds out first time that there actually are wizards and wizard schools outside Britain (GOF:78). Nevertheless, here also Rowling is heavily stereotyping other nationalities, which might be seen as a serious fault in children's books that should encourage tolerance.

During the Triwizard Tournament, the first group that arrives at Hogwarts comes from the Beauxbatons school. As can be assumed on the basis of the name of their school, they come from France or another European French speaking country, which shows in their accent, and moreover, in their use of French on few occasions. All the names are also French, as is the case with the

headmistress Madame Maxime and their champion (their representative in the Tournament) Fleur Delacour. Their group shares rather stereotypical 'French' features: they are proud, beautiful, full of temper and complain of everything at 'Ogwarts', especially the food and the decor.

> Meanwhile Fleur Delacour was criticising Hogwarts decorations to Roger Davies.
> 'Zis is nothing,' she said dismissively, looking around at the sparkling walls of the Great Hall. 'At ze Palace of Beauxbatons, we 'ave ice sculptures all around ze Dining Chamber at Chreetsmas. Zey do not melt, of course… zey are like 'uge statues of diamond, glittering around ze place. And ze food is seemply superb. … We 'ave none of zis ugly armour in ze 'alls, and eef a poltergeist ever entaired into Beauxbatons, 'e would be expelled like *zat*.' She slapped her hand onto the table impatiently. (GOF:363-364.)

Although it is Fleur who is complaining in these examples, the whole group of Beauxbatons students have a 'glum expression on their faces' when they first arrive at Hogwarts (GOF:215-216). Furthermore, since Fleur is the only Beauxbatons student that becomes a minor character in the story, she becomes a representative of her nationality and her characteristics are easily connected with all the other French students, which again leads to stereotyping.

In any case, the French group is obviously closer to the British wizards than the other group of foreign students. While at the welcoming banquet there is also a French dish (bouillabaisse) alongside with the British ones (GOF:220), there is nothing especially for the Durmstrang students, which form the second foreign group. Although on the basis of the school's name it could be assumed that they are from a German-speaking country (Durmstrang is a modification of 'Sturm und Drang'), the situation is more problematic than with Beauxbatons. None of the Durmstrang representatives has German names, instead, the persons' names, such as Karkaroff and Poliakoff, point towards Slavish countries in Eastern Europe. One of them is Bulgarian, namely Viktor Krum, who became familiar already at the Quidditch Cup, but other students' nationalities are not mentioned.

Durmstrang students are presented as silent, rough, good at sports and used to difficult conditions. Whereas the French complained about Hogwarts, Durmstrang students come from much poorer conditions, as Viktor Krum describes.

> ‘Vell, ve have a castle also, not as big as this, nor as comfortable, I am thinking,’ he was telling Hermione. ‘Ve have just four floors, and the fires are lit only for magical purposes. But ve have grounds larger even than these – though in the vinter, ve have little daylight, so ve are not enjoying them. But in summer ve are flying every day, over the lakes and the mountains – ‘ (GOF:363.)

Hermione suspects that Durmstrang is located somewhere in the far north, somewhere very cold, since they have got fur capes as part of their uniforms (GOF:148). It is difficult to say where exactly Durmstrang is, and the students’ nationalities remain obscure. It seems that other nationalities beyond France appear to the British wizards as a blurred mixture, it is not important whether they are Bulgarian, German, Russian or something else. In any case, the Durmstrang students are presented as grim and suspicious people, since their headmaster Karkaroff is a former death eater (Voldemort’s supporter) (GOF:291).

Hogwarts students do not really socialise with the foreign students who keep to their own company. Both groups are seen as the ‘others’ who are not as fair, decent, and honest as the British wizards are. Alastair Moody, the Defence of the Dark Arts teacher at Hogwarts in Harry’s fourth year, tells Harry that Dumbledore will not cheat and can be as high minded as he likes, but Karkaroff and Madame Maxime will not act similarly (GOF:301). Indeed, Karkaroff and Maxime try to help their champions in every way. Karkaroff even proves out to be truly unfair as a judge of the Tournament by giving Harry (who is Hogwarts’ champion) low points for an excellently managed task (GOF:315). Hagrid, Harry’s loyal friend sums up all the prejudices when he gives Harry some advice: ‘The less you lot ‘ave ter do with these foreigners, the happier yeh’ll be. Yeh can’ trust any of ‘em.’ (GOF:489.)

Fortunately, the picture is not totally black and white. Fleur Delacour changes her attitude and starts to treat Harry nicely after he has saved Fleur’s little sister in another task in the Tournament. At the end of the school year she is even planning to come back and get a job in Britain to improve her English (GOF:628). Viktor Krum also has his soft side, because he is attracted to Hermione and two of them become friends. Thus, these two representatives of their nationalities manage to polish up their reputation in the end.

