Harry Potter and the Unconscious Dimension

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Mary Pyle – *Harry Potter and the Unconscious Dimension*

Abstract

As the interest in and study of children's literature as a discipline has grown, so psychoanalysis has turned its focus on this subject. Stories and psychoanalysis are closely related: the patient on the couch tells a story to which the analyst listens; the author tells a story to which the reader listens. While literary criticism largely engages with the Lacanian theory of psychoanalysis, probably because both disciplines share an interest in language, my position lies within the Independent Tradition, a development of Klein's theory of object relations. Klein refers to 'positions' rather than stages of development: we all move in and out of those positions throughout life. My clinical work is based on this theory, especially as interpreted by Donald Winnicott and Wilfred Bion and expanded by contemporary psychoanalysts, Antonino Ferro, Giuseppe Civitarese and Thomas Ogden among others. I use my psychoanalytical knowledge to analyse some of the issues that we all have to deal with throughout life, issues which push us into those positions, sometimes many This thesis explores the extent to which an unconscious response on the part of the reader may contribute to the extraordinary popularity among both children adults of J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series (1997—2007). While there have always been books shared between children and adults, with this series the crossover phenomenon has become so significant that Bloomsbury published the text in different covers for children and adults. The series has attracted considerable critical attention, but this thesis breaks new ground by examining the unconscious elements behind the continued appeal of the Harry Potter series. I argue that as well as all the conscious reasons expressed for enjoying the books – good plots, characterisation, lively narrative and inventiveness — there is an unconscious element to readers' enjoyment times, not only in childhood, and to see where Rowling's narrative illuminates these. I argue that by using this approach it is possible to throw

light on the way in which readers of all ages can identify with Rowling's characters. Although there are a few papers analysing texts within the series from this position, this is the first full study of Rowling's work in these terms. My thesis makes an original contribution to the dialogue between psychoanalysis and literature.

The thesis begins with Winnicott's assertion that play is at the base of all learning and emotional development and Chapter One examines play within the series and the ludic space that opens between the reader and the text. Chapter Two looks at the way in which Rowling uses fantasy and imagination to address social and psychical issues. Chapter Three uses the familiar trope of the boarding school to look at some of the challenges of growing up, especially the challenge of disillusionment. Chapter Four on the Quest acknowledges the symbolism of the quest narrative which has been popular from earliest literature and also explores the significance and symbolic meaning of the various stopping places on Harry's quest. The quest and alchemy both address development through acquiring experiential knowledge leading to personal and social transformation of the protagonists.

Rowling's series is itself unique in that the most important theme running through the series is the theme of death. This theme is present from the beginning of the first book: although distanced by time it is not initially clear to readers that it is the precipitating event as well as being the central topic. I explore the topic of death in the final chapter of this study and posit that although the response of readers may be largely unconscious, Rowling's treatment of death is the underlying reason for the phenomenal popularity of the series. Other themes to which readers respond both consciously and unconsciously are the development of the protagonists from eleven-year-old children to adult, and the struggle between good and evil, both of which are themes which run through the series from beginning to end. This thesis offers a new and innovative way to

read the Harry Potter series, demonstrating that an interdisciplinary approach combining literary studies with psychoanalysis enables us to uncover the hidden and unconscious element behind readers' enjoyment of the books of the series.

Contents

Introduction

The unprecedented popularity among both adults and children of J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series, 1997 to 2007, indicates that the books have some special appeal beyond lively story-telling, complicated plots and attractive fictional characters with whom readers, both adult and child, identify, and for whom they care. In addition, Rowling has created situations which challenge the characters and through them the readers. My thesis addresses the question of what it is about these books that continues to make such an impact on readers leading to theme parks, web sites and an ever increasing number of critical books and articles, and suggests that the unconscious response of the readers may contribute to this phenomenon.[1]

The wizard world, existing beside the material world, offers a transcendent space within which readers as well as fictional characters can grow. I suggest that the desire for this space and what it offers is likely to be unconscious, and in a series that draws from several genres other themes may be more obvious: among them the struggle between good and evil, the emotional and physical development of the protagonists, disillusionment and intergenerational relationships, themes which contribute to the narrative as a whole and which I address within this study. While recognising that many readers, especially the younger ones, may enjoy the books purely for their magic or for their action, nevertheless, I posit that the deeper unconscious appeal for more thoughtful readers lies in the possibilities of transcendent growth, and above all, reflecting on the realisation that death is part of life. What is new and unique in this series is that death and spirituality are central – Rowling herself says that her books are all about death – but this is not consciously registered by most readers, especially in the earlier books. Rachel

[1] I explain the meaning and significance of unconscious later in this chapter.

Falconer draws attention to the link in her chapter 'Harry Potter, Lightness and Death,' which, she argues, is part of the crossover appeal.[2]

The Literary Phenomenon of Harry Potter

The way in which the books appeal to both children and adults leads Falconer to describe the series as 'the millennial crossover phenomenon.'[3] While there have always been books shared between children and adults, with this series the 'crossover phenomenon' became so significant that Bloomsbury published the text with different covers, one aimed at adults and one at children. Moreover, this 'crossover phenomenon' is not confined to pleasure in Rowling's original books and the Warner Bros. films (2001-2011),[4] but extends to ways in which both children and adults play with the text, the themes and the characters outside of these textual spaces. Warner Bros. offer tours of the Harry Potter film studios in London,[5] and theme parks have been set up around the world.[6] Chestnut Hill in Philadelphia offers an annual Harry Potter Conference.[7] In 2017-2018 the British Library held an exhibition on the origins of the magic in the Harry Potter books and has produced a book cataloguing the exhibition, *Harry Potter: A History of*

[2] Rachel Falconer, *The Crossover Novel: Contemporary Children's Fiction and Its Adult Readership* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009).
[3] Ibid., 15.
[4] *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone,* 2001, Director Chris Columbus; *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets,* 2002, Director Chris Columbus; *Harry Potter and he Prisoner of Azkaban,* 2004, Director Alfonso Cuarón; *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire,* 2005, Director Mike Newell; *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix,* 2007, Director David Yates; *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince,* 2009, Director David Yates; *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1,* 2010, Director David Yates; *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2,* 2011, Director David Yates.
[5] Warner Bros. Studio Tour London – 'The making of Harry Potter Events,' The Events Brochure contains all their packages. The basic tour, which lasts about 7 hours, invites participants to step into the Great Hall, walk down Diagon Alley and visit Dumbledore's office.' These tours can also include a dinner party, either in the Great Hall on Platform Nine and three quarters.
[6] There are theme parks in several countries among them Japan, China and Australia, but the flagship one has to be in Orlando, where participants can go on a ride called 'Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey' which takes riders through the wizarding world. There are also recreations of Hogsmeade and Diagon Alley. 'The Wizarding World of Harry Potter.
[7] This started as a student course in Chestnut on Platform Nine and three quarters.
College which ran from 2009-2012, and has expanded into an annual conference which runs in the College in October. Gradually the town became involved and becomes Harry Potter themed for a weekend each October. https:www.chc.edu>student-life

Magic.[8] *Pottermore*, the online site founded by Rowling, which has now been incorporated into *The Wizarding World*, offers fans of all ages an interactive fictional universe centred on the films as well as the novels, in which they are free to rewrite the plot, alter the characters of the main protagonists or imagine themselves as part of this fictional world by being sorted into houses and assigned a Patronus. Rowling herself appears to be party to this revisionism by fans in her collaboration with Jack Thorne and John Tiffany in the play *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*.[9] These spin-offs, exhibits, and immersive experiences enable readers to extend the boundaries of the texts and to engage playfully and imaginatively with Rowling's work in an unprecedented manner, and are themselves worthy of study. However, while fully conscious of the significance of all the additions and continuing development of the series and the fictional world it is set in, I limit my study to the seven original canonical novels because they in themselves are the foundation on which all the later films, theme parks and merchandise are based. This is also the approach taken by Beatrice Groves who writes:

> In *Harry Potter* fandom 'canon' is a term that covers not only the content of the original novels but also all Rowling's related works – *Tales of Beedle the Bard, Quidditch Through the Ages,* and *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* (both the book and the film screen plays) – as well as her interviews, Twitter account, *Pottermore* and *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child…* In literary studies, however, it is only the text itself – in this case the seven *Harry Potter* novels – that has 'canonical' authority.[10]

However, like Groves, I recognise that Rowling's own comments often illuminate her work and I, too, sometimes quote from her interviews.

While the popularity and success of the Harry Potter books is undoubted, the series' critical reception has been more mixed. Perhaps as a result of this widespread

[8] British Library Board and Bloomsbury Publishing (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).
[9] J. K. Rowling, John Tiffany and Jack Thorne, *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* (London: Little, Brown 2016).
[10] Beatrice Groves, *Literary Allusion in Harry Potter* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2017), 'Notes on texts used.'

popularity a number of established critics including Harold Bloom, A. S. Byatt and Jenny Bristow, insisted that the series was not suitable for academic study, arguing that for adults to enjoy the books, or even worse, to take them seriously, was a 'dumbing down.'[11] Nevertheless, it was evident that many academics were excited by the series from the outset and deemed it worthy of serious closer study. As early as June 2000, when only the first three books had been published, the Children's Literature Association Conference held a panel on the Harry Potter novels. Lana Whited recalls that

> There must have been a hundred people at the session, and we had to open the doors of our small salon to allow additional chairs to spill out into the lobby. The quality of the other presenters' papers was superb, and the discussion stimulating…[12]

The subsequent collection of academic essays edited by Whited in 2003 includes contributions by such established critics as Farah Mendlesohn on the construction of authority, Pat Pinsent and David K. Steege analysing the texts in terms of the school story tradition, as well as political essays such as Karen E. Westman on 'Spectres of Thatcherism,' Eliza T. Dresang and Terri Doughty on gender issues and Mary Pharr on the links with epic, myth and folklore. This mix of genres is an aspect of the series that has contributed to the interest it engenders: school story, myth of the hero, Christian parable, or *Bildungsroman.*[13] Whited's collection was followed by several others,

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[11] Anthony Holden, 'Why Harry Potter doesn't cast a spell over me,' in *The* Guardian, 25 June 200, refers to the success of the series as 'another dispiriting proof of the Murdoch-led dumbing don of all our lives.' Harold Bloom, 'Can 35 Million Book Buyers Be Wrong? Yes,' *Wall Street Journal,* July 11, 2000; A. S. Byatt, 'Harry Potter and the Childish Adult,' *New York Times,* July 7, 2003; Jenny Bristow, 'Potty over Potter,' *Spiked,* November 5, 2001; Richard Adams, 'Quidditch Quaintness,' *The Guardian,* June 17, 2003.

[12] Lana A. Whited, 'Introduction: Harry Potter from Craze to Classic?' in Lana A. Whited, ed. *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter: Perspectives on a Literary Phenomenon* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 1.

[13] Robert Tally writes of the *Bildungsoman* that it 'offers an entertaining story of a young person's coming of age, moving from innocence to experience, with lost illusions and great expectations, while making his or her way in the world… the term *Bildung* suggests something wider and more formative than mere "learning." It is an education rather broadly conceived to include establishing a self-image… maturing physically, emotionally, and intellectually, and of course, learning how the world works, thus gaining the ability to make one's way in the wider world.' Robert T. Tally 'The Way of the Wizarding World: *Harry Potter* and the Magical *Bildungsroman*' in *J. K. Rowling Harry Potter* edited by Cynthia J. Hallett and Peggy J. Huey (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 36-47.

including Giselle Lisa Anatole, *Reading Harry Potter* (2003), and *Reading Harry Potter Again* (2009); Elizabeth E. Heilman, *Harry Potter's World* (2003); Cynthia Whitney Hallett, *Scholarly Studies in Harry Potter* (2005); Neil Mulholland, *The Psychology of Harry Potter* (2007); Cynthia J. Hallett and Peggy J. Huey, *J. K. Rowling: Harry Potter* (2012); and Valerie Estelle Frankel, *Teaching with Harry Potter* (2013). Recent collections on more specific topics in the series include *Cultural Politics in Harry Potter: Life, Death and the Politics of Fear* (2020), and the recently published *The Alchemical Harry Potter: Essays on Transfiguration in J. K. Rowling's Novels* (2021). In addition to these published papers a number of PhD and MA theses have been written on the Harry Potter series, and take many different critical approaches to the series.[14] What this indicates is that over the years and world-wide, research students find something new to focus on in these novels. It is obvious that there is enormous critical appetite for these books as well as popular interest.

Several critics have described how they came to read and to be grabbed by the books, which offers some insight into how the series came to be so popular with adults. Katherine Grimes writes that 'the editor [Lana Whited] of this book gave her nephews Harry Potter books… began the first one while visiting them, and had to stop at a

Roberta Seelinger Trites makes a distinction between *Bildungsroman* and *Entwicklungsroman.* She writes: 'the *Entwicklungsroman* [is] a broad category of novels in which an adolescent character grows, and the *Bildungsroman*, which is a related type of novel in which the adolescent matures to adulthood.' Roberta Seelinger Trites, *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature* (Iowa City: Iowa University Press, 2000), 9. Trites discusses in some detail the difference between the two categories: this would suggest that the first six novels in the series are in the category of *Entwicklungsroman* as Rowling presents Harry growing from year to year, and the final novel, *Deathly Hallows*, as a *Bildungsroman.*

[14] Among them Larissa Jane Adamson (University of Durham, 2015) wrote her thesis on 'The Illusions of Reality: Blurring the Line between Fantasy and Reality in J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter's Novels.' Among the questions she poses are what we consider reality to be, and whether fiction can help us to answer that question. Sherrie Malisch (University of Sherbrooke, Quecec, 2016) wrote her thesis 'Kids Take Charge' including the Harry Potter series among other Young Adult novels, inspired by Roberta Trites's book *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature.* Kabir Chattopadhaya (Trinity College Dublin, 2021) 'Harry Potter and the Invisible Hand: The Notion of Inevitable Inequality, and "Niceness" as Moral Action in J. K. Rowling's Neoliberal Fantasy.' In his thesis he approaches the novels from a Marxist socio-political standpoint.

bookstore on her way home to buy her own copy and finish it.'[15] Cynthia Whitney Hallett reluctantly read the first book 'Gobbled down the second and third and sat starving for the fourth…'[16] Rachel Falconer describes beginning to read the first novel

> and by page three I was hooked. I had become the child-reader I once was: voracious, oblivious to time, suspended by words in an attic room of excitement, fun, friendship and bravery… Now that the world has been saturated with Harry Potter hype, it is worth emphasising the individual reader's moment of discovery… because reading by definition is still an individual experience… no amount of publicity can make a book speak to individual hearts and minds.[17]

Recognising that reading is an individual experience has to be borne in mind when researching the wide appeal of the series. My focus, therefore, is on what psychoanalytic thinking suggests are universal aspects of human inner growth as represented within the series.[18]

Falconer makes the point that as well as the Harry Potter series, other children's books are also being read by adults, and sets out to address the question of why so many adult readers were turning to children's fiction which was being published at the time of the new millennium, the decade when Rowling's series was being published.[19] Many of these books, including the Harry Potter books, could be described as low fantasy: set in the real world with protagonists who are real people, but who nevertheless find

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[15] M. Katherine Grimes, 'Harry Potter, Fairy Tale Prince, Real Boy and Archetypal Hero' in Lana A. Whited ed., *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter: Perspectives on a Literary Phenomenon* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 89.
[16] Cynthia Whitney Hallett, 'Introduction' in Cynthia Whitney Hallett, ed., *Scholarly Studies in Harry Potter: Applying Academic Methods to a Popular Text* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2005),1.
[17] Rachel Falconer, *The Crossover Novel: Contemporary Children's Fiction and Its Adult Readership* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2009), 1.
[18] By psychoanalytic thinking I am referring to what is known as the British School of Psychoanalysis, and in particular the Independent Tradition, based on Melanie Klein's theory of Object Relations and the development of their theories.
[19] Although I refer generally to 'Children's books' and to 'Children's literature' many of the books could be referred to as 'Adolescent literature' or as 'Young Adult literature.' Trites sees the difference between a children's novel and an adolescent novel as lying in 'the very determined way that YA novels tend to interrogate social constructions, foregrounding the relationship between the society and the individual rather than focusing on Self and self-discovery as children's literature does.' Trites, *Disturbing*, 20. However a little earlier she writes that 'so many of us – authors, critics, teachers, teenagers – need to believe in the possibility of adolescent growth.' 15. Psychoanalysts believe that growth continues throughout life and I regard growth as an important theme in Rowling's series.

themselves living an alternate existence. Among them are Neil Gaiman, *The Wolves in the Walls* (2003), *Coraline* (2002), *The Graveyard Book* (2008); David Almond, *Skellig* (1998), *Clay* (2005), *My Name is Mina* (2010), and Philip Pullman's trilogy *Northern Lights* (1995), *The Subtle Knife* (1997), *The Amber Spyglass* (2000). All of these books focus on issues which are of concern to children: *Clay*, for example, explores how children can reluctantly be pushed into acting out a dark side; *My Name is Mina* is concerned with acceptance of difference. What all of these novels have in common is a focus on relationships in the context of their other concerns. In this dissertation my focus is on Rowling's novels, which, in the words of Elizabeth Heilman 'contain powerful, thought-provoking literary themes as well as portrayals of social and cultural normalcy… and deserve serious critical attention.'[20]

As I have shown above an immense amount of critical attention has been focused on the series and many different disciplinary approaches have been used to analyse and engage with Rowling's series. Falconer comments 'One of the distinctive aspects of children's literature as a field of academic research is that it is genuinely interdisciplinary, and brings together readers from many different backgrounds, with widely differing areas of expertise.'[21] Despite the extent of this academic interest, and the interdisciplinary nature of many of these studies, my exhaustive search of the literature has found no more than four substantial papers on the series which draw meaningfully from psychoanalytic theory and address the unconscious as a main component of the series, and none of these addresses the entire series of seven novels. Furthermore, three of the four are by clinicians rather than literary critics and so lack the interdisciplinary approach needed to uncover the relationship between the text and the unconscious appeal to readers. Two of the three

[20] Elizabeth E. Heilman, ed., *Critical Perspectives on Harry Potter* second edition (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2003), 2.
[21] Falconer, *The Crossover Novel*, 9.

clinicians also address the novels, and the unconscious itself, from an Object Relations position, and the third from a classical Freudian position: none is from the Lacanian position more commonly used by literary critics. Although these clinicians analyse the text and its symbolic meaning, none of them addresses the dimension of the protagonists' mental, emotional and spiritual growth through the seven books in the series and the unconscious response of the reader to this growth. Before addressing the different ways of interpretating the unconscious I start with a general introduction to the topic.