All in all, the other nationalities are represented in rather stereotypical ways as compared to the ‘normal’ British people. Whether or not Britons in real life

see others in that sort of light, cannot obviously be decided, in any case the British wizards in the books appear as somewhat narrow-minded in this respect. Furthermore, the other nationalities seem to be more interested in foreign countries, since they at least have learned a foreign language (English), while the British wizards do not learn any languages at school. One might assume that their curriculum is not exactly up to date, but surprisingly it reflects the situation in contemporary Britain; the British government is actually planning to make it possible for students to drop foreign languages at the age of fourteen in all secondary schools (Curtis 2002). That would surely not increase tolerance nor reduce prejudices, but would certainly make British society more like the narrow-minded wizard society in Rowling's books.

As suggested earlier, the house elves could be seen both as a lower class and as a different race/species working for wizards. If they are seen as a race, their treatment becomes a racial issue. For wizards, house elves are a mere slave race, who claim to enjoy their working conditions and are proud of not accepting money for their services. When Winky, a female house elf is sacked by her master, Mr. Crouch, she is totally devastated. Dobby brings her to Hogwarts, but she does not want to work for money feeling that it would be absolute disgrace. Finally, she ends up drinking several bottles of Butterbeer a day, which is why the other house elves are ashamed of her. As one of them says to Hermione, Harry and Ron: 'We is hoping you will not judge us all by Winky, sirs and miss!' (GOF:467.) The people in the novels who own house elves, Malfoys and Mr. Crouch, have not much consideration for their servants, and other characters, apart from Hermione, who wants to liberate house elves, mostly ignore them. None is really interested in fighting for the rights of elves.

Another race/species are the giants, whom the wizards have actually driven out of the country, since giants are supposedly vicious and brutal (GOF:374). Not all of them are, however, since Hagrid is a half-giant and thus a living example of a human – giant relationship, which has not lead to either of them being killed. Hagrid himself says that his father was broken-hearted when his mother had to go (probably because of the wizard persecution) (GOF:372). Hagrid is a very kind person and the only thing that reflects his giant-blood is his liking for dangerous creatures as pets. Prejudices against giants exist in deep, it is not only the evil Malfoy who spreads them, but also the journalist

Rita Skeeter and the Minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge, have prejudiced attitudes. Dumbledore is not that short-sighted, but after Voldemort's new coming encourages Fudge to send envoys to the giants.

> 'Envoys to the giants?' Fudge shrieked, finding his tongue again. 'What madness is this?'
> 'Extend them the hand of friendship, now, before it is too late,' said Dumbledore, 'or Voldemort will persuade them, as he did before, that he alone among wizards will give them their rights and their freedom!'
> 'You – you cannot be serious!' Fudge gasped, shaking his head, and retreating further from Dumbledore. 'If the magical community got wind that I had approached the giants – people hate them, Dumbledore – end of my career – ' (GOF:614.)

Fudge is too keen to hold his position to drop his prejudices, while Dumbledore speaks for tolerance. Tolerance is necessary, since otherwise, as he points out, Voldemort will take advantage of racial prejudices between two groups and use the hatred for his own ends. It remains to be seen in the book five, in what way the wizard community is going to react. To survive from evil, it must drop all the prejudices and start to co-operate with others.

7.3 Pure-blooded wizards and 'mudbloods'

Wizards have prejudices against other nationalities and races, thus it is not a surprise that they are not in good terms with the Muggles either. Prejudice and tolerance are indeed major teams in the novels, as Rowling herself (in BBC 2001/B) admits. Although there are no serious clashes between the 'real-life' ethnic groups, there are severe problems between the "pure blooded" wizards and mudbloods (referring to children, one of whose parent is Muggle). Rowling claims that pure-blooded wizards, Muggles and mudbloods are separate races, since she has insisted that Harry reflects the modern world because he is mixed race; his father is a pure-born wizard and his mother is a "Muggle-born" witch (Smith 2001:183). Thus, the difficulties between these groups can be regarded as racism, even though without Rowling's own claim about the different races one could see the problems between pure blooded and mudbloods as class conflicts between the old, established wizard families and 'newcomers', children that come to the school outside the wizard society.

However, the fact that ‘blood’ has been made an issue here, implies that these problems can plausibly be regarded as racial ones.

There are children with all sorts of background at Hogwarts (and presumably this is true of also the adults working at the Ministry); some of them are from old wizarding families, ‘pure-blooded’ wizards (as is the case with Malfoys, and also Weasleys), some families are half Muggle (as is the case with Harry), and some come from Muggle families (Hermione). There are also a few near Squibs, such as Neville Longbottom, who was born in a wizard family but without almost any magic, and thus is almost a Muggle. In the first novel the conflict between these groups is almost invisible, appearing only in Draco Malfoy’s comment about opinion of not allowing children from Muggle families in at Hogwarts (PS:61). However, in the second book the racial prejudices break loose and the theme is continued in the fourth novel.

In the second book the heir of Salazar Slytherin (one of the four founders of Hogwarts) spreads terror by attacking Squibs and mudblooded wizards. The discrimination in the wizard society dates back to Salazar Slytherin, who first suggested that the magical learning should be kept within all-magic families (COS:114). All dark wizards, Voldemort among them, have adopted similar views. Voldemort himself is half-blood (his mother was a Muggle) and thus a controversial character. Rowling (in BBC 2001/B) compares him to Hitler (who was supposedly part-Jewish) and explains that she thinks that often ‘the biggest bully takes their own defects and they put them on someone else, and they try to destroy them.’ Voldemort has simply made wrong choices at an early stage of his life, since the ‘blood’ has nothing to do with people’s characters or abilities.