The Unconscious

While they may differ in the detail as to how it is constructed, the main schools of psychoanalysis agree that the unconscious is the part of the mind built up from sensations, impressions and feelings from the very beginning of life, the details of which are forgotten at the conscious level. It can be difficult to appreciate the sheer unconsciousness of the unconscious. Daniel Widlöcher writes that the use of the word 'unconscious' as an adjective 'is one of the foundations of scientific psychology. Psychoanalysis uses it widely to describe the way in which thoughts are forgotten or repressed and which continue to have an influence on the psychic life of the individual.'[22] Laplanche and Pontalis comment 'If Freud's discovery had to be summed up in a single word, that word would without doubt have to be "unconscious."'[23] They explain that Freud saw the unconscious as containing repressed instincts and memories which nevertheless have activity and can lead to symptoms. The way in which the unconscious is understood has gone through many revisions since Freud's discovery as Freudian psychoanalysis has

[22] Daniel Widlöcher 'Unconscious' in R. M. Skelton, ed., *The Edinburgh Encyclopaedia of Psychoanalysis* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006),476.
[23] J. Laplanche and J-B. Pontalis *The Language of Psycho-Analysis* (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1980), 474.
Note: Psychoanalysis was originally spelled as two hyphenated words. Over time it became a single word as it is written today. I use the modern spelling except for quotations.

developed in different ways with its focus on different aspects of the psyche. They conclude 'As we know, from 1920 onwards the Freudian theory of the psychical apparatus is subjected to a thoroughgoing revision…'[24] Psychoanalyst Alessandra Lemma brings psychoanalytic theory into the twenty-first century with an overview of the schools of psychoanalysis as they developed from Freud.[25] Lemma traces the way in which the concept of the unconscious has developed in what is known as The British School of Psychoanalysis, also known as the Independent Tradition. This school of psychoanalysis, on which my clinical work and the theoretical framework for this thesis are based, starts from Object Relations theory, developed by Melanie Klein, which posits that 'the ego is present and active from the beginning of life and establishes relations with objects from the first contacts with the external world.'[26] From the clinical side this means that psychoanalysis focuses on relationships: between the patient and the people in his life,

[24] *The Language of Psycho-Analysis* 474-476.

[25] Alessandra Lemma *Introduction to the Practice of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy* (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons Ltd., 2003). Lemma does not address Lacan's development of Freud's theory: although she does address Ego Psychology, 26-27, and Self Psychology, 42-43, she focuses on the British School, which consists of the Contemporary Freudians, the Kleinians and the Independents. The extent to which psychoanalysis has moved from its origins can be seen in the fact that Lemma begins her Introductory chapter 'Psychoanalysis in the Twenty-First Century' by stating 'Freud is Dead:…It is just as well to be reminded of this fact if we are to approach psychoanalysis with a level-headed, critical, yet open attitude. Freud was a great theorist but he made mistakes. And we mustn't forget that there is much more to psychoanalysis than Freud. He helped us get started.'

[26] Charles Brenner in *Edinburgh Encyclopaedia,*, 332-333. Object Relations theory, which is not a psychoanalytic school, is concerned with the way in which we relate to each other both consciously and unconsciously. Although originating with the theories of Melanie Klein it is associated especially with the group of analysts known as the Independent Group. This group was formed by those analysts unwilling to be bound by either of the two main groups in the British Psycho-Analytical Society, the Anna Freud group or the Kleinian group. Both groups were developing techniques of child analysis and both saw themselves as developing Freud's theories to the extent that the Society divided into two factions and two separate trainings, and as a result a Middle group was formed which became the independents. The phrase 'Independent tradition' is significant as without a solid base in traditional theory there would be no grounding to the discipline but without independent thinking there can be no development of ideas. Among the Independent thinkers are some of the most innovative analysts who have felt free to draw on the work of both Melanie Klein and Anna Freud: among them Donald Winnicott, often thought of as the quintessential Independent, but who refused to be part of any group, and on whose work I draw in particular, and also Christopher Bollas, Patrick Casement, Nina Coltart, and Margaret Little. Developing from the Kleinian school is the hugely influential Wilfred Bion; Thomas Ogden, Antonino Ferro, Michael Parsons and Donald Melzer are also clinicians and theorists belonging loosely to this group on whose work I draw. When I refer to the 'unconscious' in this thesis it is from the Independent standpoint, while recognising that there are other schools of psychoanalysis who also are also concerned with the 'unconscious.'

friends, colleagues, parents, siblings and also between the patient and the analyst.[27] This makes it an appropriate stance from which to address Rowling's series and the relationships between the characters and between the characters and the readers. The Independents have never been a formal group: based on traditional Freudian and Kleinian concepts, they are free to draw on other more contemporary theorists which I do also, especially Thomas Ogden, Antonino Ferro and Michael Parsons. Lemma, who describes herself as a 'synthesiser' looking for 'common strands between the many psychoanalytic theories that are available,'[28] offers a list of key psychoanalytic assumptions, which help to define characteristics of the unconscious as commonly understood. Among these assumptions she lists:

> We have a conscious as well as an unconscious mental life; meaning systems include both conscious (i.e. verbalizable) and unconscious aspects of experience; our early relationships contribute to the development of representations of relationships that are affectively toned;[29] we have an internal life that gives texture and colour to each new situation that we encounter; meanings and phantasies[30] shape behaviour and thinking whether or not they are the originators of the behaviour or thought; the inner world of process and experiences mediates the individual's relationship with the external world; the internal world is in a perpetual dynamic interaction with the external world, so that both influence each other.[31]

The unconscious part of the mind is not easily accessible but nevertheless, although we are unaware of it, as Lemma notes it has a profound influence on us as we go about our daily lives, particularly in our response to other people, and our likes and dislikes. The unconscious also affects feelings about books we read, and influences our critical judgement without our being aware of it. Gaining access to the unconscious is the task of psychoanalysis, which hopes thereby to undo the negative ways in which it affects our

[27] This links to the concept of 'transference' where feelings and ideas are projected onto others, often authority figures from the past.
[28] Lemma, *Introduction,* xi.
[29] 'affects' in psychoanalysis is a term used for strong feelings.
[30] This spelling is used in psychoanalysis for unconscious phantasy.
[31] Lemma, *Introduction*, 53.

lives. With the awareness of how we are influenced by unconscious material, thoughts and feelings can be verbalised and explored. My use of the word 'unconscious' is in this context.

One of the key tools used in psychoanalysis, especially by Kleinians but also by the Independents, is transference, defined by Morris Eagle as

> A central concept in the psychoanalytic theory of treatment, transference refers to the patient's transfer of feelings, wishes and reactions experienced towards an important figure from his or her childhood (usually a parental figure) onto the analyst. But it should be noted that transference is a universal phenomenon that occurs in many spheres of life in which one's reactions to a current person are reminiscent of early patterns.[32]

In recent decades there has been more recognition that transferences in the sense of individual reactions and feelings are also present in the way we relate to books and to works of art. Falconer's statement 'reading is…an individual experience' is applicable to both psychoanalytic criticism and to reader-response theory, and allows for the transferences that readers bring to the narrative text. Nevertheless, while recognising that no two people are alike, psychoanalysis is based on the premise that there are situations, wishes and needs common to humanity, and it is with this in mind that I undertake this thesis.

My approach connects literary studies and psychoanalysis. I am not the first to make this connection and in this study I build upon the work of others who have identified links between the two disciplines. Norman Holland links the theories of reader-response and psychoanalytical criticism saying 'The school known as reader-response criticism… opens up questions, particularly psychological questions…'[33] He elaborates on this: 'For the reader-response critic, a "text" equals a psychological process in which

[32] Morris Eagle, 'Transference' in *Edinburgh Encyclopaedia*, 462.
[33] Norman N. Holland, 'Reader-Response Criticism' in *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 79: 1203-1211 (1998), 1203.

author and reader interact through a physical text.[34] Therefore one cannot isolate some "objective" text, the words-on-the-page, from readers' experiences of it, because *one cannot read a text except through the processes by which we perceive texts.* Those inevitably derive from our particular situation in history, culture, education, and the psychological patterns of our own personalities. That situation includes what we know that the artist didn't…'[35] Holland, an academic and literary critic who had also undergone a training in psychoanalysis, in his paper 'Psychoanalysis and Literature—Past and Present,' describes the stages in each discipline as they have developed and as they relate, but for the purposes of this thesis it is what Holland regards as the third stage of each which is relevant. The third phase of literary criticism, Holland suggests, 'most people would call postmodern,' a phase in which 'the artist shifts attention from the solid…object-in-itself… to the relation between the object and its audience…'[36] In psychoanalysis, he posits, the third stage dates from about the 1950s and includes among other theories Object Relations and Lacan's version of psychoanalysis. In the former, as I have said above (p. 15), it is assumed that the infant is seeking to relate from birth, whereas Lacan lays more emphasis on language as being essential to the formation of the subject.[37] Lacan's theories are more frequently used in twenty-first-century literary criticism: Roberta Seelinger Trites writing on 'Psychoanalytic Approaches to Children's

[34] Michael Benton's chapter 'Readers, texts, contexts: Reader-response criticism' in Peter Hunt ed., *Understanding Children's Literature* Second edition (Oxford: Routledge, 2005) 86-102, gives a survey of studies of how children read literature. He focuses especially on studies of reader-response, and, like Holland, recognises that the reader is not a *tabula rasa* but brings idiosyncratic knowledge and personal style to the act of reading, and the awareness that interpretation is socially, historically and culturally formed.' 89.
[35] Holland, 'Reader-Response Criticism' 1204. Italics in original.
[36] Norman N. Holland, 'Psychoanalysis and Literature—Past and Present,' in *Contemporary Psychoanalysis* (1993), 29: 5-21, 7.
[37] Ibid., 6. Since Holland's paper there have, of course, been many other developments and refinements in ideas as well as technique, including the new discipline of neuropsychoanalysis. Holland develops his ideas in his later paper 'Reader-Response Criticism.' A decade earlier Terry Eagleton wrote about Freudian and Lacanian criticism but did not refer to Klein or Object Relations. Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1983). 151-93.

Literature: Landmarks, Signposts, Maps,' reflecting on the number of articles from a psychoanalytic angle, comments 'Lacanian theory with its focus on the relationship between cognitive and emotional development, lends itself naturally to the study of children's literature.'[38] The fact that English literature and Lacanian psychoanalysis both have links with linguistics and philosopher-psychoanalysts, among them Julia Kristeva and Hélène Cixous, may, I suggest fuel the appeal of Lacanian approaches to texts among scholars of literature. There is also a particular concentration on the significance of words, which both Lacanian psychoanalysis and literary criticism share.[39]

Holland's paper linking Reader-Response with psychoanalytic criticism opens up a number of questions. Both are concerned with the personal response to and identification with the protagonists, but it poses the question of where and how the criticism should be directed. Holland concludes his analysis of the various stages of literary criticism arguing that in the present post-modern phase of criticism the relation between the text and its reader is what the critic focuses on.[40] In this thesis, addressing the series from the Independent Tradition with its roots in Object Relations, I focus on the relationships between book and reader, between the characters in the books and between the fictional characters and the readers. By focusing on the unconscious, relationships and their transferences and especially on the transformations that take place throughout the

[38] Roberta Seelinger Trites 'Psychoanalytic Approaches to Children's Literature: Landmarks, Signposts, Maps' in *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* Jan 2000.

[39] 'According to Lacan the "Freudian field" is properly the field of language, and humans are beings who are "captured and tortured by language". In order to reground Freudian metapsychology and clinical practice, Lacan proposed three inter-related orders of human experience; the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real.' Matthew Sharpe, in *Edinburgh Encyclopaedia*, 275. A further entry by Roberto Gambini says: 'Lacan opposes developmental approaches in psychoanalysis, maintaining that psychoanalytic theory does not describe the facts of actual development, but a structure which organises and manifests itself within an individual's history without being reducible to its developmental processes… The most striking feature in the evolution of Lacan's thought is that he increasingly formalises and… depersonalises psychoanalytic theory.' *Edinburgh Encyclopaedia*, 279. Although Lacan saw himself as a Freudian, his ideas were very different from those of Anna Freud and Melanie Klein both of whom saw themselves as developing Freud's theories.

[40] Holland, 'Psychoanalysis and Literature,'8. Holland suggests this as potentially serving the critic: 'Nowadays some critics will frankly acknowledge that the primary purpose of literature and culture is to provide professors to publish and not perish,'

narrative, rather than focusing solely on reader response, I align my work closely with the Kleinians and the Independent Tradition.

With this approach it is tempting to think of the characters in the novel as real people, and Holland points to the difficulty. He writes: 'If psychoanalysis is a method of criticism it is essential to remember that "*psychoanalysis does not deal with texts but with persons.*"' [41] He continues 'we have to find a person to apply the psychoanalysis to,' suggesting that it would have to be the writer, the reader or the character in the text.[42] Here I diverge from Holland's argument: I am not setting out to psychoanalyse Rowling, her readers, or the characters in her text as if they were real people. However, where the fictional characters are concerned it is not always possible to avoid a certain amount of analysis in so far as readers identify with them as real people. Margaret Rustin and Michael Rustin are aware of this dilemma:

> In discussing these stories, we frequently write about characters as if they possessed all the complex and interrelated feelings of actual people, though of course we know that they can have no qualities other than those described in the pages of the story… our view is, however, that authors have imagined situations and persons *as if* they were real… many modern literary critics have become hypercritical of the supposed realist fallacy of imagining fictional characters as real…[but] if they cannot be responded to as plausible representations of some reality, whether internal or external… they will seem to have little point or connection with the reader's world.[43]

Nor am I offering a psychoanalytic interpretation of the text. Bruno Bettelheim analyses the text of fairy tales from a Freudian position.[44] Lucy Rollin and Mark West analyse the text of several stories to illustrate a variety of psychoanalytic concepts. They write in their preface 'While keeping the emphasis on classical analysis and Freud, we have tried to

12[41] Ibid., 8. Italics in the original.
[42] Ibid., 8.
[43] Margaret Rustin and Michael Rustin, *Narratives of love and Loss: Studies in Modern Children's Fiction* (London: Karnac, 2001),14.
[44] Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales.* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Peregrine, 1978).

give a sense of the many revisions of the theory.'[45] As psychoanalyst Merav Roth points out, analysing texts in this way ran parallel to Freudian analysis which assumed that 'the patient's text [was] understood to contain all the allusions required to decipher the hidden meaning contained within it…' psychoanalytic analysis of literature analysed texts in a similar way, using the tools of psychoanalysis to find the hidden meaning of the text.[46] This method of analysing literary texts, by illustrating the psychoanalytic concept through the text of a story, while interesting, does not address the resonances between text and reader, and echoes Holland's comment that it is not psychoanalysis, rather it is textual analysis. For the analysts of the Independent Tradition, it is not illustrating a concept that is important, but rather exploring relationships and their impact. As Lemma has stressed, in the British School Klein's influence on developing theories has become more relevant in clinical work than Freud's original theories and classical analysis.[47] Three of the four papers addressing Rowling's series from a psychoanalytic standpoint are from this Independent or Object Relations position: the paper by John Rosegrant represents the classical position. I have not included Neil Mulholland's book *The Psychology of Harry Potter: An Unauthorized Examination of the Boy Who Lived* as it is based on clinical psychology rather than psychoanalysis.[48]

[45] Lucy Rollin and Mark L. West, *Psychoanalytic Responses to Children's Literature* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company Inc., Publishers, 1999).
[46] Merav Roth, *A Psychoanalytic Perspective on Reading Literature: Reading the Reader* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2020), 11-12.
[47] Although Klein's ideas and Independent theories are popular in South America, classical Freudian analysis, and Anna Freud's development of it have been more significant in North America.
[48] Neil Mulholland ed., *The Psychology of Harry Potter: An Unauthorized Examination of the Boy Who Lived* (Dallas: Smart Pop, 2007). The book examines the first six books of the series from the position of clinical psychology rather than psychoanalysis. Only one of the twenty two contributors links with psychoanalysis, although several are counselling practitioners. Mulholland suggests as therapies: Narrative Therapy; Cognitive Behaviour Therapy; Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing; Mindfulness Training/Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. The approach and language are very different from a psychoanalytic approach; moreover the book suggests that Harry is a boy in need of therapy rather than a character in the process of growing up.