While Voldemort’s away, the dark wizards continue with the discrimination and racist attitudes. The Malfoys are, again, in the front line of putting others down. Lucius Malfoy’s attitude becomes clear from the first moment he appears in the books.

> ‘I would have thought you’d be ashamed that a girl of no wizard family beat you in every exam,’ snapped Mr. Malfoy.
> ‘Ha!’ said Harry under his breath, pleased to see Draco looking both abashed and angry.
> ‘It’s the same all over,’ said Mr. Borgin, in his oily voice. ‘Wizard blood is counting for less everywhere – ‘ (COS:44.)

Lucius Malfoy has come to sell Mr. Borgin illegal items that he has got at home, which is why Mr. Borgin, in the hope of good bargain, agrees with him about the racial issues. They feel that the wizard blood is counting less everywhere since the half-blooded wizards are guaranteed equal rights. Mr. Malfoy is also concerned about the Minisitry of Magic growing even more "meddlesome", because there are rumours about a new Muggle Protection Act, which Lucius's suspects to be "that flea-bitten, Muggle-loving fool's", Arthur Weasley's creation (COS:43). A bit later Mr. Malfoy and Mr. Weasley meet in a shop and it becomes clear that the first sees a wizard in a company of Muggles as a disgrace to the name of wizard, while Mr. Weasley says that he has a very different idea of what disgraces the name of wizard (COS:51). Indeed, Malfoy has been a loyal supporter of Voldemort and is still suspected of practising the dark arts.

The girl Lucius talks about is Hermione, who has done far better at school compared to Draco. Inspired undoubtedly by his father, Draco carries the racist attitudes with him to school. First time he calls Hermione a 'filthy little Mudblood' (COS:86), Harry and Hermione (and the readers) are not aware of how insulting Malfoy's remark has been, but later Ron explains them the whole issue.

> 'It's about the most insulting thing he could think of,' gasped Ron, coming back up. 'Mudblood's a really foul name for someone who was Muggle-born – you know, non-magic parents. There are some wizards – like Malfoy's family – who think they are better than everyone else because they're what people call pure-blood.' … 'I mean, the rest of us know it doesn't make any difference at all. … 'It's a disgusting thing to call someone. … 'Dirty blood, see. Common blood. It's mad. Most wizards these days are half-blood anyway. If we hadn't married Muggles we'd've died out.' (COS:89.)

Here it also becomes clear that most of the wizards are not racist, not even the pure-blooded ones, since Ron's family is an example of that group. He also points out that pure-blooded wizards are such a small group that they would not have survived and will not survive in the future if they do not marry Muggles. As Draco Malfoy, Ron has learned his attitude at home, since his father, who works at the Ministry, tries to improve the relationship between wizards and Muggles.

In the second book the heir of Slytherin, who turns out to be Voldemort himself, is banished and the persecution of half-bloods and Muggles is over for

a while. However, in the fourth book Voldemort grows more powerful and the dark wizards feel it safe again to act openly. The hostile activity begins at the Quidditch World Cup.

> A crowd of wizards, tightly packed and moving together with wands pointing straight upwards, was marching slowly across the field. Harry squinted at them… they didn't seem to have faces… then he realised that their heads were hooded and their faces masked. High above them, floating along in mid-air, four struggling figures [a Muggle family] were being contorted into grotesque shapes. It was as though the masked wizards on the ground were puppeteers, and the people above them were marionettes operated by invisible strings that rose from the wands into the air. Two of the figures were very small.
>
> More wizards were joining the marching group, laughing and pointing up at the floating bodies. (GOF:108.)

Here the group of dark wizards with their covered faces resembles somewhat the Ku Klux Klan; both groups hide the identity of their members during persecutions. The dark wizards are using magic to humiliate and torture a Muggle family in which there are two children, which is simply horrible. At this point the Muggles are saved by decent wizards working for the Ministry (such as Mr. Weasley). However, at the end of book four everyone knows that after the rise of Voldemort the hostility towards Muggles will increase and incidents such as described above will be ever harder to prevent.

At this point it might be assumed that the books depict racism as a black and white issue with hostile 'baddies' on one side and tolerant 'goodies' on the other. However, the situation is more complex. As already seen in the case of foreigners, even 'good' wizards, such as Hagrid, can be very prejudiced. Similarly, there are wizards who are supposedly working against dark arts and Voldemort but still hold racist ideas. An example is the Minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge, who is not a dark wizard but, as Dumbledore marks, places too much importance on the so-called purity of blood and fails to recognise that it does not matter what someone is born but what they grow to be (GOF:614-615). Thus, racism does not only appear in school children's insults, but people at top positions are equally likely to either allow racism or even spread it. Fortunately, there exists a large group of wiser wizards, such as the headmaster Dumbledore, who fight for tolerance and harmony between different groups.

Similar problems are part of the real British society. Oakland (2001:226) writes that it had been generally assumed in the beginning of 1990s that

Britain's multicultural society had seen a substantial decrease in racism and racial disturbances. But the murder of black student Stephen Lawrence in 1993, allegedly by white racists, was followed by the criminal court acquittal on those accused, a private civil prosecution, and considerable media comment. The Macpherson inquiry (1998-99) into the matter provoked a significant debate about the state of race relations in Britain. The Macpherson report recommended sweeping changes. (Oakland 2001:226.) In order to promote an understanding of diversity at a young age, the report said that schools can stress education and give an example an attitude of zero tolerance towards racism by incorporating those aims in the national curriculum, and maintaining records of racist incidents in schools (Oakland 2001:233). However, the report also faced severe criticism, according to which such recommendations would be detrimental to that work which s already being done in schools to encourage inclusiveness and toleration in the class room. In this view, the emphasis should be on respect for individuals, rather than categories, which means that children should be taught more constructively to think beyond all stereotypes. (Oakland 2001:233.)

Thus, the issue of racial prejudice and tolerance is a one that has been under serious discussion during the 1990s in Britain. Against that background it is not surprising that Rowling has also chosen those issues as central themes in her novels. Although she does not write about the real ethnic minorities' problems in 'real' British society and thus her books are not mimetic in a strict sense, she writes about the real existing problems converted to the form of fantasy, which again can be seen as a form of mimesis. Another question is why she has included so few ethnicities in her novels, while the real-life situation in boarding schools is quite different. It seems that in this respect Rowling is imitating British schools from her own school years; in the past the ethnic minorities have been extremely rare in boarding schools (or public schools).

Finally, although Rowling claims to speak for tolerance, her books involve severely stereotypical attitudes. There are very important characters, who try to encourage tolerance, such as the headmaster Dumbledore, but the gap between 'us' and 'them' remains, and is actually widened by the narrator's view of other ethnicities and nationalities. Negative comments made by major characters – such as Hagrid's opinion of foreigners above – make the situation

even worse, since the narrator or the implied author do not criticise the character's stereotypical views at any point. Similarly, the question about the rights of elves is left without solution, for in the end their situation is accepted as the way it is and even Hermione gives up fighting for equality. Strangely enough, although Rowling presents the problems with stereotyping and racism, there are not many solutions and the overall atmosphere appears to be indifferent (or even despising), especially towards the elves and other nationalities, while the difficulties between pure-blooded wizards and mudbloods are given more attention. Although the wizards are planning legislation against racism (the Muggle Protection Act suggested by Mr. Weasley), it shows clearly in the books that no laws can change people's attitudes, at least not very quickly. This also probably reflects the real-life situation in Britain; there have been laws against racial discrimination since the 1960s, but some of the racist attitudes still remain.

8. CONTROL AND POWER

8.1 The Ministry of Magic

Britain's relative decline and alleged lack of 'modernisation' have often been attributed to 'the Establishment', which is a vague and variously defined concept. It is often taken to be a ruling élite (or series of élites) in British society whose interlocking membership has traditionally centred on institutions such as the monarchy, the Church of England, the legal system, Parliament, the Civil Service (Whitehall), the older professions, the ancient universities and independent (private) schools. (Oakland 2001:10.)

In the early 1990s the economic recession brought criticism on the Establishment and some critics, such as Martin Jacques (in Oakland 2001:12), assumed that the modernistic trends that had appeared in British culture would continue to expand and that institutions must respond to such movements. By modernistic trends Jacques refers to a more diverse, pluralistic, fragmented and individualised society with more independent, self-possessed and inquiring

people that are less tied to class structures, political party or gender. Oakland (2001:12) points out that at the same time as these developments were arguably taking place (especially in the business life), yet it was felt, and continues to be strongly felt in some quarters that there was still a desire by many Britons and their institutions to live in the past. Some British people also want to see Britain nostalgically in terms of traditional images rather than coming to grips with the present. In any case, it seems clear that whatever attempts there are to modernise the old institutions, such as the public school, for instance, they are still an essential part of British society. The Establishment or the ruling élite still exists, otherwise there would not be the discussion about them.

Furthermore, the state's role has strengthened, especially in business life, despite the claimed rise of individualism. Obelkevich & Catterall (in Oakland 2001:25) explain that during the period from the post-war period to today the state's field of operations has expanded enormously, and now extends beyond its traditional role. Compared with its fairly restricted range of activities earlier in the century, the state now gives the impression of intervening in just about every corner of British life. The state is ultimately responsible for the legal framework within which British society is supposed to operate, but, as Obelkevich and Catterall continue, that framework is itself a reflection of past social attitudes. The state may appear to have policies for everything, but that does not mean that those policies are always successful, or that they are the only factor in the situation. However, Oakland (2001: 3) writes that the British public still depends upon and expects state spending on what it considers to be essential social or public services, in spite of recent emphases by both Conservative and Labour governments upon more personal responsibility and taking control on one's own life.

The wizard society reflects the centralised power and beliefs in control from above. Although wizards are outcasts in the Muggle world, 'unashamed misfits' as Rowling (in Weir 1999) puts it, in their own society they are actually highly organised and controlled. The two important institutions of social control are the school and the Ministry of Magic in London, which together resemble 'the Establishment', since the people in top jobs indeed form a 'ruling élite' of the wizard society. Since Hogwarts was already discussed in the section above, only the Ministry of Magic is examined here.