All four papers were published before I began this thesis, and, for Rustin and Rustin and for Suzanne Lake before the series was complete. Rustin and Rustin's chapter appears as a postscript, 'The Inner World of Harry Potter,' in the second edition of their book *Narratives of Love and Loss*, published in 2001 when only four of the novels had appeared.[49] However, their paper is the one closest to my thesis: while not mentioning Object Relations per se, it is nevertheless based on the ideas of Klein and Winnicott and is foundational in connecting these ideas with the Harry Potter series. The themes which I address are similar to those addressed by Rustin and Rustin in that they, too, address the way in which readers of all ages identify with the protagonists. In particular, although they do not use the term *Bildungsroman* they also view the series as a year by year account of growing up.[50] They recognise the intergenerational popularity of the series and argue that this is a result of an 'underlying emotional realism… a feeling for the emotional cruxes in the lives of children.'[51] The title of their book *Narratives of Love and Loss* references two important aspects of relationship: love and loss, central issues in life as in literature.[52] In the children's books which they consider, Rustin and Rustin see loss as being central, often loss of parents, which may be actual or in fantasy, permanent or temporary, and the way in which the protagonist assimilates this loss. In their discussion of Harry Potter, they argue that 'it is the relationship in Harry's mind with his lost parents which is crucial to his sense of identity, and which is put to the test at the crises of the narratives of each of these books.'[53] However, the extent to which this identification with his father is put to the test in a way that shatters his sense of security only emerges in the

[49] Rustin and Rustin, *Narratives*, 263-291.
[50] Ibid., 284.
[51] Ibid., 264
[52] Object Relations theory recognises that loss is a recurring part of life, starting with the loss of the safe environment at birth,, loss of the early dyadic relationship with mother, loss of the idealised parent in moving into the depressive position…
[53] Rustin and Rustin, *Narratives*, 273.

fifth book, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, (2003), which had not yet been published when Rustin and Rustin were writing: this means that for them James and Lily Potter remain as the idealised good parents while the Dursleys are the unequivocally bad ones. Harry does not yet have to confront his ambivalence about his feelings for his father, and the resultant shattering of his own identity. And it is only in the final book, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, (2007), that he has to confront his disillusionment with Dumbledore, and wonder if everything he believed in, and has committed his life to, is false.

Rustin and Rustin draw attention to pairs of good substitute parents: Dumbledore and McGonagall, Mr and Mrs Weasley and even, they suggest, Hagrid and the owl, Hedwig. The main limitations of their paper are that Rustin and Rustin did not have access to the entire series and so were unable to complete their view of it as a *Bildungsroman*, or to have insight into how Harry's relationships with his friends, and with his enemies, develop through the three final novels. In their introduction to their book as a whole although Rustin and Rustin do reference Winnicott's emphasis on play they do not address his insistence on it, a topic on which I focus in my first chapter.[54] As can be seen from the title, loss is a significant topic in their book as a whole, as it is in the last three books of Rowling's series, and it would have been interesting to read their comments on this aspect. Above all, they do not recognise the central significance of death in the series: this is understandable as the text only begins to get dark in the fourth novel, but there is a sense of something unfinished in their chapter, as they conclude 'He is the boy who lives and also the boy who knows about death. That is what makes him so special…' Perhaps surprisingly, the Rustins do not comment on the change of tone in the fourth book, *Goblet of Fire* which, rather than beginning with Harry living with the

[54] Rustin and Rustin, *Narratives* 12.

Dursleys, begins instead with the death of an old man and ends with the death of a student, and is much darker than the previous three novels. Although they recognise that adults enjoy the series, they do not address the unconscious response to the novels in either adults or children.

Suzanne Lake's paper 'Object Relations in Harry Potter' was published in 2003 but again only four of the books were available.[55] Lake is more explicit in her Object Relations interpretations: significantly she reminds us that 'universal conflicts—the struggle between good and bad impulses, the search for justice and meaning, reunion with lost loved ones, and so on—continue to be reworked as we make our way across the life span,' and argues that recognition of this fact is an aspect of the appeal of the series to adults. Lake draws attention to an important feature of Klein's work which is that she describes development as moving through 'positions' rather than 'stages': Klein herself wrote

> I chose the term 'position' in regard to the paranoid and depressive phases because these groupings of anxieties and defences, although arising first during the earliest stages, are not restricted to them but occur and recur during the first years of childhood and under certain circumstances in later life.[56]

In particular Klein sees a tendency to revert on occasion to seeing situations in a binary way, polarised as either good or bad, a view which she calls the 'paranoid /schizoid position,' a position assumed from the beginning of life but which hopefully gradually gives way to the more nuanced 'depressive position.'[57] This means that the early

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[55] Suzanne Lake, 'Object Relations in Harry Potter' in *The Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis and Dynamic Psychiatry* 31(2003), 509-520.
[56] Melanie Klein, *Envy and Gratitude and Other Works 1946-1963* (London: Hogarth Press, 1975), 93.
[57] Michael Parsons writes of the positions 'Klein's concept has turned out to be one of the most important advances in psychoanalysis. In saying this, I am not referring specifically to the paranoid and depressive positions. It is the concept of a position, in itself, that is so fruitful. A position is a psychic constellation of impulses, fantasies, anxieties, defences, and object relationships, with an overall quality related to the point in development at which it arises, but without a definite end point at which it disappears. *Instead it remains present, active or latent, so that someone's unconscious relation to this aspect of their internal world may continue to evolve throughout the whole of life.* This allows developmental processes to be conceptualised in a more open-ended way, than was available before. (Italics in the original).
Michael Parsons, *Living Psychoanalysis: From Theory to Experience* (London: Routledge, 2014),71.

primitive fantasies of seeing a parent as 'good' when needs and desires are satisfied, and 'bad' when they are not, give way to a realisation that it is the same parent who is sometimes 'good' and sometimes 'bad'. There is sadness involved in this move to the depressive position as it means recognising that most people and most situations are neither totally good nor totally bad. In her series Rowling shows some of her most significant and likeable characters, James Potter, Sirius, Lupin and Dumbledore, as being flawed, something which Harry and her readers must learn to recognise and accept. Like Rustin and Rustin, Lake addresses the fact that Rowling shows Harry having to confront this loss on several occasions.[58] Lake sees the wizard world as representing the unconscious, as being 'infinitely exciting, full of possibilities and dangerous adventures,'[59] but where Rustin and Rustin focus on relationships in terms of love and loss, Lake argues that the 'character of Harry Potter… embodies such universal (repressed) torments as the agony of destroying and losing the mother; the ominous perception of good and bad objects at war within the self; and the reparative efforts offered to save the self from eternal separation from the beloved other.'[60] Although coming from a similar theoretical background based on Object Relations, the writers choose to focus on different aspects of psychoanalytic theory underlying the narrative, Rustin and Rustin focusing on relationships while Lake focuses on unconscious phantasy of destroying the mother and making reparation: two distinct strands with which Object Relations is concerned. As with Rustin and Rustin, Lake did not have access to the whole series so we cannot speculate on how they would have addressed Rowling's completed work.

[58] Lake, 'Object Relations,' 513.
[59] Ibid., 512.
[60] Ibid., 509.

John Rosegrant also addresses the crossover appeal of the novels saying 'devotion at the level commanded by Harry Potter… can result only when deep psychological issues are touched. Since the books are set in the world of adolescents and written for adolescents, yet also have a devoted adult and child audience, the crucial psychological issues must be ones that are particularly acute during adolescence, but start earlier and continue to be reworked throughout the life span.'[61] Much of his paper is a synopsis of each of the books while expanding on these issues. Rosegrant does not come from an Object Relations background and his approach is more traditionally Freudian, with the centrality of the Oedipus complex and, traditionally, castration anxieties at adolescence. In this context he writes that although 'in today's psychoanalytic climate… one rarely hears about old-fashioned phallic symbols…'[62] these abound in the novels as wands, and especially snakes, the classic phallic symbol. For Rosegrant the phallus is a significant aspect in his approach to the series, and he posits that the significance of Harry identifying with Voldemort's snake, can be understood as sharing Voldemort's penis:[63] that is, in sharing Voldemort's power. A twist unnoticed by Rosegrant is that Rowling has made the snake, Nagini, female and closer to being Voldemort's 'familiar' than his penis. Rosegrant does, however, reference Winnicott's ideas of transitional phenomena,[64] and he also recognises Hogwarts as being a transitional space,[65] a point which I address in my first chapter. Although Rosegrant's reading of the text is very different from that of the two previous papers; nevertheless, all three writers recognise that Rowling's series

[61] John Rosegrant, 'The Deathly Hallows: Harry Potter and Adolescent Development' in *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 57 (2009), 1401-1423, 1402.
[62] Ibid.,1419. It is interesting that Rosegrant refers to phallic symbols as 'old-fashioned.' For Freud, the repressed memories were usually sexual, and phallic symbols represented male power, but Object Relations theory has pushed the emphasis much further back to early infancy and in some cases to before birth.
[63] Ibid.,1419.
[64] Ibid., 1409.
[65] Ibid., 1408.

resonates at an unconscious level with significant issues which tend to recur throughout the life span, and these are the issues which I address in this thesis.

Rebecca R. Butler's paper, originally delivered at a conference at University of Hertfordshire in 2007, 'The Scholar, the Hero and Their Faithful Friend,' discusses the six published books using Melanie Klein's work as a starting point.[66] Butler, the only one of the four writers who is not a clinician, argues that 'beneath the surface [of these books] is a deep and bitter psychological struggle… the struggle between integration and fragmentation…is seen to run all through this complex work, and to be its underlying theme.'[67] Butler sees this struggle as being the basis of Klein's work, although she does not give any references, and from that argues that the integration of what she sees as the originally fragmented Harry is effected through being in a triad with Hermione and Ron. She compares this integration with Voldemort's fragmentation of himself through creating Horcruxes. Butler's ideas are interesting but limited partly by the fact that only the first six books had been published, but even more by a limited knowledge of Klein's work. The intended audience for the papers is also relevant: Butler's paper was presented at a conference on children's literature; Lake and Rosegrant are writing in psychoanalytic journals: they are psychoanalysts writing for psychoanalysts and so assume knowledge of the theory in the readers; Rustin and Rustin more specifically bridge the gap between psychoanalysis and literature, and Margaret Rustin especially has a thorough knowledge of psychoanalysis as she is a senior clinician at the Tavistock clinic.[68] Because my

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[66] Rebecca R. Butler, 'The Scholar, the Hero and Their Faithful Friend' in Jenny Plastow ed. *Children's Literature Annual No.2. The Story and the Self, Children's Literature: Some Psychoanalytic Perspectives. Papers and presentations from conference 2007.* 29-45.
[67] Ibid., 29.
[68] Margaret Rustin is a Child and Adolescent psychotherapist and adult psychotherapist and was head of the child psychotherapy training programme at the Tavistock Clinic for twenty years, later becoming director of the Clinic. The Tavistock Clinic is the major centre for Child and Adolescent psychotherapy in the U.K. Originally based on John Bowlby's Attachment Theory, which, like Object Relations theory, suggests that from birth a child is instinctively ready to form attachment with others, many of its practitioners are linked to the Institute of Psychoanalysis and interested in developments there. The Tavistock also publishes its own research. Margaret Rustin is also an Associate of the British Psychoanalytical Society.

clinical and theoretical background is similar to theirs, and I am also bridging the gap between psychoanalysis and literature, I see my thesis as continuing and expanding their paper: continuing because we can now see how Rowling brings Harry Potter to adulthood, expanding through focusing on some other aspects of the series, and in the centrality of the theme of death.

Literature and Psychoanalysis

In recent decades there has been a closer rapprochement between the disciplines of literature and psychoanalysis.[69] As early as 1999 Thomas Ogden, one of the most innovative and influential psychoanalysts, and who is also a novelist, wrote a detailed textual analysis of a Robert Frost poem beside a detailed account of an analytic session, noting the language, the effect of the language on the hearer, and what lies behind the language. He writes 'Over the course of the past fifty years, there have been a number of important shifts in the theory and practice of psychoanalysis. Among them …the question "what does that mean?" …has gradually expanded to… "What's happening between us consciously and unconsciously…?"[70] This question arises out of the emphasis that as analysts we now place on transference, that is, the way in which we transfer feelings from the past onto those around us in the present, especially onto the analyst. Here I address the feelings which are transferred by readers not only onto the characters in the books but onto the books themselves.

Parallel to the use of transference is the use of countertransference, the analyst's reaction to and feelings about the material in the session. Once considered to be an indication of the need for further analysis, this has come to be seen as a valuable tool in

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[69] As in all of the thesis I discus from the psychoanalytic position of the Independent tradition.

[70] Thomas H. Ogden, '"The Music of What Happens" in Poetry and Psychoanalysis' in *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 80 (5) 979-994 (1999), 979.

the understanding of what is happening between the patient and the analyst in the session. The question posed by Ogden as to 'what is happening between us' was originally developed through the work of Wilfred Bion, (1897-1979), basing it on the work of Klein and thereby widening the influence of the post Kleinians. Bion's work has given rise to what is known as post Bionian Field Theory, or BFT.[71] Here, more emphasis is given to the analyst's reverie: a concept of Bion's which Ogden sees as being open to experiencing what is true in the conversation between analyst and patient.[72] Psychoanalysts Ferre and Civitare stress that while 'intersubjective' may be a useful term it is essential to put the emphasis on '*inter (between)* [as] the place where the analysis occurs.'[73] While Freud saw communication in terms of the patient's unconscious thoughts emerging and thus enabling the analyst to make an interpretation, the later form, 'reverie,' allows the analyst to use his own thoughts and reflections to aid his understanding.[74]

Relationship is central in the analytic situation as it is from the beginning of life and here Donald Winnicott's work is of major importance. Ogden says of Winnicott:

> Psychoanalysis in its first century has had several great thinkers, but, to my mind, only one great English-speaking writer: Donald Winnicott. Because style and content are so interdependent in his writing, his papers are not well served by a thematic reading aimed exclusively at gleaning what the paper is 'about.' Such efforts often result in trivial aphorisms. Winnicott, for the most part, does not use language to arrive at conclusions; rather he uses language to create experiences in reading which are inseparable from the ideas he is presenting, or more accurately, the ideas he is playing with.[75]

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[71] Antonino Ferre and Giuseppe Civitare introduce the concept and explain how it has derived from Bion's work. They write: 'Bion mounts a systemic deconstruction of the principles of classical psychoanalysis. His aim, however is not to destroy it but rather to bring out its untapped potential and to develop ideas that have remained on its margins. In his close critical engagement with Freud he not only prescribes, but also shows, how essential it is to have a mental attitude of openness to the new, and the importance of not locking oneself up inside a "religious" vision.' Antonino Ferre and Giuseppe Civitare, *The Analytic Field and its Transformations* (London: Karnac, 2015), xiv.

[72] Thomas H. Ogden, *Creative Readings: Essays on Seminal Analytic Works* (Hove, East Sussex: Routledge,2012), 108.

[73] Ferre and Civitare, *Field*, xv.

[74] This does not, of course, involve telling the patient what our thoughts or feelings might be, but awareness of anxiety or boredom or an unexpected thought or memory may illuminate something happening in the space between the two.

[75] Ogden, *Creative Readings*, 76.

In this paragraph Ogden not only illustrates a relationship between text and reader which is relevant to my thesis, but also points to Winnicott's emphasis on play. Because of Winnicott's insistence that play is the basis of all creative activity, the centrality of his understanding of play in his work, and because I see Winnicott as being the analyst who best enters the early preverbal world of the infant, I use his work as the basis of the first chapter in which I examine the ways in which Rowling invites her readers to play with the text and the way that play is foregrounded within the Harry Potter series.

This new way of looking at the patient /analyst relationship has also changed the way in which analysts are looking at the relationship between psychoanalysis and literature. Studies that draw on the two disciplines have developed too: as already stated psychoanalysts have moved away from analysing the text in itself and literary critics no longer think of fictional characters as if they were real people. Psychoanalyst Jeremy Holmes sees 'parallels between the literary and the psychotherapeutic imagination, so that understanding literary creativity can enhance psychotherapeutic skilfulness. Literate therapists, I suggest, make better therapists.'[76]

While Holmes sees literature as enhancing psychotherapy, psychoanalyst Ignês Sodré uses psychoanalysis to throw light on fictional characters. Writing on 'Psychoanalysis and Literature' she says

> There seems to be a need of the human mind to fictionalise; the mind seems to create and to hear stories to be able to function. Listening to stories is not only a pleasure but also the fulfilment of a powerful psychological need… the pleasure we get from reading good literature relates at its most basic level to the pleasure in being told a story which, whilst being essentially not true – fiction, not fact – only works while we believe it is true.[77]

[76] Jeremy Holmes, *The Therapeutic Imagination: Using Literature to Deepen Psychodynamic Understanding and Enhance Empathy* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 204), ix.
[77] Ignês Sodré, *Imaginary Existences: A Psychoanalytic Exploration of Phantasy, Fiction, Dreams and Daydreams* (London: Routledge, 2015), 75.