Hagrid explains in the first book that the main task of the Ministry is to keep it from Muggles that there still are wizards and witches around the country (PS:51). Actually, the Ministry's tasks are not restricted to that. It supervises and controls quite everything that goes on in the wizard world. The magic powers give wizards the chance to supervise others without any technical devices; thus they can, for example, ensure that the underaged wizards do not use any magic during their holidays. This supervision is limited, though, since wizards also have the means to avoid it by other magic tricks.

The Ministry of Magic is divided in several departments and offices, which all concentrate on different areas. Six departments are mentioned in the books, such as the Department of Magical Transportation, the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures, and the Department of Magical Co-operation, to name a few. In addition, the readers find out about three offices (the Misuse of Muggle Artefacts Office, the Goblin Liaison Office, the Improper Use of Magic Office), two Committees (the Committee of Experimental Charms, the Committee for the Disposal of Dangerous Creatures), and two Squads (the Accidental Magic Reversal Squad the Magical Law Enforcement Squad). As the names indicate, the Ministry's responsibilities cover everything from guaranteeing security in the wizard world to ensuring that the Muggles remain ignorant. The Ministry creates the laws, decrees, and conventions and controls the use of magic in several ways. For instance, the Ministry keeps registers on Animagi (the wizards who can transform into animals) (POA:257), gives licences for Apparition (to disappear from one place and re-appear almost instantly in another) (GOF:63), and regulates the use of Floo powder (the Floo Regulation Panel) and defines what are objects are regarded as Muggle Artefacts (the Registry of Proscribed Charmable Objects) (GOF:85). The officers at the Ministry make the proposals for laws (POA:312) and a certain amount of bureaucracy is unavoidable, which is demonstrated humorously in Percy Weasley's report which deals with standardising the cauldron thickness:

> 'What are you working on?' said Harry.
> 'A report for the Department of International Magical Co-operation,' said Percy smugly. 'We're trying to standardise cauldron thickness. Some of these foreign imports are just a shade too thin – leakages have been increasing at a rate of almost three per cent a year –'

> ‘That’ll change the world, that report will,’ said Ron. (GOF:53.)

The Ministry also supervises the wizard school. As mentioned earlier, Löfgren (1993:27) describes the school in boarding school stories as an independent unit that forms a world of its own. This is not the case, however, with Hogwarts. The wizard school is not an independent unit, since there is a sort of school board consisting of school governors that can in a crisis situation fire the headmaster, which indeed happens in the second Potter novel (COS:194). The school governors contact the Ministry if they are concerned about school matters. Also the Minister of Magic keeps an eye on the school and has the right to interfere in its maintenance if necessary. In the second book Minister Fudge appears at school after there has been four attacks on Muggle-borns and the school governors have demanded that the Ministry acts (COS:193). In the third book the Minister orders Dementors, guards from the prison of Azkaban, to patrol the school grounds, since a dangerous prisoner Sirius Black has managed to escape and is likely to attack Harry (POA:54; 72). In addition to the security matters the Ministry has some sort of recommendations about the school curriculum, since the Ministry has defined the curses that ought to be taught at school (GOF:187).

There are also problems in centralising the power and control in one institution and giving the Minister of Magic vast rights to act. Since everything is controlled by the Ministry, it also attracts those who want to change things for the worse. During the time Voldemort had power, there were spies working for him inside the Ministry (GOF:512). Furthermore, people such as Lucius Malfoy use the people holding the posts to achieve their own ends in a legal way. For instance, the school governors (Lucius Malfoy is one of them) decide to suspend Dumbledore, because Malfoy has threatened them to do that. Malfoy’s plots are revealed when Dumbledore is asked to return to Hogwarts.

> ‘So!’ said Lucius Malfoy, his cold eyes fixed on Dumbledore. ‘You’ve come back. The governors suspended you, but you still saw it fit to return to Hogwarts.’
> ‘Well, you see, Lucius,’ said Dumbledore, smiling serenely, ‘the other eleven governors contacted me today. It was something like being caught in a hailstorm of owls, to tell the truth. They’d heard that Arthur Weasley’s daughter had been killed and wanted be back here at once. Very strange tales they told me, too. Several of them seemed to think that you had threatened to curse their families if they didn’t agree to suspend me in the first place.’ (COS:246.)

Dumbledore is fortunately considered to be the best possible man for the headmaster's job and he has more influence in the wizard world than Malfoy ever could have. Dumbledore is above Malfoy and thus he does not have to directly accuse him. In another instance Lucius Malfoy is more successful as he manages to convince the Committee for the Disposal of Dangerous Creatures of a threat that Hagrid's pet Hippogriff causes to the students and the poor animal is executed (POA:293).

The Minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge is also somewhat of a problem. As already seen, he is prejudiced against Muggles, half-bloods and other races. In a serious situation he, however, co-operates with Muggles, as in the case when Sirius Black is at loose end and has to be looked for in both the wizard and the Muggle world (POA:33). Normally the Ministry of Magic is not really interested in Muggle affairs, as Dumbledore remarks in the book four (GOF:522). Minister Fudge is not really aware what is going on even in the wizard world (because he believes the suspicious journalist's, Rita Skeeter's, sensational stories which are absolute rubbish). Thus, he is easily abused by people like Malfoy, who has won the Minister on his side by donating money on excellent causes. Furthermore, Fudge is not a very brave person and unwilling to act if his position or personal safety are at stake. (GOF:612-613.) Even though he is not evil, he is not very trustworthy. Therefore, under his lead the Ministry of Magic can be totally counted on and it is exposed to dark wizards attempts to gain power. In the end of book four Cornelius Fudge refuses to accept the fact that Voldemort has returned, and thus those who try to fight the dark wizards cannot count on the Ministry. Though there are laws that guide the Ministry's actions, Fudge is finally the one who decides on the Ministry's policies and therefore resembles a bit the real-life Prime Minister.

8.2 Crime and punishment

Among the critics there are somewhat different views of the crime and security in contemporary Britain. Obelkevich and Catterall (in Oakland 2001:26) blame the government for the steady rise in crime. They write that crime has gone on increasing throughout the post-war period, in periods both of high and of low

employment, despite changes in policing, sentencing, and the party in office; whereas some critics claim quite the contrary. Oakland (2001:219) states that there are statistics that show that the reality of individuals actually being affected is remote. Even though that is the case, the fear of becoming a crime victim is a concern for many Britons. Commentators argue that the Labour government's policy of being 'tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime' has not worked, that there need to be many more police on the streets, and that stricter treatment of offenders is needed. (Oakland 2001:219.) One might assume that there are both those who are satisfied with the present system and those who want to change it and claim for stricter treatment. The wizard society reflects the latter view, belief in control and very severe punishments. People in the wizard society still feel very insecure, since it has been only just over ten years from the Voldemort's reign of terror.

As seen above, one of the tasks of the Ministry of Magic is to maintain security in the society. For that there has to be laws and rules and means to ensure that those laws are obeyed. Obviously, there also has to be a legal system that decides on the punishments.

The wizard laws cover every area of wizards' lives. The Ministry has magical means to supervise possible offenders of less important laws, while dangerous and skilful criminals, such as Sirius Black, have their ways to avoid being caught. In minor cases the punishment is decided directly by the responsible Department or Committee of the Ministry, while serious crimes are dealt with in a wizard court. An example of a minor offence is an underage wizard's illegal use of magic during a holiday. The first time Harry breaks the rule, he gets an official warning from the Improper Use of Magic Office.

> We have received intelligence that a Hover Charm was used at your place of residence this evening at twelve minutes past nine.
> As you know, underage wizards are not permitted to perform spells outside school, and further spellwork on you part may lead to expulsion from said school (Decree for the Reasonable Restriction of Underage sorcery, 1875, Paragraph C). (COS:21.)

'Intelligence' is here attained namely by the magic means the Ministry has in spotting offenders. Moreover, the warning is sent to Harry immediately after the offence, which shows that in dealing with minor crimes, the Ministry is very efficient. As can be noticed, the next offence might lead to expulsion from

Hogwarts, therefore the punishments for even minor crimes are quite serious for those, who repeat their offence. The Ministry's warnings are an effective way to control people by spreading dread of punishment. Harry, at least, is terrified; in book three he has for second time used magic illegally and is certain that he will be expelled (POA:29). Another way to keep people aware of the control are the raids that the Ministry can organise into people's homes to look for illegal magic devices (COS:43).

More serious crimes are taken to the court, which is also working under the Ministry. In most cases these involve working for Voldemort, use of the dark arts – evil magic – or injuring or killing other people. The curses most heavily punished by wizarding law, the so called unforgivable curses are Avada Kedavra (the killing curse), Imperius (a curse which gives its user a total control of the victim), and Cruciatus (a curse that causes ultimate torture to the victim). The use of any of them on a fellow human being is enough to earn a life sentence in Azkaban, the wizard prison. (GOF:192.) Execution is not used as punishment, except for other creatures than humans, as in the case in which Hagrid's pet Hippogriff is executed for attacking a student (POA 161-162). However, if a wizard that has got a life sentence in Azkaban manages to escape, the utmost punishment will be used on him/her. The most horrific punishment in the wizard world is the Dementors' Kiss, as Professor Lupin explains Harry in the book three. Dementors, the guards of Azkaban, are dreadful creatures that wear hooded cloaks (thus no one knows what they really look like) and suck all the happiness from around them.

> 'They call it the Dementors' Kiss,' said Lupin, with a slightly twisted smile. 'It's what Dementors do to those they wish to destroy utterly. I suppose there must be some kind of mouth under there, because they clamp their jaws upon the mouth of the victim and – and suck out his soul.'
> Harry accidentally spat out a bit of Butterbeer.
> 'What – they kill – ?'
> 'Oh, no,' said Lupin. 'Much worse than that. You can exist without your soul, you know, as long as your brain and heart are still working. But you'll have no sense of self any more, no memory, no… anything. There's no chance of recovery. You'll just – exist. As an empty shell. And your soul is gone for ever… lost.' (POA:183.)