This introduces the concept of 'emotional truth' by which I mean the recognition by the reader of a situation or a feeling experienced by a fictional character which rings true to the reader who may have had a similar emotional experience either in reality or in fantasy. For Sodré, who uses psychoanalysis to examine fictional characters, 'great writers… use their talents to create "true false characters"' that is, characters who, while being fictional, are believable and with whom readers identify.[78] The 'truth' – emotional and otherwise – of a fictional text and of fictional characters allows us to appreciate the meaningful relationships readers can have with a text and with the characters within it.

Examining the experiences which Rowling's protagonists undergo resulting in feelings of anxiety, excitement, or happiness is essential to my thesis. The element of fantasy makes it clear to readers that this is fiction, and yet embedded in the fantasy are these emotional truths which are recognised both consciously and unconsciously. Rustin and Rustin, writing about another fantasy, *Tom's Secret Garden*, (Philippa Pearce, 1958), write 'It must be evident to child readers as well as adults that the events of the narrative could not really occur yet the story in a number of ways refuses to trivialise them… and insists on their deeper truth.'[79] This is the concept expressed by Rowling when she has Dumbledore say 'Of course it is happening inside your head, Harry, but why on earth should that mean that it is not real?'[80] This statement recognises the 'deeper truth' or the inner reality, of Rowling's entire series, and her use of the genre of fantasy facilitates its expression.[81] In literary criticism the emphasis is on the conscious; in psychoanalysis the

[78] Ibid., 75.
[79] Rustin and Rustin, *Narratives*, 38.
[80] Rowling, *Hallows*, 579.
[81] Karen Armstrong examines how myth has always been used to explain deep truths and numinous ideas. She makes the point that it is essential that myths should not be accepted as factual: as an example she writes 'Creation stories had never been regarded as historically accurate; their purpose was therapeutic. But once you start reading genesis as scientifically valid, you have bad science and bad religion.' Karen Armstrong, *A Short History of Myth*, (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2006),137.

emphasis is on the unconscious, but, I suggest, as readers we respond both consciously and unconsciously.

In this thesis my aim is to address the two disciplines equally. I argue that reading any fiction, but especially fantasy, is similar to embarking on the journey of psychoanalysis. The reader and the analysand both enter into a new and unfamiliar world. Both fiction and psychoanalysis involve storytelling, something essential whether as a myth to live by, as entertainment or as a means of revealing truth. Karen Coats recognises the essential function of storytelling when she writes:

> Stories, it has been said, are as old as bread. I like that image, because it links stories to something as indispensable to our survival as food… It's an apt connection, surely, with rich metaphorical implications, but we must beware, I think, of a false binary embedded in its image, namely that bread feeds the body and stories feed the mind. Instead we need to remember that just as good bread can often nourish and fortify the soul even more than it does the body, so stories have a profound effect on the growth, the image and the perceived needs and desires of the body, indeed of the whole person.[82]

From the point of view of Object Relations, these needs are first and foremost about relationship, originally within the family, and later with peers. In her narrative Rowling offers fictional characters with whom readers connect and with whom they identify. Stories, I insist, are an aspect of play, insofar as the listener or the reader leaves the day-to-day life and enters a fictional life. This kind of fantasy play is at the base of emotional growth, according to Winnicott, the title of whose most important work, *Playing and Reality* makes this evident. Winnicott sees play as taking place in the liminal space between inside and outside.[83] I discuss this in further detail in Chapter one, but introduce it at this point as I see storytelling in both fiction and psychoanalysis as inherently connected to play and to emotional growth as an essential underlying concept throughout.

[82] Karen Coats, *Looking Glasses and Neverlands: Lacan, Desire and Subjectivity in Children's Literature* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2004), 1.
[83] D. W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London: Tavistock, 1971).

Methodology

My research question is what is the part played by the unconscious response of readers to Rowling's Harry Potter series leading to the extraordinary popularity of the novels. Linking literature and psychoanalysis by seeking to discover the *unconscious* response of readers, is a new concept, and a search of the literature has shown just one other study of this, that by Merav Roth.[84] My thesis thus breaks new ground in analysing an aspect of why certain books have a greater appeal for children than others, and why, in Rowling's series, the novels also appeal to adults.

Unconscious thoughts and feelings are not readily accessed but nevertheless have a strong impact in our day-to-day life: psychoanalysis is a means of exploring the unconscious, but finding an appropriate methodology for using it to explore the unconscious response has its own difficulties. Roth observes this difficulty in addressing the unconscious response to a narrative, and writes 'We cannot report directly about our unconscious, which is by definition, unknown to us.'[85] On the difficulty of finding a possible methodology she writes: 'there is a glaring and continuing difficulty in psychoanalytic reader study – in extracting and generalising the unconscious aspects of the literary reading experience.'[86] To do this I have chosen to focus on what the text offers to the reader to which he or she can relate, in the same way that a psychoanalyst offers an observation to the patient which he is free to take or to leave. I look at how the fictional characters relate to each other and how the actual readers relate to the fictional characters and situations, and, to use Roth's words, try to 'extract and generalise the unconscious aspects of the… reading experience.'

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[84] Merav Roth, *A Psychoanalytic Perspective on Reading Literature: Reading the Reader* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2020).

[85] Ibid., 18.
[86] Ibid, 17.

However, there are also supplementary questions that emerge as a result of reading through a psychoanalytic lens: standard literary tropes such as quests and school stories represent aspects of growing up emotionally and spiritually as well as physically. Coming from the standpoint of the Independent Tradition, with its emphasis on Object Relations, two elements are of particular importance: the fact that relationships in their conscious and unconscious forms are of the essence, and that transference, which is one form of relating, is also central, again in conscious and unconscious ways. Readers relate not only to the fictional characters but to the books themselves, and may use the narratives to expand their own ideas. Choosing the genre of fantasy enables Rowling to address ideas and themes more freely, especially the representations of inter-family strife, struggles of good and evil, and representations of death.

Rustin and Rustin write that their objective is 'to demonstrate how the grasp by these authors of children's feelings and behaviour has some parallels with the more generalised understanding obtained from child psychoanalysis.'[87] This was written in their first edition in 1987: in their second edition 2001, introducing a new chapter on Harry Potter, they write that a reason that these stories appeal to children and adults is 'a combination of imaginative creativity, with a sense of underlying emotional "realism," by which in this context we mean a feeling for the emotional cruxes in the lives of children.'[88] I have addressed the Rustins' work on p. 20, and much of my thesis is based on their recognition of 'emotional realism,' insofar as in each of the chapters I explore how Harry and his companions negotiate these 'cruxes,' many of which child readers will identify with as being their own. However, unlike Rustin and Rustin I do not see these identifications as ends in themselves but as steps that the protagonists take towards

[87] Rustin and Rustin, *Narratives*, 14.
[88] Ibid., 264.

integration and transcendence, which suggests a deeper layer of connection with the narrative. In order to uncover the unconscious appeal of the series, I must focus on relationship, which is central to Object Relations and to the Independents as well as to Rowling's narrative. But relationships take place in a space, a virtual space or a physical space, and they involve some kind of interaction which Winnicott calls play.[89] I therefore begin by exploring the concepts of Space and Play.

[89] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, passim.

The Structure of the Thesis

Chapter One, Space and Play: Space to Play

In this chapter I introduce the work of Donald Winnicott, (1896-1971), the psychoanalyst who has had the most influence on my psychoanalytic work and thinking. I explain his theories on the importance of Play which for him underlies everything we are and everything we do. Play in the Winnicottian sense is less about playing games and more about the liminal space in which people meet, mentally and emotionally. I posit that for Winnicott play and meeting emotionally, mentally or spiritually are the same – significantly, Winnicott misquotes Tagore's line 'On the seashore of endless worlds children meet' as 'on the seashore of endless worlds children play'[90]— so shared culture or belief, or indeed any real sense of connection is an aspect of play as Winnicott understands it. Equally important is the idea of space in which play can take place and transformation can happen. I also look at play as more commonly understood in the ways in which Rowling plays with her readers through detective puzzles, word play, references, and jokes, and explore how she addresses serious themes with lightness.

Chapter two, Fantasy and the world within

In this chapter I look at the importance of fantasy and how it can be used first, as a metaphor for the unconscious, secondly, as it is used by Rowling, to create a secondary world parallel to the world in which we live. I look at how Rowling uses fantasy to draw a contrast between the way in which Harry can move between the two worlds, fantasy and actual, inner and outer, and the Dursleys, caricatures of what psychoanalyst Christopher Bollas terms 'the abnormally normal.'[91] Fantasy can be seen as a threat by those anxious

[90] Winnicott, 'The Location of Cultural Experience' in *Playing* 95. Rabindranath Tagore *On the seashore of endless worlds children meet*.
[91] Christopher Bollas, 'Normotic Illness' in *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known* (London: Free Association Books, 1987), 135-156.

to hold onto rigid beliefs, which is why the books have been banned in some places, the threat being not only that they encourage new ways of thinking, but as they are set in a school for witches and wizards they are assumed to encourage Satanism. Fantasy offers a medium for observing ideas at a remove, such things as prejudice, snobbery and illusion and I explore how Rowling addresses several of these issues. In this chapter I interrogate the extent to which fantasy, more than realism, can express the fundamental truths explored both in psychoanalysis and in Rowling's text.

Chapter three, School: finding one's place in the world

Fantasy is concerned with the inner world, but the outer world for most children is structured by school and the school and the school year, which is a familiar setting. Hogwarts is unlike most other schools, which delights children, but is not unlike some elite schools which Rowling satirises. However, the challenges of growing up, starting in a new place, meeting new people, making friends and enemies, remain the same. Rowling uses the frame of the school year as a structure to contain the development of the series as a *bildungsroman*, so that in each volume the students are a year older and the challenges are different. In this chapter, I query what is the unconscious response and recognition of Harry's struggles that might appeal to adults as well as children? What does the school setting lend to our understanding of the series from a psychoanalytic perspective? In the final novel Rowling abandons the school as setting, metaphor and structural motif, and focuses on the relationships between the three main protagonists and their transformation in an unstructured environment.

Chapter four. The Hero's Quest: Stopping Places on the Quest.

The hero's quest has been a significant theme since stories began, and certainly it is one way in which Rowling's series can be read. The battle between good and evil is part of

the hero's journey, as the hero struggles to gain something essential for his community. In this chapter I compare Harry and his companions to chivalric knights, striving to save their civilisation from a rule of darkness. Harry, like Will Stanton in Susan Cooper's series The Dark is Rising (1965-1977), is eleven at the start of the series and both writers see this age as significant. I draw on Winnicott's work again in this chapter, and particularly his celebration of the idealism of youth when he writes 'One of the exciting things about adolescent boys and girls can be said to be their idealism. They have not yet settled down into disillusionment.'92 I compare Rowling's work with Old English and Middle English texts because as a British writer this is her heritage, and many of her literary allusions are to these early works. The quest functions, as I demonstrate here, as both a structural device for the narrative and as a powerful metaphor for the central characters' personal and psychological growth.

Chapter five, Alchemy as a metaphor for learning.

Learning and Transformation were the two goals of the medieval alchemists, and they are the two goals of growing up. In this chapter I show how Rowling uses alchemy as a metaphor for 92 D. W. Winnicott, Playing and Reality, 149.38 36 Harry's academic and spiritual learning and how he is transformed by it. Knowledge can be used for good and evil as the legend of Faust shows, and in Rowling's series we see how it can be used and misused. In this chapter I compare Dumbledore to a medieval alchemist tutoring Harry about the important issues of life and the significance of the important choices that he must make, and compare him with Voldemort, an essentially Faustian figure whose desire for power ultimately leads to his downfall. This chapter moves from reflecting on the personal and interpersonal issues in growing up, to focus on the deep underlying philosophy of the series. I examine the extent to which the reader responds consciously and unconsciously to Rowling's philosophy from the beginning of the series.

Chapter six, Death and its significance through the series.

Rowling has said that her books are all about death and gradually, book after book, she makes Dumbledore explain to Harry his views about death, and finally make clear the task that Harry must eventually undertake. Rowling addresses the topic of death in a way that is accessible to a young audience but not too simplistic for the adult reader, and in this chapter I look at the fact that the entire series has headed to this topic, and even more at the way in which, without being specific about belief she makes clear her views on spirituality. She makes death approach gradually from the first novel in which Harry realises that the loss of the Philosopher's Stone will result in the death of Nicholas Flamel, who is no more than a name to him, to the later texts which contain real losses in the deaths of Cedric, Sirius, Dumbledore and Harry's owl Hedwig. These are characters with whom Harry, and Rowling's readers, have formed increasingly close relationships as the series has progressed. In her final novel Harry becomes reconciled to his own death.93 Here Rowling pushes her narrative to the edge of experience: as human beings we recognise that we are being-towards-death and in 93 Rowling, Hallows, 554-564. 37 recent decades there have been a number of novels imagining this unknown space, possibly in an effort to find reassurance by an imaginary familiarisation. In her series Rowling does not explicitly offer any particular belief, but she gives consistent hints that 'All will be well,' to paraphrase her final words. This is also the message of the medieval philosophers and alchemists. I suggest that this reassurance that with the hint that there may be some kind of continuity of relationship even beyond death, offers hope to her readers as they confront it more closely in book after book. In addressing the unconscious hopes of her readers, I address an unconscious desire which goes beyond psychoanalytic concepts, apart from the desire and need for relationships. In this interdisciplinary approach I explore the conscious and unconscious responses to Rowling's series with a

view to discovering why the phenomenal popularity of this series, written for children, extended to an adult readership. Addressing the unconscious response has inherent difficulties, as I described in the Methodology section, and may be a reason why, to my knowledge, Merav Roth who published in 2020, is the only psychoanalyst to have attempted this approach to works of fiction. My research therefore introduces to studies of the Harry Potter series an aspect previously unconsidered. In this new interdisciplinary approach my research has important repercussions for both psychoanalysis and children's literature.

Chapter One: Space and Play: Space to Play

Rowling's novels have resulted in a huge amount of extra-textual enjoyment of her books, leading to theme parks in several countries, notably Japan, China and Australia and especially the flagship park, 'The Wizarding World of Harry Potter'in Orlando, Florida.[92]This consists of two theme parks, one of which, 'Islands of Adventure,' recreates Hogwarts Castle where participants can experience a ride called 'Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey,' which takes them through the wizarding world. A replica of the Hogwarts Express connects 'Islands of Adventure' with the other part of 'The Wizarding World,' 'Universal Studios Florida' which includes among other attractions a re-creation of Hogsmeade. In London, Warner Bros. offer various events: participants are invited to walk down Diagon Alley, have dinner in the Great Hall of Hogwarts, which offers special Christmas Dinners on some dates each December.[93] These theme parks engage almost exclusively with the films, which started with *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* in 2001 and, because of dividing *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* into two, ended with part two in 2011.[94] Chestnut Hill College in Philadelphia holds an annual academic Harry Potter conference, which spills over into fun events held in the town.[95] In 2000 a Harry Potter panel was included in a Children's Literature Association conference in Roanoke, Virginia, at which Roberta Seelinger Trites among

[92] www.visitorlando.com
[93] www.wbstudiotour.co.uk
[94] *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone,* 2001, Director Chris Columbus; *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets,* 2002, Director Chris Columbus; *Harry Potter and he Prisoner of Azkaban,* 2004, Director Alfonso Cuarón; *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire,* 2005, Director Mike Newell; *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix,* 2007, Director David Yates; *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince,* 2009, Director David Yates; *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1,* 2010, Director David Yates; *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2,* 2011, Director David Yates.
[95] www.che.edu The festival, which at its peak had 50,000 participants, had to be cancelled in its original format in 2018 because of legal action from Warner Bros. Hoever, the academic conference continues to take place and the festival continues without using the name Harry Potter.

others participated.[96] In 2012 the University of Limerick and the University of St Andrews in Scotland both held academic conferences on Harry Potter. In 2017-2018 the British Library held an exhibition on the origins of the magic in the Harry Potter books and has produced a book cataloguing the exhibition, *Harry Potter: A History of Magic*.[97] This, like the Harry Potter conferences and the ever-increasing academic books being published on the series, was a recognition not only of the popularity of the series and the films, but also an acknowledgment that the Harry Potter culture deserved to be taken seriously, as well as providing immense popular enjoyment. In *Pottermore*, the online site founded by Rowling, which has now been incorporated into *The Wizarding World*, fans can be part of an interactive fictional universe centred on the films as well as the novels, in which they are free to rewrite the plot, alter the characters of the main protagonists or imagine themselves as part of this fictional world: being sorted into houses and assigned a Patronus and a wand.[98] Moreover, Rowling also seems to endorse some of the many other web sites which are independent of her control, and to give awards to those fan sites that she thinks well of.[99] These digital spaces allow readers to engage playfully with material from the texts and to imagine themselves in the role of a character within Rowling's wizarding world. These digital spaces, because they are accessible from one's own smartphone or tablet, computer or PC, merges the private

[96] Lana A. Whited, ed., *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter: Perspectives on a Literary Phenomenon* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 1. The conference led to this book.
[97] British Library Board and Bloomsbury Publishing (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).
[98] *Pottermore*, now incorporated into *Wizarding World*, was founded in 2012 by J.K.Rowling and is her official website. While this may be viewed, as Pamela Ingleton suggests, as Rowling's desire to continue to control her wizard universe ('Harry Potter and the Extratextual (After)life' in *J. K. Rowling: Harry Potter* edited by Cynthia J. Hallett and Peggy J. Huey (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012)), it also points to the unwillingness of her fans to leave the wizard universe, and their eagerness for new revelations about the characters past and present.
While *Pottermore* appears to have started as a way for Rowling to control her fans, innumerable other sites evolved, some such as *MuggleNet* and *The Leaky Cauldron*, were approved by Rowling.
[99] In 2004 she gave her first award to Immeritus, a Sirius Black fansite; among others who were given her award are The Leaky Cauldron, 2005; Potterish, 2006; Harry Potter Fan Zone in 2007; and finally HPAlliance, in 2008, a site which encourages fans to make the world a better place, now called fandomforward.org.

space with the public sphere, making the world of the novels contiguous with the reader's own world. By inviting readers to take an active role in extending the fictional world of the texts, building new stories, and even recreating and revising material from the novels, Rowling encourages readers to play with and within her stories. Rowling herself appears to participate in this revisionism by not only collaborating with Jack Thorne and John Tiffany in the play *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* (2016), but even declaring it to be part of the canon.[100] She is also prepared to add to her narrative: speaking to fans at Carnegie Hall in October 2007, she startled her audience by announcing 'I have always thought of Dumbledore as gay.'[101] Rowling's continued interventions within her texts and her revisions to her material can be – and should be – read as a kind of continued play. The films, theme parks, interactive exhibitions, webpages, fanfics and dramas, are conscious forms of play: they carve out space – physically or virtually – where the reader may engage deliberately with material from the texts for enjoyment or recreation rather than for any serious purpose. These are spaces of amusement, entertainment and diversion. The play that I am concerned in this chapter is *unconscious* play as a form of communication, and as an aspect of learning. From the position of Object Relations it is through this unconscious play that readers are drawn into Rowling's world.