The victims that have to face this fate will become living dead that have no sense of life nor death. The utmost punishment is that the soul is lost for ever. The punishment is horrible and not in the limits of humanity. It reflects

wizards' fear of Voldemort and his followers, of which the latter constitute the majority of the prisoners in Azkaban. Probably the utmost punishment is seen as the way in which evil people can be prevented from repeating their crimes for ever. Thus, the Dementor's Kiss is comparable to death sentence, which is not accepted as a punishment in real-life Britain. The novels do not approve of the punishment, since there is a possibility that innocent people are condemned to it. Harry nearly suffers such a fate in book three, and his godfather Sirius Black will be given to Dementors if he is caught, although he has not committed the crime of which he is accused.

A life sentence in Azkaban is not much better. The prison of Azkaban – which is supervised by the Ministry of Magic – is a horrific way to maintain control over wizards who have offended the law. Azkaban is a tiny island in the north of the North Sea (Rowling in Scholastic 2000/A). The punishment in the prison is same for everyone, since the prison guards are not human, but scary creatures that suck all the happiness out of the prisoners. Hagrid is put in the prison for a short time in the second book, and he tells Harry, Ron and Hermione about his experiences the following year.

> After a brief pause, Hermione said timidly, 'Is it awful in there, Hagrid?'
> 'Yeh've no idea,' said Hagrid quietly. 'Never bin anywhere like it. Thought I was goin' mad. Kep' goin' over horrible stuff in me mind. … 'Yeh can' really remember who yeh are after a while. An' yeh can' see the point of living at all. I used ter hope I'd jus' die in me sleep. …
> 'But you were innocent!' said Hermione.
> Hagrid snorted.
> 'Think that matters to them [the Dementors]? They don' care. Long as they've got a couple o' hundred humans stuck there with 'em, so they can leech all the happiness out of 'em, they don' give a damn who's guilty an' who's not.' (POA:163-164.)

The Minister of Magic has decided to put Hagrid in prison, since he has been condemned earlier for caressing a lethal monster and is now suspected of the attacks on students at Hogwarts. Hagrid is, indeed, innocent and sentenced although there is an obvious lack of evidence. As Hagrid explains, the Dementors do not differentiate between innocent and guilty and therefore the punishment is the same for all. Apparently, as far as the prison is concerned, the wizards hardly have heard about human rights. Usually the wizards do get trials before they are condemned (see GOF:514), however, the magic does not prevent wizards from making wrong decisions. Moreover, the mischievous

wizards can try to exploit the system, as Lucius Malfoy does in the case of the Hippogriff by using his own influence to ensure that the animal is executed (POA:215).

Apart from the Dementors that guard Azkaban and during a crisis are commanded to patrol also elsewhere (e.g. on Hogwarts grounds and in the nearby village of Hogsmeade while Sirius Black is searched for (POA:54; 148)), the Ministry has its own 'police forces', the Magical Law Enforcement Squad. Trained Hit Wizards of the Squad are called for whenever there is a crisis situation, or a serious offence on people. (POA:155.) Moreover, there is a group of wizards working for the Ministry that is specialised in catching Dark Wizards. They are called the Aurors, or the Dark-wizard-catchers (GOF:144), while they have also been involved in chasing the giants out of the country or killing them (GOF:382). The Trained Hit Wizards and the Aurors together are responsible for searching for and catching the criminals of serious offences.

The strict control and severe punishments reflect the wizards' dread of a new reign of terror. Voldemort's power was based not only on his skilful use of the Dark Arts, but also pure terror, from which not even his supporters are safe (GOF:559). A reaction to Voldemort's attempts to regain power is to try to enforce the security by the use of special forces, and raids, for instance. The wizard society is prepared to deal with all sorts of catastrophes, and the Ministry acts quite fast in a crisis situation. Since there appears a threat to security in each book, the wizards, and the wizard children, must get used to special rules and guards patrolling on the school ground and in the streets.

The controlled wizard society obviously resembles the real Britain in that respect that the society is governed by highly organised institutions and that there are laws about crime and punishment. Real-life Britain hardly is as brutal in its punishments as the wizard society (though there might be people who would disagree). However, according to question polls, British children feel that the discipline in schools is too lax, and adults feel that the society is becoming more and more insecure. The controlled wizard society could be seen as a wizard answer to that urge or an 'ideal' society in that respect. However, it is apparent from the books that such a society is not without problems and total control can lead to horrific things in a situation where more and more innocent people suffer. That is because in the wizard society, at least,

it is fear that is behind the idea of controlling everyone, and fear for its part spreads all sort of prejudices and suspicion among the society. However, one should also remember that the wizard society is preparing for a war against Voldemort, and thus the degree of control is more understandable. Therefore, the strict control reminds us perhaps more of a war society than the contemporary British society (even though one might argue that there are certain similarities with the situation in Northern Ireland). In any case, the structure of the wizard society, in which the power and control are centralised to the Ministry of Magic, is partly mimetic in regard to the real-life British society.