In this thesis, as I explained in the Introduction (p3), I keep to the original canon of seven books, from which all the later fandom has developed. The series forms a complete whole, tracing the protagonists' mental and emotional growth from eleven to adulthood. While the possibilities for play which I described above are for conscious play

[100] This despite the fact that she not only completely changes the characters as we have come to know them in the first seven books, but also alters the plot and the timeline of the original series.
[101] While some fans saw this as a triumph for LGBT people, others wondered why it came as an after thought rather than in the body of the text. While Rowling states that this is based on Dumbledore's relationship with Grindlewald, this is another example of revisionism, with no inference in the books until the final novel. Looking through the lens of Object Relations it recognised that hererosexual people can share love and excitement with someone of the same sex when embarking on a new project or idea without it being homosexual. .

– which does not rule out an unconscious element – the play that underlies this chapter is about play as an unconscious form of communication, and as an aspect of learning. In particular I examine the transcendent aspect of the protagonists' development and the way in which it links with other themes and genres in the series. My thesis addresses the part the unconscious plays in the response of readers to the series: what unconscious needs or desires are met by the novels as the series develops. I approach this from the position of the Independent group of psychoanalysts, also known as the British School, in particular I use the theory of Object Relations which is closely linked to this group. I start with the work of psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott, who was a paediatrician before becoming a psychoanalyst, and whose observations on troubled children and babies led to his ideas on the importance of play and on the space in which unconscious play can take place, and also to the fact that the desire to communicate – which to him is a form of play – is there from the beginning of life.

The importance of potential space for play

Winnicott's concept of what he calls 'potential space' is important as a space where play can take place. For Winnicott all creativity and all healthy development is grounded in play and he expounds on this in his book, *Playing and Reality.*[102] Winnicott postulates that this essential play starts when the infant becomes attached to a particular object, which assumes great importance and which Winnicott calls the 'transitional object.'[103] It is also, he says, 'the first not-me object,' an object which is not part of the infant's body but nor does the infant see it as part of external reality.[104] It is, therefore, a liminal object:

[102] D. W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1971), 95 and 104.
. Even with very young babies Winnicott communicates through play: in his 'set situation' he has a shiny spatula within the baby's reach and observes the baby's reaction to it, this can range from eagerly grabbing it to anxiety about touching it. Ibid., 36-53.
[103] Ibid., 2.
[104] Ibid., 2.

it is neither fully outside nor inside. This is an object that the child carries around for security. It is particularly important at times of stress, at bedtime, or when the child is lonely or in need of comfort. From the observer's point of view it is merely an object 'yet it must seem to the infant ... to do something to show it has vitality or reality of its own.'[105] Winnicott argues that the importance and significance of this 'transitional object' is gradually 'spread out over the whole intermediate territory between "inner psychic reality" and "the external world as perceived by two persons in common", that is to say over the whole cultural field.'[106] He writes 'I am therefore studying the substance of *illusion,* that which is allowed to the infant, and which in adult life is inherent in art and religion…'[107] As I will show, this is an important aspect of how we react to fiction and myth, and how we negotiate the zone between our own internal lives and the world around us. This is the area of development that I refer to as transcendent. For Winnicott this 'intermediate territory' is not a physical space but an imagined one. In a similar way Winnicott sees the space in which the infant relates to this object as being a liminal space which also is neither outside nor inside.

Winnicott is not alone in reflecting on phenomenological readings of space, for example, Edward Soja, writes in *Thirdspace* of 'space as directly *lived* ... inhabited and used by artists, writers, and philosophers... ethnologists, anthropologists, psychoanalysts...[108] What Soja calls Thirdspace is very similar to Winnicott's concept of potential space, that is, a liminal space between inside and outside, and Winnicott even uses a similar lexis in describing this potential space as being the 'third part' of a person's life. Though notoriously complex, Winnicott's concept of potential space forms the basis of all his work both as a theoretician and as a practitioner, and enables us to understand

[105] Ibid., 5.
[106] Ibid., 5.
[107] Ibid., 3.
[108] Edward Soja, *Thirdspace* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1996), 65. Emphasis in original text.

the ways in which the individual may relate both to the outside world and to personal inner space. Winnicott sees this potential space as belonging to

> The third part of the life of a human being, a part that we cannot ignore, [which] is an intermediate area of *experiencing*, to which inner reality and external life both contribute. It is an area that is not challenged, because no claim is made on its behalf except that it shall exist as a resting-place for the individual engaged in the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet interrelated.[109]

This 'potential space' is also the essential space where psychoanalysis takes place, linking as it does, external life, internal conscious reality and the unconscious. The idea of a 'resting place' suggests that it can be a space for fantasy or daydreaming, which for Winnicott are forms of play. The liminal zone between inner and outer realities is not, for Winnicott, a zone of conflict but a space of exchange, interaction and growth. 'Resting place' also suggests a space of relaxation which could include entry into another world by reading or writing, in which both writer and reader could share a space of exchange. Winnicott describes it as the space where creativity is born and so it is in this liminal space, where the elements of external life, inner conscious reality and the unconscious come together freely, that Rowling and her readers meet.

When Winnicott writes of 'The Place where we Live' he suggests that it is in this potential space, the 'third area [which] is a product of the *experiences of the individual person* (baby, child, adolescent, adult) in the environment that obtains.'[110] He returns to his theme of playing in potential space in this book, addressing the topic from different positions: 'The Place Where we Live,' 'Creativity and its Origins,' 'The Location of Cultural Experience.' Winnicott devoted much of his work to analysing when and how the individual begins this process of creativity, a process requiring the individual to make

[109] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 2.
[110] Ibid., 107. Emphasis in original text. While exploring the unconscious Winnicott never loses sight of the reality of the patient's experience. When working with babies in the 'set situation' he is also aware of the mother's attitude, strict or permissive.

sense of experiences as they occur throughout life. In Winnicott's thinking, playful imagination is essential if the individual is to achieve this process of creativity successfully.[111] The psychoanalyst Thomas Ogden describes this

> most elusive of [Winnicott's] ideas which he used to refer to an intermediate area of experiencing that lies between fantasy and reality. Specific forms of potential space include the play space... the analytic space, the area of cultural experience, and the area of creativity.[112]

Phenomenological space is concerned with subjective experience, thus the 'reality' referred to by Ogden here is likely to be something which has particular inner emotional significance for the possessor.

Returning to the space between inner and outer, Winnicott maintains that

> no human being is free from the strain of relating inner and outer reality, and … relief from this strain is provided by an intermediate area of experience, which is not challenged (arts, religion, etc.) This intermediate area is in direct continuity with the play area of the small child who is 'lost' in play.[113]

This 'intermediate area' or potential space is the space in which we exist while immersed in a fictional world such as that of the *Harry Potter* series. When we are engrossed in a novel the feelings evoked in the reader are real although it is neither our own inner world nor the external world. On the interface between psychoanalysis and literature psychoanalyst Priscilla Roth writes

> Psychoanalysts know what great writers have always known: that everything we love and everything we hate is both real and metaphorical, so that each of our attachments has layers of meaning.[114]

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[111] Ibid., passim.

[112] Thomas H. Ogden, 'On potential space' in Margaret Boyle Spelman and Frances Thomson-Salo eds. *The Winnicott Tradition: Lines of Development, Evolution of Theory and Practice over the Decades* (London: Karnac 2015), 121.
It is important to note that Winnicott tends to use the words 'space' 'location' and 'place'loosely rather than differentiate between them s many geographers do. Moreover, these terms do not refer to physical space or environment as addressed in chapter four of this thesis. For clarity, I use the terms 'space' and 'place' as distinct: 'space' for the purposes of this discussion refers to potential space, and 'place' will be used throughout the thesis, and especially in chapter four, to refer to physical or geographical locations.

[113] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 13.

[114] Priscilla Roth 'Introduction' in Ignês Sodré *Imaginary Existences: A psychoanalytic exploration of phantasy, fiction, dreams and daydreams* (Hove, East Sussex: Routledge 2015), xviii.

Approaching the topic of the interface between fantasy and reality from the standpoint of myth, Karen Armstrong offers as an example that readers of a novel are projected into another world, which, 'like yoga or a religious festival, breaks down barriers of space and time…'[115] Rowling recognises this when she has Dumbledore tell Harry 'Of course it is happening inside your head, Harry, but why on earth should that mean that it is not real?'[116] We know that the events as recounted in the narrative are not factual, but the emotional response of the reader is real. This breaking down of barriers offers a conceptual meeting place: literature and psychoanalysis; author and reader; conscious and unconscious; playing and reality. In this way the text becomes a kind of transitional object, a space where 'inner and outer reality are separate yet interrelated,' a site of potentiality, creativity and play.

The Importance of Play

It is important to clarify that I am not referring to playing games but to play in the Winnicottian sense of reaching a greater understanding of reality as suggested in the title of his book *Playing and Reality.* Play is a serious business. For children and young animals play is preparation for life, although they are not conscious of this fact. Different scenarios can be tried and skills practised. Melanie Klein, like Winnicott, worked with very young children allowing them to express their concerns with toys before they were mature enough to express them verbally. Play can be therapeutic, a means of coming to terms with traumatic incidents or difficult situations and helping the child to control the environment, or at least to recognise it and come to be at peace with it. In replaying a situation, either alone or in therapy, the child can rearrange it imaginatively, this time being in control, no longer helpless. The control may be illusory but it is helpful in

[115] Karen Armstrong, *A Short History of Myth* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2005), 153-154.
[116] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 579.

healing emotional trauma. Stories, particularly fantasy, are an important aspect of play for all these reasons, and although literature can be used formally as a branch of therapy, children are usually drawn to the books that meet their needs at the time.[117] It is not only children who need the security of a book from time to time as we confront crises: Karen Coats notes that because we return to the same issues throughout life 'Our focus shifts as we encounter circumstances and develop new cognitive abilities, but patterns recur because we need them to, because we never fully and finally "finish" any part of our developmental process.'[118] In that uncomfortable liminal space of moving forward we need to 'play' in the space offered by a book. Suzanne Lake makes a similar point in her paper 'Object Relations in Harry Potter': 'Because certain fundamental conflicts continue to be revisited and reworked throughout adulthood, it follows that masterful children's literature might enthrall adults as well.'[119] Jenny Plastow, also draws attention to the need for play: 'There is *play* here—that function too much neglected in today's society, through which we rehearse, examine, and overcome, building confidence, managing doubts, trying out alternatives…'[120] Stories are also important in psychoanalysis as this is the space in which the patient tells his own particular story.[121]

Writing of his own profession as a psychoanalyst , Winnicott says:

> *Psychotherapy is done in the overlap of the two play areas, that of the patient and that of the therapist.* If the therapist cannot play, then he is not suitable for the

[117] Hugh Crago, 'Healing texts: bibliography and psychology' in Peter Hunt, ed. *Understanding Children's Literature* (Oxford: Routledge 2005) 181-189. Adults too, often seek out or return to books which offer a safe space in which to recover from a traumatic situation.
[118] Karen Coats, *The Bloomsbury Introduction to Children's and Young Adult Literature* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 71.
[119] Suzanne Lake, 'Object Relations in Harry Potter' in *The Journal of American Academy of Psychoanalysis and Dynamic Psychiatry* 31 (2003), 509-520.
[120] Jenny Plastow, *Children's Literature Annual No. 2. The Story and the Self; Children's Literature: Some Psychoanalytic Perspectives Papers and Presentations from Conference 2007* ed. Jenny Plastow (Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2008), 07.
[121] The psychoanalytic setting also offers space for that interplay between subjective and objective, fantasy and reality: analysts do not assume that what is said in a session is objectively true although in the patient's mind it may be factual. Psychoanalyst Horacio Etchegoyan is very clear on this, saying 'the analyst can take what the analysand says only as material… and material is, by definition, what informs us about the patient's internal world.' R. Horacio Etchegoyan, *The Fundamentals of Psychoanalytic Technique* (London: Karnac, 1991), 12.

> work. If the patient cannot play, then something needs to be done to enable the patient to become able to play, after which psychotherapy may begin. The reason why playing is essential is that it is in playing that the patient is being creative.[122]

In this context Winnicott sees play for the patient as freedom to express without reservation whatever thoughts occur. This is the essence of free association.[123] For the patient free association suggests a kind of playing with ideas, thoughts and memories. Play for the analyst involves seeing if these thoughts can be arranged in a new pattern which would shed light on the patient's difficulties. Winnicott argues that both analyst and patient need to be able to play creatively with the material which the patient brings to the therapy sessions.

I see both literature and psychoanalysis as taking place in this third, potential space, where inner, outer, and fantasy can co-exist as equals. It is a space that allows for the suspension of disbelief, but it is also a space for reflection.

From early in life children are concerned with major issues such as relationships, their own and those of others around them, death, rivalry and morality, and above all gaining a sense of identity. These are similar to adult issues, but children are more likely to admit openly their fears and anxieties and to seek reassurance than are adults. This, I suggest, is what Philip Pullman had in mind when he postulated that 'some themes, some subjects [are] too large for adult fiction; they can only be dealt with adequately in a children's book.'[124] Similarly, Winnicott acknowledges children's play to be 'inherently exciting and precarious. This characteristic derives … from the precariousness that belongs to the interplay in the child's mind of that which is subjective (near-

[122] Ibid., 54. Italics in the original.

[123] Free association, the basic method or tool of psychoanalysis initiated by Freud, invites the patient to relax, lying on the couch, and to say whatever occurs, without censorship and without omission. In normal conversation we try to be clear in what we are expressing, and so to be urged to express what comes to mind without having a clear context may appear to be an almost impossible task.

[124] Djamesauthor.blogspot.com

hallucination) and that which is objectively perceived (actual, or shared reality).'[125] For Winnicott, both psychoanalysis and the space to play must have space enough to allow anything, however disturbing or frightening, to be thought about but with secure boundaries to ensure safety. I suggest that children's literature also provides a space in which anything – no matter how disturbing or frightening – can be safely explored. These themes, of for example, anger, hatred and violence as well the desire to be loved and the fear of death, ambition and the fear of not being good enough, are relevant to both children and adults, and run through the entire Harry Potter series.[126] These complex themes are made acceptable through the playful aspects of the books. The novels become darker in tone as the series progresses, but the playful aspect is always present, and always open both to the protagonists and to the engaged reader.