9. CONCLUSION

My hypothesis was that though some writers claim that most children's fiction reflects the past, this is not the case with Rowling's novels. The hypothesis is partly correct and partly not, since there are features both from the past and from the contemporary society.

When it comes to mimesis, Rowling's novels are mimetic in several levels. The society that is reflected through partial mimesis in the novels, is namely contemporary British society with its structures, although in some respects the books remind us of the past. The mimetic strategies that Rowling uses vary from imitating the structures of real-life institutions to presenting speech in 'real' accents at certain points and including minor characters from real-life ethnic minorities in her stories. Moreover, Rowling combines mimesis, fantastic elements, and intertextuality (e.g. genre of boarding school stories, characters from earlier stories and mythologies) in her writing. While she partly imitates British society, she has also invented a lot.

Reynolds (1990:152) is one of the critics who claimed that today's juvenile fiction carries within it images, structures, attitudes and value systems which are at least partially shaped by their earlier counterparts. She argues that one obvious reason for this relationship is that the adult writers of contemporary children's fiction were once child readers of fiction written for them and so are

in some ways responding to what they experienced. Her claim is a dubious one, since it can be asked why the adult writers would not describe the things that they are experiencing and observing at the moment instead of writing about the time of their own childhood. Rowling, for instance, is doing both.

Rowling has not attended public school herself, which might explain why her book depicts partly a *school* society from the past. According to Löfgren (1993:30), most writers – like most people in general – cannot help having a ready-made idea of the typical school story, a horizon of expectation, and nowhere are the formulas of the school story so established and recognised as in Britain. This is how a writer of school stories might create a successful literary world of boarding school only by imitating the worlds of other writers – assisted by her or his own imagination – without any personal experiences from a real school of this kind (Löfgren 1993:31). Rowling has probably built up her own world of boarding school on the basis of all she has read. However, although Hogwarts is quite a traditional boarding school, one should remember that it reflects the contemporary schools in the sense that it is a co-educational institution.

Gender roles also remind us of the past, though it is difficult to say whether the greater part of the wizard world lives according to the traditional models or whether the described characters are exceptions. In any case, whatever people's occupations might be, the main characters, whether male or female, boys or girls, are not all that typical, as has been shown in this thesis. Moreover, the traditional role models still exist in the contemporary Britain, and thus it can be claimed that the traditional aspect of contemporary British society is the one that is reflected in Rowling's novels.

The system which divides people into different classes and groups has been part of the British society in the past and still is. In the real society people are divided into classes by their economical status and occupation, in Rowling's book the issue that divides people is not only money but 'wizardness'. As already mentioned, the issue of different races in the book could also reflect the conflicts between the ethnic minorities and British main culture in real life, and the system of control bears a certain resemblance to contemporary British society.

Obviously, the novels are not showing a “real” picture of either modern society or society from the past (since such ‘real’ picture does not exist), even though there are certain similarities. In addition, although it has been claimed that children’s fiction often represents an ideal picture of society (see above), Rowling’s book is not necessarily doing that. It is true that the novel lacks some problems of modern society, such as isolation, alienation and extreme individualism. Actually, Hogwarts offers children a stable society, where they (excluding Harry) can safely grow up into members of the wizard culture. According to McDowall (1999:97), young people in Britain aspire to traditional values, preferring, for instance, the idea of marriage and family stability to partnership. Therefore, the discipline, strict rules and sense of community at Hogwarts, and the stable family relations (there have not been divorces in Rowling’s novels so far) might reflect some sort of ideal society in the minds of young people in Britain. The same goes for the control in the wizard society, the strict laws and severe punishments could be seen as some people’s ideal view of a secure society. On the other hand, these could only be reflecting the implied narrator’s (or Rowling’s) ideals and nothing else.

Nevertheless, Rowling herself does not admire the public school system (even though her books actually seem to) and that is probably why some critics, such as Nettleship, argue that Hogwarts is a comprehensive school. The boarding school is obviously a more interesting milieu for constructing the plot, which might be the only reason for choosing it. It also gives Rowling the chance to criticise the upper class in Britain, represented by the Malfoys in the book. In that respect, the book does not represent an ideal picture of society, but instead reflects and criticises the problems in the British society.

It might also be that the wizard world has to seem familiar to make the children feel that they can recognise and sympathise with the different characters, especially Harry himself. If the wizard children lived in a world totally different to the real one, it could be more difficult to understand them. It is also easier to apply similar moral rules in two worlds that resemble each other in quite a few respects. The wizards seem to be, after all, only common people with some extraordinary gifts. This is very different from some fantasy books, where wizards or elves or whatever different kind of creatures are not

exactly human and they actually lack some human characteristics, such as the ability to feel passion or remorse.

I hope that I have managed to show that both fantasy and children's fiction are able to provide commentary on contemporary society, since that task should not be assumed only of 'realist' writers or even nobelists. Further studies would probably reveal the relationship between contemporary society and children's literature even more clearly. Although Rowling's following novels should also be studied, a comparison between her and other British fantasists for children, such as Diane Wynne Jones, might provide a deeper insight into the way British society is reflected in British children's fantasy. Books, also children's books, can and should be read on several levels. Even so, one should not forget to enjoy the books, which is why we read them in the first place.

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