In some ways the reader acts as an analyst of the novels. I do not mean this just in the sense the reader can work towards critical interpretation or close-reading of the texts, but in the sense that the reader, like the analyst should listen with 'evenly suspended attention' and 'turn over his own unconscious … towards the transmitting unconscious of the patient,' in this case of the author.[127] Later analysts working in the British Independent tradition, focusing on the interchange between the unconscious of the patient and the unconscious of the analyst, have developed the use of this free-floating attention into the metaphor of 'the analytic field', the basic idea being that 'patient and analyst generate unconscious field fantasies, or couple fantasies'[128]… so that from the patient's

[125] Lesley Caldwell and Angela Joyce, eds., *Reading Winnicott* (London: Routledge, 2011), 247.
[126] Rowling brins in elements from different popular genres to address these issues. My chapter three on school offers instances of learning about relationships, and also anger and violence; while chapter four on the quest and chapter five on alchemy are concerned with learning, both academic and spiritual.
[127] Sigmund Freud, 'Recommendations to physicians practising psycho-analysis' in Vol. XII of *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud.*1958 Psychoanalytic Electronic Publishing Edition. In her novels Rowling has struck a chord which resonateswith her readers at an unconscious as well as a conscious level.s
[128] Antonio Ferro and Giuseppe Civitarese, *The Analytic Field and its Transformations* (London: Karnac, 2015), 2.

free association and the analyst's free-floating attention may emerge a personal echo of the patient's material which can be offered as an interpretation. So, for example, a creative session might use the potential space described by Winnicott for analyst and patient to meet and jointly create a greater understanding of the patient's internal world, in other words, bring unconscious ideas into consciousness, and, bearing in mind Winnicott's dictum that only through play is it possible to be creative, to put this greater understanding to creative use.

Potential Space in Rowling's Text

Similarly, Rowling's text offers her readers not only a space where the common issues of fear, anxiety and depression and the struggle of good against evil can be contained within the narrative, but also a space where readers can respond to Rowling's text both consciously and unconsciously.

The most significant potential space is Hogwarts itself, where young wizards learn to practise their potential skills, to hone them and to control them. The ritual whereby first year students enter this new exciting space, and new exciting life by crossing the lake in small boats is described in a particularly evocative passage, and can be read symbolically as a return to the womb from which they emerge as new-born Hogwarts students; it can also be read as a descent into the unconscious where all sorts of marvellous things may be discovered, as Suzanne Lake suggests.[129] Similar to birth and to entry into the unconscious, it is a journey which is both exciting and perilous:

> Slipping and stumbling, they followed Hagrid down what seemed to be a steep, narrow path. It was so dark either side of them that Harry thought there must be thick trees there. Nobody spoke much… the narrow path…opened suddenly on to the edge of a great black lake…Perched atop a high mountain on the other side, its

[129] Lake, 'Object Relations in Harry Potter.' As so often in the unconscious, especially when reflecting on dreams, both interpretations are true: symbolically the protagonists' new lives are just beginning, and like newborns they are trying to make sense of their unfamiliar surroundings; as analysands they are leaving the consensual ordered world for a place where anything might happen.

> windows sparkling in the starry sky, was a vast castle with many turrets and towers…[which] towered over them as they sailed nearer and nearer to the cliff on which it stood…they were carried along a dark tunnel which seemed to be taking them right underneath the castle, until they reached a kind of underground harbour… Then they clambered up a passageway in the rock… coming out at last onto smooth, damp grass right in the shadow of the castle.[130]

Significantly, the reader arrives at Hogwarts at the same time as Harry, and experiences these new and strange spaces along with him. In this way, the reader is initiated into this play space just as the central characters are. In this manner, while Hogwarts is an actual physical space that the characters experience, the books also create a liminal space for the readers, within which readers can identify vicariously with the protagonists' struggles and victories without themselves being harmed. It is a liminal space in which conscious and unconscious fantasy can flourish. Fantasy, like the unconscious, can contain the disturbing and frightening as well as the exciting and marvellous: it contains the courage and daring of Gryffindor, the learning of Ravenclaw, the ambition of Slytherin and the kindness of Hufflepuff. The building itself plays with the students through its shifting staircases and riddling pictures, and the reader, too, is invited to take part in this play through word-games, intertextual allusions, and free association of symbols and imagery.

While the Room of Requirement is a physical location within Hogwarts, it is, as a result of its shifting and liminal nature, a space rather than a proper place. Because it adapts itself and becomes whatever space is needed, the Room of Requirement functions as a significant transitional and transformative space. When Harry is looking for a safe place to practise Defence Against the Dark Arts, following Dobby's advice he walks past what is normally 'a stretch of blank wall opposite an enormous tapestry depicting Barnabas the Barmy's foolish attempt to train trolls for the ballet,' and as he walks past for the third time a door appears in the wall. Inside:

[130] Rowling, *Stone* 83-84.

> The walls were lined with wooden bookcases and instead of chairs there were large silk cushions on the floor. A set of shelves at the far end of the room carried a range of instruments such as Sneakoscopes, Secrecy Sensors and a large, cracked Foe-Glass…[131]

The room can be seen as a potent symbol of potential space in which the creative play, which is in fact learning, can take place. As with young animals this is 'play' on which the child characters' lives will later depend, and indeed the play-practice bears fruit when after a confrontation with a group of Slytherins, Ron, Ginny, Neville and Luna appear, battered and bruised but triumphant and pleased with themselves.[132] In the transformational space of the Room of Requirement their play facilitates growth and enables them to change from being helpless victims of Umbridge's desire to treat them as little children to growing in confidence to confront the crises that they encounter. However, Rowling's text makes it much more than a space for learning skills and techniques: it is also a space where the marginalised characters like the inept Neville Longbottom and dreamy Luna Lovegood are enabled to become accepted members of the group. No longer fearing ridicule, their characters begin to flourish as they develop their skills, and from this point Rowling brings Neville and Luna as well as Ginny much more to the fore in the series, expanding the central group of Harry, Ron and Hermione to include them in the battle of the Department of Mysteries.

Reading this from an Object Relations stance, we can see the importance of relationship. Coming together as a group, learning to trust each other and to rely on each other, to relate to each other, is hugely significant and Rowling shows the significance of these developing relationships as they help the protagonists to grow through the series. For Luna the greatest value was that 'it was like having friends.'[133] Later in the series

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[131] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2003), 345-346. This passage is also an example of the way in which Rowling creates an incongruous throw-away funny image in the middle of Harry's serious concern.
[132] Ibid., 670.
[133] Rowling, *Prince* 132.

Harry sees that the ceiling of her room has paintings of Harry, Ron, Hermione, Ginny and Neville linked by what looked like gold chains but which was the word 'friends' repeated over and over.[134] Towards the end of Deathly Hallows both Neville and Luna become strong characters on whom others depend. Luna has been encouraging the other prisoners in the dungeon at Malfoy Manor,[135] and, when later they see Neville, he has become one of the leaders of the students rebelling against the rule of the Carrows at Hogwarts. One of his eyes is swollen and there are gouge marks on his face, but he tells them 'It helps when people stand up to them…'[136] Neville is the one who challenges Voldemort when Harry's body is carried back to the castle, and it is he who receives the Gryffindor sword with which he cuts off the snake's head. Both Neville and Luna have used the potential space of the Room of Requirement to become fully themselves, Neville as a fighter, and Luna as inspiration and encouragement when the others are almost overcome by Dementors, saying '…think of something happy… we're all still here…we're still fighting…[137]

Like all potential space the Room of Requirement can be used negatively as well as positively: Draco Malfoy's use of the space to introduce the Death Eaters into Hogwarts is very different from Harry's use of it.[138] The Room of Requirement also figures in the Battle of Hogwarts as the place of the final confrontation between Harry, Ron and Hermione, and Malfoy and his cronies. Harry remembers seeing Rowena Ravenclaw's diadem on a previous visit, and thinks it is likely to be a Horcrux: Malfoy and his friends have come to capture Harry. By now the latter group have learned Dark Magic, although they are unable to control it, and Crabbe turns the room into a furnace of

[134] Rowling, *Hallows* 338-339.
[135] Ibid., 376-378
[136] Ibid., 462.
[137] Ibid., 586-587, 522.
[138] Rowling, *Prince*, 548.

Fiendfyre, a horrifying fire that changes itself into monsters of nightmare intent on swallowing up anything and everybody. The fire destroys the diadem Horcrux and the room itself.[139] This potential space has been the container for the truly creative and nurturing Dumbledore's Army, for the evil plans of Malfoy and finally for the destructive horrors that kill Crabbe and narrowly miss killing the others. Potential space, like knowledge, can also be used destructively: The Room of Requirement is a symbol of a neutral space which can be used for good or evil. The same can be said of psychoanalysis, and of all learning: it offers transformation, but leaves the outcome to be freely chosen.

How Rowling plays with her readers

A large part of the appeal of the series for both children and adults lies in the humour of the books at several levels. As I will stress in other chapters the main thrust of the narrative is the physical, mental and spiritual transformation of the protagonists as they take on ever more difficult tasks and deal with bullying, often complicated decision making and with the ever-present threat of death. Rowling's use of humour does not minimise the horror, but it does balance it. Terri Doughty, writing of the appeal of the books to teen age boys, draws attention to the fact that 'these books are funny. There is a lot of gross-out humor here, from Bertie Bott's Every Flavor Beans, which can come in such flavors as "vomit" and "ear-wax," to the Blast-Ended Skrewts with their exploding bottoms.'[140] To the Skrewts I would add the Bubotubers: black, slug-like plants with swellings which the students have to squeeze to obtain the pus which each contains, a task which is 'disgusting but oddly satisfying.'[141] Doughty also draws attention to 'Divination

[139] Rowling, *Hallows*, 508-509.
[140]Terri Doughty, 'Locating Harry Potter in the "Boys' Book" Market,' in *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter: Perspectives on a Literary Phenomenon,* ed. Lana A. Whited (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002), 255.
[141] Rowling, *Goblet*, 172.

class, when Lavender asks to have a planet identified, Professor Trelawney answers "It is Uranus, my dear," whereupon Ron trots out the rather tired but endlessly funny joke… "Can I have a look at Uranus, too, Lavender?"'[142]

Throughout the series the Weasley twins play the part of the joker, always ready with a quick answer. Rowling makes the dynamics of the Weasley twins quite clear from when Harry first meets them at the station: the twins tease their mother about which is Fred and which is George; they tease their pompous older brother, Percy, who is very proud of being a prefect; they are good-hearted and offer to help Harry with his trunk and in doing so, notice his scar and ask directly if he is Harry Potter. Ron, who shares Harry's compartment, is more reticent, but does blurt out '"Are you really Harry Potter?... I thought it might be one of Fred and George's jokes…"'[143] The twins are clever although not academic and their joke shop, 'Weasley's Wizarding Wheezes', proves to be very successful.[144] Even at the worst times the twins still manage some black humour: when George loses an ear as the members of the Order of the Phoenix rescue Harry, he tells Fred he feels saint-like: '"What's wrong with him?" croaked Fred looking terrified. "Is his mind affected?"…"Saint-like," repeated George… "I'm holy. *Holey*, Fred, geddit? … You'll be able to tell us apart now, anyway, Mum."'[145]

As the reader is drawn into the fantasy world, we are given a new perspective on our own world, and much of the humour lies in the way in which Rowling defamiliarises what in the 'real' world are perfectly ordinary objects or ways of behaving. Hagrid's comment about parking meters is an example of this,[146] as is Mr Weasley's wondering about how plugs and the telephone work.[147] In St. Mungo's Hospital Harry asks Ron if

[142] Doughty, 'Locating,' 255.
[143] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997), 72-74.
[144] Rowling, *Phoenix,*764.
[145] Rowling, *Hallows,* 67.
[146] Rowling, *Stone,* 52.
[147] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (London: Bloomsbury, 1998), 37.

the wizards asking questions and making notes are doctors: '"Doctors?" said Ron looking startled. "Those Muggle nutters that cut people up? Nah, they're Healers."'[148] A little later Mr Weasley, himself passionately interested in all things Muggle, has to admit to an outraged Mrs Weasley that a Trainee Healer, interested in complementary medicine, has tried to stitch his skin together.[149]

Another way that Rowling uses the space of the novels to play with her readers is through her appropriation of narrative elements from the genre of detective fiction. From the point of view of this thesis detective fiction has an unconscious appeal and overlaps in surprising ways with psychoanalysis: Freud himself was an avid reader of thrillers.[150] In addressing the connection between psychoanalysis and crime stories Frank Tallis writes

> Psychoanalysts and detectives have a great deal in common. Both study evidence, look for clues, reconstruct histories, and seek to establish an ultimate cause.[151]

An important aspect of detective fiction is that it offers the reader the chance to play along with the narrative and to try to find the solution to the mystery ahead of the protagonists. In each of the novels Rowling offers important clues early on in the text but hides them so well that readers are unlikely to be aware of their significance at the time, and, in some cases the true significance of the clues may not become apparent until a later novel. In the first story, for example, she introduces the character of Nicolas Flamel when Ron and Harry are exchanging Chocolate Frog cards on the journey to Hogwarts. Harry finds a card with a picture of Dumbledore and on the back of the card he reads:

> Albus Dumbledore, currently Headmaster of Hogwarts. Considered by many the greatest wizard of modern times, Dumbledore is particularly famous for his defeat of the dark wizard Grindelwald in 1945, for the discovery of the twelve uses of

[148] Rowling, *Phoenix*, 428.
[149] Ibid., 448-449.
[150] Christopher Badcock, 'The Genius of Detective Fiction'. In *Psychology Today*. January 21 2010. https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-imprinted-brain/201001/the-genius-det...
[151] Frank Tallis, 'Sigmund Freud's contribution to detective fiction' in *The Times*, October 3 2008. http://www.the times.co.uk/article/Sigmund-freuds-contribution-to-dective-fiction-cjc79rnltwh

> dragon's blood and his work on alchemy with his partner, Nicolas Flamel. Professor Dumbledore enjoys chamber music and tenpin bowling.[152]

The picture of Dumbledore on the card is Harry's introduction to the Headmaster and he is so interested by this, and by discovering that in wizard pictures the subject does not stay around, that he pays scant attention to Dumbledore's achievements. Likewise, the reader is encouraged to focus their attention on the image on the card rather than the accompanying text. Rowling has casually hidden the reference to Nicolas Flamel in plain view. Only when he is given another Dumbledore card does Harry remember where he had come across the name Flamel before, and Hermione makes the connection with the Philosopher's Stone.[153] The active and astute reader who plays along with the mystery may have solved the puzzle before the protagonists, but even a more passive reader is enabled to join in once the game is afoot.

Sometimes Rowling offers clues so casually that they could not be noticed as clues at the time, and only solves the mystery in a later novel, as when Sirius shows Harry an ancient tapestry with the House of Black family tree embroidered on it. He points out the hole in the tapestry where his name has been removed, and to the name of his brother, Regulus Black, who had joined Voldemort's Death Eaters, and been killed when he tried to leave.[154] A little later as they are cleaning the house, Rowling lists a heteroclite collection of objects, among them 'a heavy locket that none of them could open.'[155] At that time it appears to be just one object among many; only in the final novel does it become apparent that not only is the locket a Horcrux but also that Regulus Black had stolen it to undermine Voldemort, leaving a fake locket in its place.[156]

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[152] Rowling, *Stone,* 77.
[153] Ibid., 161.
[154] Rowling, *Phoenix* .104.
[155] Ibid., 108.
[156] Rowling, *Hallows,* 156-163.

Ernelle Fife examines many minute details in the series which do not reveal their true significance on a first reading, a time when Rowling's narrative moves quickly and the reader is eager to know what happens. Fife makes the point that on second or third readings, details, clues and links which were probably missed the first time will be noticed by the active reader. She writes

> Rowling's simple, direct narrative style does pull readers into her fictional construct so that many will read too quickly and superficially to doubt Harry's assumptions, which, I believe explains the more complex and pro-active nature of Hermione in the later books. She is becoming the type of reader that Rowling wants her readers to be—inquisitive, educated, logical, and unlikely, or at least less likely than Harry, to jump to conclusions.[157]

While Hermione is often the one to solve the mystery – it is she who finds out about Nicolas Flamel, and solves the mystery of why Harry is the only one to hear the threatening voice in *Chamber of Secrets* and eventually works out the identity of the Half-Blood Prince – some mysteries are beyond her capabilities. *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* in particular has a great number of small details only obvious on a second or third reading. An example in this book concerns the animals, whose 'normal' behaviour, a cat trying to get at a terrified rat, at first appears to be no more than part of the story. The active reader might notice Ron's birthday present to Harry of a Sneakoscope which 'Bill says [is] rubbish, because it kept lighting up at dinner…'[158] but nevertheless often lights up when near Scabbers, as on the train.[159] Hermione's cat, Crookshanks, the 'huge and orange' creature which she has just bought, recognises Scabbers, for what he really is.[160] Harry sees the sinister black dog that had appeared to

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[157] Ernelle Fife, 'Reading J. K. Rowling Magically: Creating C. S. Lewis's "Good Reader"' in *Scholarly Studies in Harry Potter: Applying Academic Methods to a Popular Text* ed. Cynthia Whitney Hallett (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellon Press, 2005), 142.
Sometimes Rowling offers details which have little bearing on the narrative but are nonetheless satisfying to find: in *Chamber* Harry and Ron ask a girl the way to the Slytherin common room, and she replies distainfully '*our* common room? *I'm* a Ravenclaw…' A moment later Percy Weasley emerges from a side room. 164. Later they learn that Percy has a Ravenclaw girlfriend.
[158] Ibid., 13.
[159] Ibid., 60.
[160] Ibid., 110-111.

Harry as he leaves the Dursleys' 'moving stealthily across the lawn, Crookshanks trotting at its side.' Evidently the dog is friends with Crookshanks.[161] Only when all three animals are together in the Shrieking Shack does Rowling make the relationships clear: Sirius is an Animagus and has been assuming the form of the black dog; Scabbers is also an Animagus, in reality the wizard Peter Pettigrew, the actual betrayer of Harry's parents.[162] Crookshanks is still a cat but with extraordinary powers of awareness. The 'natural' behaviour of the animals is, thus, more complex as the complicated relationships between the three men, two allies and an enemy becomes clear. Sirius Black is no longer the villain and the protagonists, like the readers, have to re-adjust their assumptions. Re-reading, as Fife suggests, shows clues in full view. This in particular is how Rowling plays with her readers: each novel has a mystery to be solved, and the series is full of such twists and turns. Rachel Falconer observes:

> By the time readers had come to the third novel in the series, most would have grown accustomed to Rowling's wrong-footing them, and reversing the apparent meaning of a series of clues in a final fast-paced denouement… adult readers enjoyed being drawn into this process as much as child readers did over the decade of the series' publication…over this decade child and adult readers were drawn together into a shared conversation in a way that had rarely occurred before on such a scale.[163]

The mystery, which continues from the first novel when Harry realises that Snape hates him to near the end of the final book, is whose side Snape is really on. His character seems to oscillate between good and bad throughout the series.[164] As well, each novel has a separate mystery that is solved by the end of the book, thus making each novel complete. Nontheless, as Falconer observes, each novel has enough twists and turns to keep speculation alive for both adults and children as to how both novel and series will

[161] Ibid., 224.
[162] Ibid., 244-261.
[163] Rachel Falconer, *The Crossover Novel: Contemporary Children's Fiction and its Adult Readership* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2009), 61.
[164] Snape is the most complex character in the series, struggling with his promise to protect the son of Lily, the person he has always loved, but against that Harry is also the son of the man he most hated, James.

end. This speculation is a central part of detective fiction, and finding that the author has laid a false trail and our assumptions are quite wrong is a typical trope of the detective story. The pleasure of trying to work it out before the protagonists is an essential aspect here and a central way in which Rowling plays with her readers. While this kind of play is light hearted it nevertheless illustrates Winnicott's dictum on illusion: in this case readers are responding to the narrative as though the protagonists were real people and they are sharing this illusion.

Intertextual Allusions

Similar to finding the clues in detective fiction is recognising references to other literary works or traditions, and the reader is invited to join the game of finding playful intertextual references and allusions within the novels. Rowling chooses her names with care: Nicolas Flamel is one of the few genuine historical figures she introduces but is not the only name which readers may recognise. Several are drawn from mythology: Sirius Black, an Animagus who changes into a black dog, is called after Sirius, the dog-star. Remus Lupin who changes into a werewolf at the full moon, is doubly linked to a wolf, through the story of Romulus and Remus, the legendary founders of Rome, who were nurtured by a wolf. His surname name Lupin, is close to the word *lupine*, wolflike. The Divination teacher, Sybill Trelawney, is linked by her name to the sibyls, the prophetesses of Greek and Roman mythology and Professor Pomona Sprout, teacher of Herbology, is named after Pomona, the Roman goddess of fruitful abundance, and her surname 'Sprout' emphasises this. In charge of Hogwarts's hospital wing is Madam Poppy Pomfrey, so named, I suggest, for the properties of the plant, which include opium and codeine, and the formidable Deputy Head of Hogwarts, Minerva McGonagall, Rowling names after the Roman goddess of wisdom. Where names are not drawn from mythological sources Rowling's creative inventions come into play: Severus Snape, whose name sounds

somewhat like 'Severe Snake,' appropriate as he is head of Slytherin House whose crest is a snake, but who may also be linked to Petrus Severinus, a sixteenth century follower of Paracelsus, and a chemist.[165]The colours in the first names of Albus (white) Dumbledore and Rubeus (red) Hagrid represent alchemical stages,[166] and their surnames from dialect: dumbledore is a dialectal word for bumblebee and to be hagridden is to have a nightmare.[167] Voldemort's name means 'Flight from Death,' which represents his great obsession with avoiding death. I suggest the word Muggle may come from the religious sect of Muggletonians, a sect which believed that everything was material and which did not believe in spirits of any kind: for them, even God is a material being. As well as playing with words Rowling makes intertextual links with other fictional works: there are echoes of other children's fantasy books, among them C. S. Lewis's Narnia series, and Susan Cooper's The Dark is Rising series. In all three series the child protagonists move between a magical world and the consensual everyday world, and in Cooper's series, as in Rowling's, the fate of the magical and non-magical worlds is inextricably linked.[168] Groves traces allusions in Rowling's work from Greek mythology to Chaucer, Shakespeare and Jane Austin, and suggests that as a result the series is itself a portal into the world of Western literary tradition.[169] The reader may engage actively with the text or more passively, according to their own interests and to what they themselves want to get from the texts. As I will now discuss, the reader can choose the level of play they

[165] Jole Shackelford, *A Philosophical Path for Paracelsian Medicine: The Ideas, Intellectual Context, and Influence of Petrus Severinus (1540-1602).* (Museum Tusculanum Press, 2004), Google Books.
[166] I address the significance of colour in chapter five, on alchemy.
[167] Beatrice Groves suggests that Rowling is here alluding to Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886) here both these names are mentioned. Beatrice Groves, *Literary Allusion in Harry Potter* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017) xi.
[168] C. S. Lewis, The Chronicles of Narnia, published between 1950 and 1956, currently published by HarperCollins, is a series of seven novels for younger children. Susan Cooper, The Dark is Rising Sequence, published 1965 to 1977, by Random House Children's books, is a series of five books for older children. Like Rowling's series it depicts a struggle between the forces of good and evil.
[169] Groves, *Literary Allusion* x.

want to engage in and may even choose to extend the game beyond the imaginative space of the texts by creating their own conceptual spaces in which to play.

Readers Playing Creatively with the Text

On the topic of Winnicott's influence on later analysts, Margaret Boyle Spelman writes

> It has been noted that with Winnicott's thinking, everyone has, and needs to have, his or her own personal response. It has often been said that everyone has their own 'Winnicott.'[170]

I suggest that similarly everybody has their own 'Rowling' and comes at her work with differing viewpoints, and responses. Among these is Colman Noctor, a Child and Adolescent/Young Adult Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist, who used the Harry Potter series in a therapy group of troubled teenagers. He found

> There... appears to be a qualitative difference in their interest in the books compared to other crazes or fads. I can recall witnessing quite insightful discussions of storylines, where I could not help but draw parallels with the young person's own difficulties... I was interested in exploring the unconscious appeal of the storylines as I felt that the author... however unintentionally, displays a deep understanding of the difficulties experienced by many children today.[171]

Members of Noctor's group were able to use the text to identify their own issues such as problems with authority, lack of parental support, content of dreams, themes of loss and especially the sense that life is not fair, issues that Rowling's protagonists also have to cope with. This is an example of playing with the text for therapeutic purposes, using the response of the readers to help them to understand themselves. Until quite recently how individual readers respond to a particular text has tended to be dismissed as anecdotal and therefore as irrelevant, Terry Eagleton, acknowledging this, states

> Reception theory examines the reader's role in literature, and as such is a fairly novel development. Indeed, one might very roughly periodize the history of modern literary theory in three stages: a preoccupation with the author

[170] Margaret Boyle Spelman, *Winnicott's Babies and Winnicott's Patients: Psychoanalysis as Transitional Space* (London: Karnac, 2013), xiii.
[171] Colman Noctor, 'Putting Harry Potter on the Couch,' in *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry,* 11.4 (2006) 579-580. www.sagepublications.com.

> (Romanticism and the nineteenth century); an exclusive concern with the text (New Criticism); and a marked shift of attention over recent years. The reader has always been the most underprivileged of this trio – strangely, since without him or her there would be no literary texts at all… For literature to happen, the reader is quite as vital as the author.[172]

This 'marked shift of attention' is the result of what is known as 'Reader Response Theory'.[173] Aidan Chambers describes how Reader Response Theory can enable children to think about and discuss texts from an early age, stressing the importance of drawing out their thoughts and opinions to help them to understand better what is being written. He makes clear that there is a distinction between a group of children engaged in 'booktalk', the topic which concerns him, and a group where children use the text to discuss their own life events,[174] the latter being similar to Noctor's therapy group. What both groups have in common is the recognition that individual responses are valid and that readers can use the text to develop their own ideas. Groves reminds us that Rowling herself notes the importance of the reader's response in this liminal space where author and reader meet:

> My readers have to work with me to create the experience. They have to bring their imagination to the story… Together, as author and reader we have both created the story. Reading is not like watching a film or television, because we both see the same images and that's a very passive experience. Reading is an active experience because you bring your imagination to it. When you do that, the reader and the author are having sort of a conversation. In a good story, the reader is very aware of what's in the author's mind. That's what makes reading magical.[175]

This reflects Winnicott's concept of the space of shared illusion within which play takes place.

Critics Playing with the Text

[172] Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983) 74.
[173] I have referred to Michael Benton's paper on Reader Response in my Introduction.
[174] Aidan Chambers, *Tell Me: Children, Reading and Talk* (Stroud, Glos. The Thimble Press, 2011), 129.
[175] Groves, *Literary Allusion*, xi.

If all readers, both academics and amateurs are engaged in play, as they are, for example, in Chestnut Hill, it follows that to address the text critically is also a form of play: critics have found some aspect or some detail of the series that particularly interests them. Chambers makes a comment similar to that of Eagleton when he writes:

> Criticism is autobiographical. Whatever the critic's specialist preference – linguistic, structuralist, feminist, political, psychoanalytical, and so on – the basis is the reader's own experience of the text. Without that there is nothing. Nothing to work on, nothing of interest.[176]

This statement, together with Winnicott's idea of the central position of play, underpins my suggestion that all the many papers and books on Rowling's series are the result of playing creatively in the potential space of her text. What is remarkable is the number of different 'specialist preferences' that critics have chosen to write about. Cynthia Hallett, in her introduction to a collection of essays on Harry Potter, writes 'the greatest strength of the *Potter* series is that it can be read on a number of levels and from a variety of perspectives'[177]. Most of these perspectives are from academics in the field of English literature and children's literature, and from a very wide range of topics. Papers range from the centrality of food in the series[178] to gender issues,[179] from issues of race[180] to difference in language[181]; there is a collection of papers on teaching with Harry Potter[182] and a collection on alchemy in the series.[183] There are also papers written by people outside of schools of English literature, among them a paper addressing the series with a

[176] Chambers, *Tell Me* 116.
[177] Cynthia J. Hallett, 'Introduction' in Cynthia J. Hallett, and Peggy J. Huey, eds., *J. K. Rowling: Harry Potter* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 2.
[178] Siân Harris, 'Glorious Food? The Literary and Culinary Heritage of the *Harry Potter* Series.' Ibid., 8-21.
[179] Terri Doughty, 'Locating Harry Potter' 243-257.
[180] Tess Stockslager, 'What it Means to Be a Half-Blood: Integrity versus Fragmentation in Biracial Identity', in Hallett and Huet, 122-134.
[181] Philip Nel, 'You Say "Jelly," I Say "Jell-O"? Harry Potter and the Transfiguration of Language' in Whited, *Ivory Tower* 261-284.
[182] Valerie Estelle Frankel, ed., *Teaching with Harry Potter: Essays on Classroom Wizardry from Elementary School to College* (Jefferson, North Carolina 2013).
[183] Anne J. Mamary, ed., *The Alchemical Harry Potter: Essays on Transfiguration in J. K. Rowling's Novels* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2001).

medical diagnosis of some of the characters*:* Clyde Partin, a Professor of Medicine, refers to

> the steady undercurrent of medical issues and themes in [Harry Potter]. Traditional medical topics such as anatomy, embryology, physiology, and especially pharmacology permeate the books… Thus, it is important to delineate and to explore the threads of medicine and medical care woven into the novels, both in a socio-medical context and a psychological/psychiatric aspect since they are the most thematically developed.[184]

Partin's 'special preference' leads him, among other ideas, to diagnose Peeves, the Poltergeist as suffering from Tourette's syndrome,[185] and to explore in terms of Mendelian genetics the class discrimination between those who are pure-blood wizards and those who are half-blood or Muggle-born.[186] Philosophers David Baggett and Shawn Klein have edited a humorous book addressing philosophical issues such as courage, ethics, metaphysics and the nature of evil, basing the topics on the four Hogwarts houses.[187] John Granger sees the series as Christian allegory and as representative of alchemical thinking. [188] Lana Whited refers to the novels as a 'Literary Phenomenon'[189] in the title of her book and I suggest that what makes it so lies in the diversity of topics that critics have chosen to 'play' with creatively. All of these critics have read and responded to the novels in the autobiographical way which Chambers describes, approaching from their own 'specialist preference' and basing their criticism on their personal experience of the text. This poses the question as to whether all readers' responses are equally valid. If Chambers, quoted above, is correct it would suggest that they are equally valid because it is a personal response. I posit that an element of this

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[184] Clyde Partin, 'Magic, Medicine, and Harry Potter,' in Hallett and Huey *Harry Potter.* 135-148.
[185] Ibid., 137.
[186] Ibid., 137-138. Previously, in 2005 J. M. Craig, R. Dow, and M. A. Aitken, researchers in genetics at the University of Melbourne, Australia, published a letter in the journal *Nature* on 'Harry Potter and the recessive allele.' *Nature* 436 11August 2005.
[187] David Baggett and Shawn E. Klein, eds., *Harry Potter and Philosophy: If Aristotle Ran Hogwarts* (Chicago, Illinois: Open Court. 2004)
[188] John Granger, *How Harry Cast his Spell: The Meaning Behind the Mania for J. K. Rowling's Bestselling Books* (Illinois: Saltriver, 2008).
[189] Whited, *Ivory Tower.*

personal response to the narrative lies in the unconscious: why certain topics interest us more than others.

Conclusion

Winnicott's theory of play is for him first and foremost a means of communication, whether it is the baby playing with the spatula or communication through any cultural activity, and this includes writing and reading. In his chapter entitled 'Playing: Creative Activity and the Search for the Self' he links playing with reality and insists that 'in playing, and perhaps only in playing, the child or adult is free to be creative.'[190] In the Harry Potter series Rowling and readers meet and play on conscious and unconscious levels and discover or connect with parts of themselves in that liminal area of potential space which is illusion. While the fictional characters find spaces within the novel that enable them to explore ideas and positions safely – such as the Room of Requirement – the series as a whole provides this kind of space for the reader. As I have shown, readers of all ages play with the text, both on a personal, amateur level and on a professional level. The theme parks, movies, fan sites and theatre productions extend the playful potential of the texts into real-world spaces. But it is only with the printed books that the reader has the possibility of returning to again and again for comfort. As the series develops and the central themes become darker it is Dumbledore's philosophy of love and companionship that supports all the protagonists, but especially Harry. For the reader being able to hold and return to the physical object containing the text is not unlike returning to the comfort of a security blanket. Both kinds of play are present: play as Winnicott understands it which means the meeting of author and reader through the medium of the characters, and the play which makes confronting the darkness bearable.

[190] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* 53; this chapter 8.

In the next chapter I address the way in which Rowling uses fantasy both as a metaphor for the unconscious and also to create a secondary world parallel to the world in which we live. Fantasy offers a space in which to observe ideas at a remove, different aspects of how Rowling's characters, and her readers, respond to moral choices and confront the reality of death.

Chapter Two: Fantasy and the World Within

In the previous chapter I address the essential nature of liminal space for play leading to inner growth and transformation, and how this is manifested in the Harry Potter series. In this chapter I develop further the theme of transformation through play, and in particular the play involved in fantasy, and its appeal to the reader While the series is usually categorised as fantasy, the text is more complex and brings together narrative tropes and formulae from many different literary genres, including satire, mystery, school stories, quest romance, adventure and detective fiction. The way the various genres interact in the series has been noted before: Gwen Tarbox proposes that we view the series as a 'hybrid' and highlights the intersections of 'fantasy, social realism, and principally mystery within the books.'[191] Anne Hiebert Alton also acknowledges this generic blend, and suggests that this 'fusion' may be one of the reasons for the appeal of the series.[192] The two genres which are most significant in the series are that of fantasy and that of the school story, and of the two I see the fantasy genre as being the most important: although much of the narrative takes place in Hogwarts the underlying theme of defeating Voldemort, and by extension the forces of evil, spills outside the school and into other places, and it is the genre of fantasy which holds the series together. In much psychoanalytic thinking, and certainly within those theorists whose work is based on Object Relations, it is an essential part of the work: when listening to a patient we are being told about an inner story, and whether the story is factual or not is irrelevant. What patient and analyst do with the story is what counts. So it is with Rowling's narrative: it does not matter that Hogwarts is not a real place on the map, in our minds it is a real place, and a place where we can play.

[191] Gwen Tarbox, *From Convention to Insurgency: J.K.Rowling's Critique of Childhood Innocence in the Harry Potter Series* (https://www.academia.edu/415750).
[192] Anne Hiebert Alton, 'Playing the Genre game: Generic Fusions of the Harry Potter Series,' in *Critical Perspectives on Harry Potter*, ed. Elizabeth E. Heilman (second edition, Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 199-200.

Fantasy and Object Relations Theory

In Object Relations theory, fantasy, the world within, is present from the beginning of life. Two kinds of fantasy are present: that which is unconscious is spelled 'phantasy' and that which is conscious is spelled 'fantasy'. To avoid confusion, I use the spelling 'fantasy' except in quotations. Fantasy is the basis of all imaginative life, as well as underlying our unconscious response to events in our lives, including our reading response. Theories about fantasies in the early months can only be speculative, but we assume that 'the newborn infant's world at the outset is a bodily world, and phantasy represents the infant's attempt to transform somatic events into a mental form'[193] and so to make sense of them. Therefore, there is inevitably a fantasy element in every psychoanalytic theory about this early stage.[194] What is important is that we recognise that from that early stage some form of fantasy is present from the beginning of life and remains in our unconscious, as well as forming the basis for the conscious fantasies expressed in literature as well as in daydreaming. In Ogden's words:

> The experience of reality of external reality would not exist in the absence of the experience, not of unreality, but of the unconscious reality of phantasy activity. The unconscious psychic reality of phantasy is a dimension of the totality of the reality of being alive… From this perspective, 'psychic reality' is a single experiential entity with multiple qualities, one of which involves conscious awareness, another of which does not. Neither quality of reality exists in isolation from the other: the two are qualities of a unitary experience.[195]

In this way, all conscious fantasy has its origins in very early unconscious fantasy, being influenced by experiences and being able to adapt to new experiences as they occur. What

[193] Thomas H. Ogden, *The Matrix of the Mind: Object Relations and the Psychoanalytic Dialogue* (London: Karnac, 1992), 1.
[194] It is not within the scope of this thesis to discuss Klein's theories of the life and death instincts, the origins of which she maintains have their roots in these early fantasies, except to say that the first is concerned with creative and positive feelings and actions and the latter with negative and destructive ideas.
[195] Thomas H. Ogden, *Creative Readings: Essays on Seminal Analytic Works* (Hove, East Sussex: Routledge, 2012), 42.

is fantasised is an essential aspect of the totality of the person. This form of fantasy which starts at the beginning of life takes place unconsciously.

Literary fantasy is a conscious fantasy in which the imagination may be allowed free rein, something which can be very disturbing. Karen Coats asks the question 'What is it about fantasy that attracts some and repels others?' She continues: 'Since my critical twig is bent in the direction of psychoanalytical criticism, my questions often turn to how a literary text or genre meets a psychological need.'[196] As Ogden makes clear, imagination is indeed a 'psychological need' in order to develop as a complete person, yet for some people it appears terrifying. Psychoanalyst Christopher Bollas writes about what he calls 'normotic illness:'

> A normotic person is someone who is abnormally normal. He is too stable, secure, comfortable, and socially extrovert. He is fundamentally disinterested in subjective life and he is inclined to reflect on the thingness of objects, on their material reality, or on 'data' that relates to material phenomena… He lives contentedly among material objects and phenomena [and does not engage in] the internal play of affects and ideas that generates and authorizes our private imaginations.[197]

In his psychoanalytic practice Bollas meets those who are not totally contented with such a life, who feel empty or without a sense of self and who seek the help of psychoanalysis. But there are those who feel safe with such a life and who feel very threatened by ideas of fantasy or imagination which involve moving out of the familiar and safe world into an unboundaried space where important but potentially disturbing issues are likely to emerge. Early in Rowling's series she gives an illustration of how trying to avoid disturbing experiences can lead to madness: she begins her series by introducing the Dursleys, perfect examples of the normotic personality, but also caricatures:

> Mr and Mrs Dursley, of number four, Privet Drive, were proud to say that they were perfectly normal, thank you very much. They were the last people you'd

[196] Karen Coats, *The Bloomsbury Introduction to Children's Literature* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 353.
[197] Christopher Bollas, *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unknown Thought* (London: Free Association Books, 1987) 136.

> expect to be involved in anything strange or mysterious, because they just didn't hold with such nonsense.[198]

What Mr Dursley values is his own importance where a normal morning means that 'He yelled at five different people. He made several important telephone calls'…'[199] For Mrs Dursley, life is concentrated on her son, Dudley, and her house, about which, later in the series, the witch Tonks remarks, 'is a bit *too* clean, d'you know what I mean? Bit unnatural.'[200] For Dudley what is important is the accumulation of possessions: on his birthday his main concern is the number of presents he received, a concern encouraged by his parents.[201] Harry, by contrast, represents something very different, something unaccountable: strange things happen around him, his hair grows back overnight when Aunt Petunia has almost shaved it off; he finds himself on top of the school buildings when trying to escape from Dudley and his gang and, most alarming of all, it appears he was not only able to talk to a snake, but to set it free.[202] Anything inexplicable is terrifying for the Dursleys, and they deal with this fear by denying that anything mysterious exists. When an ever-increasing number of letters starts to come for Harry from Hogwarts, it indicates a break in the physical and psychic boundary of the house, and this results in a break in Mr Dursley's mental boundaries. Rowling describes his descent into madness, first by nailing up the mailbox and then by boarding up the house so no one could go out.[203] Finally in desperation he tries to escape not only from his house which is no longer his familiar safe place but has become a place of bombardment, but also from his mind which has been invaded by a terrifying awareness of possibilities that he has until now managed to avoid. Removing the family from the reality of Privet

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[198] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997), 7.
[199] Ibid., 9.
[200] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (London: Bloomsbury, 2003), 51.
[201] Rowling, *Stone*, 21.
[202] Ibid., 23, 25-26.
[203] Ibid., 34.

Drive he drives haphazardly, without any plan of where to go, only concerned to 'Shake 'em off…'[204] Regression to an earlier more primitive state than the rational one is a defence against being overwhelmed by a traumatic situation, and this is what Mr Dursley does, retreating into madness he leaves the rational world for the broken-down hut on the rock.

Rivka Warshawsky and Richard Tuch address the topic of regression writing 'Regression can occur with regard to… the ways in which one relates to others. Regression of object-relatedness entails potential loss of ego boundaries… the overall ability to function, particularly the way in which one copes with danger…'[205] Rowling writes:

This 'was horrible…the wind whistled through the gaps in the wooden walls and the fire-place was damp and empty.'[206] Rowling shows how this mental collapse brings the whole family into a place of madness and splits the previously secure unit of three: Aunt Petunia can only go along with what is happening, and is afraid to protest, Dudley does protest vociferously as it is the first time in his life that he has not been allowed to do what he wants.[207] Moreover, they are now in a place without the necessities of life: warmth and food. Only when what Bollas refers to as 'the subjective element … the internal play of affects and ideas that generates and authorizes our private imaginations'[208] enters in the form of Hagrid, is the misery relieved for Harry.[209]

[204] Ibid., 35.
[205] Rivka Warshawsky and Richard Tuch in *The Edinburgh International Encyclopaedia of Psychoanalysis* ed., Ross Skelton (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 2006), 329.
[206] Ibid., 35-37.
[207] Ibid., 35.
[208] Christopher Bollas, *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known* (London: Free Association Books, 1987), 137.
[209] We are never told how the Dursleys got back, or how Mr Dursley recovered.

Jack Zipes sees the Dursleys as 'evil not only because they treat [Harry] like scum but because they lack imagination and compassion.'[210] Looked at from a psychoanalytic standpoint they are not so much evil as caricatures of 'normotic' people, terrified by anything unfamiliar. Harry's difference appears to them as a great threat, reminding them that there exists a world which they do not understand and cannot control.[211] In Rowling's narrative Harry represents the desire for creative imagination and fantasy, a desire which is met by the arrival of Hagrid and the telling of a different story. With Hagrid, Harry, and Rowling's readers, move into the richness of the imagined wizard world.

Fantasy in Literature

Fantasy has always been a difficult genre to define but despite the difficulties several critics, including Daniel Hahn, Farah Mendlesohn, John Clute and John Grant, and Brian Attebery as well as Coats, have all made efforts to define the genre while continuing to recognise its nebulous quality. One definition is that by Hahn who writes of fantasy as

> a term used (in the context of children's literature) to describe works of fiction, written by a specific author (i.e. not traditional) and usually novel-length, which involve the supernatural or some other unreal element. This however proves to be a nebulous and wide-ranging term…'[212]

Clute and Grant also refer to this nebulous quality, writing: '"Fantasy" – certainly when being conceived as being in contrast to Realism – is a most extraordinarily porous term…' and they define a fantasy text as

> …a self-coherent narrative. When set in this world, it tells a story which is impossible in the world as we perceive it; when set in an otherworld, that

[210] Jack Zipes, *Sticks and Stones: The Troublesome Success of Children's Literature from Slovenly Peter to Harry Potter* (New York and London: Routledge, 2001), 182.
[211] The desire to understand even the wildness of the unconscious may contribute to the fact that among all the critical papers on the series only four are by psychoanalysts, and not many seem to be interested in the series. One told me (personal communication) 'I am not interested in fantasy except as it links into concepts.' Although not 'normotic' as Bollas describes it, nevertheless it suggests a desire to keep within the bounds of the familiar.
[212] Daniel Hahn, *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature,* Second Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 200.

> otherworld will be impossible, though stories set there may be possible in its terms.[213]

In addition, Clute and Grant observe that 'the greatest fantasy writers … almost invariably engage deeply with the transformative potentials of fantasy,'[214] an opinion held by several other critics of children's literature. For example, Catherine Butler writes '…children's fantasies now usually ensure that encounters with the fantastic precipitate significant emotional growth, if not life-defining change, in their protagonists.'[215] This emotional growth and transformation of Rowling's protagonists is at the centre of my study, and it is this aspect of the narrative in particular which I see as being the unconscious appeal to children and to those adults who are aware that our emotional and psychic growth is never fully completed.

As a literary genre, fantasy has a number of distinguishing features and draws upon a set of both narrative and stylistic tropes. Brian Attebery addressing the difficulty of definition and the fact that fantasy appears in so many different guises, writes 'there are…no clear boundaries between categories. Fantasy edges into science fiction; science fiction impinges on mainstream fiction; mainstream fiction overlaps with fantasy.' He suggests as 'a more flexible means of categorization, [g]enres may be approached as "fuzzy sets," meaning that they are defined not by boundaries but by a center.'[216] Using Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* as a template he suggests three essential aspects: content which should be the impossible, or 'some violation of what the author clearly believes to

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[213] John Clute and John Grant, editors, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (New York: St Martin's Griffin, 1999). In her book *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), Farah Mendlesohn sets out four main forms of fantasy: Portal-Quest, Immersive, Intrusion, and Liminal. She links portal and quest fantasies because, she states, 'modern quest and portal fantasies rely on very similar narrative strategies because each assume the same two movements: transition and exploration. The portal fantasy is about entry, transition and exploration, and much quest fantasy…adopts the structure and rhetorical strategies of the portal fantasy.'2. Intrusive fantasy is when the fantasy world intrudes into the consensual world. These two groups of fantasy are most relevant to Rowling's series.

[214] *Encyclopedia,* 338. Rowling's narrative taken as a whole is such a transformative quest.

[215] Catherine Butler, 'Modern Children's Fantasy' in *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*, ed. Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 225.

[216] Brian Attebery, *Strategies of Fantasy,* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 12.

be natural law;' secondly: 'It begins with a problem and ends with resolution;' thirdly a satisfying emotional response to which Tolkien gave the name 'eucatastrophe'.[217] Attebery writes that as a literary genre, fantasy has a number of distinguishing features and draws upon a set of narrative and stylistic tropes, and identifies these tropes as follows:

1. Fantasy is a form of popular escapist literature that combines stock characters and devices – wizards, dragons, magic swords, and the like – into a predictable plot in which the perennially understaffed forces of good triumph over a monolithic evil.

2. Fantasy is a sophisticated mode of storytelling characterized by stylistic playfulness, self-reflexiveness, and a subversive treatment of established orders of society and thought. Arguably the major fictional mode of the late twentieth century, it draws upon contemporary ideas about sign systems and the indeterminacy of meaning and at the same time recaptures the vitality and freedom of nonmimetic traditional forms such as epic, folklore, romance, and myth.[218]

I see both of Attebery's descriptions of the genre as being relevant to Rowling's series. The novels can certainly be read as escapist literature with wands replacing the magic swords, and the stock characters which Attebery later describes as 'one villain with…a nearly all-powerful badness, mythological creatures and nonhuman races… one naïve and ordinary hero who will prove to be the prophesied savior…and a wise old advisor who can rescue him from time to time and explain the plot.[219] While this could be a summary of Rowling's series, and indeed of almost any fantasy quest story, for younger readers Attebery's first description suggests an exciting narrative similar to a fairy tale. But it is Attebery's second description detailing the stylistic, thematic, and subversive elements of fantasy narratives, and setting it at the turn of

[217] Ibid., 14-16.
[218] Ibid., 1.
[219] Ibid., 10.

the twentieth century, a time which is more familiar to contemporary children than the classical fairy tale setting as the children speak today's idiom, that draws readers.

Fantasy and the Unconscious

As I explained, fantasy has been part of unconscious life from the beginning, and using fantasy in literature is a way of playing in which fears or fun may be addressed and some of the conscious fantasies put into story form will obviously come from the writer's own unconscious. There is a link between the two. One of the first critics to address the link between fantasy in literature and the unconscious is Rosemary Jackson who begins her book by asserting:

> Fantasy in literature deals so blatantly and repeatedly with unconscious material that it seems rather absurd to try to understand its significance without some reference to psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic readings of texts.[220]

However, she, too, recognises the difficulty of defining what constitutes fantasy, writing:

> Fantasy, both in literature and out of it, is an enormous and seductive subject. Its association with imagination and with desire has made it an area difficult to articulate or to define, and indeed the 'value' of fantasy has seemed to reside in precisely this resistance to definition, in its 'free floating' and escapist qualities.[221]

For Jackson, coming from a Lacanian perspective, fantasy is based on Freud's description of 'the uncanny,' a frightening, dangerous space. She is also influenced by Tzvetan Todorov's representations of what he sees as the three forms of the fantastic: the Marvellous (Supernatural), Fantasy (Unnatural) and Uncanny (Natural).[222] As a result her narrow definition of fantasy suggests that it is nothing more than 'a movement towards a zero point of non-meaning.' Jackson goes so far as to argue that:

> Behind the 'high' fantasy of Kingsley, MacDonald, Morris, Tolkien, Lewis etc., there is a recognisable 'death wish,' which has been identified as one recurrent feature of fantasy literature. Whereas more subversive texts activate a dialogue

[220] Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London: Methuen & Co Ltd., 1981), 6.
[221] Ibid., 1.
[222] Attebery, *Strategies of Fantasy*, 10.

> with this death drive, directing their energy towards a dissolution of repressive structures, these more conservative fantasies simply go along with a desire to cease 'to be,' a longing to transcend or escape the human. They avoid the difficulties of confrontation, that tension between the imaginary and the symbolic which is the crucial, problematic area dramatized in more radical fantasies.[223]

This statement, considered alongside the narrow range of texts which she discusses, suggests that the unconscious contains only bleakness and horror which is suppressed because it is unbearable. Although Klein keeps the concept of a death drive – albeit very different from Freud's concept – it is rarely part of Object Relations theory, except as a form of destructive energy.[224] In my clinical experience, fantasies emerging from the unconscious contain happiness and humour as well as bleakness, a fact that sometimes comes as a surprise to patients when dreams and free associations cause amusement. Moreover, transcending the human and escaping the human are not the same. Escaping the human suggests living in an unreal world of denial, refusing to accept the reality of a situation.[225] Carried to extreme this can result in psychosis, as Rowling shows in the case of Mr Dursley. Transcending the human involves growth, a reaching beyond the known limitations while still remaining in touch with one's everyday humanity, and this is a central theme in Rowling's narrative.[226]

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[223] Ibid., 156.

[224] The concept of the death drive 'emerged from Freud's observation of the tendency to repeat situations which they did not enjoy, offered no pleasure or mastery (as did children's stories or play) and did not help them to prepare for traumatic situations (as did repetitive dreams of trauma). He concluded that he conservative nature of the instincts led to a compulsion to repeat which was "beyond the pleasure principle". Since non-existence precedes life, the organism tries to return to its non-living, inorganic state… This concept, held from the outset to be quite speculative, has given rise to various interpretations…[some] writers remain extremely sceptical with regard to the interest of the concept judging it to be too speculative and a source of confusion.' Daniel Widlöcher/June A. Bernstein, *The Edinburgh International Encyclopaedia of Psychoanalysis* ed. Ross Skelton (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 105-106.

[225] Denial is an important mechanism of defence, according to Anna Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence* (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1979), passim; Ross Skelton *Edinburgh Encyclopaedia*, 112.

[226] Rowling illustrates denial leading to psychosis with her description, discussed above, of Mr Dursley's attempt to deny the reality of the owls bringing letters and the reality of Harry's life, which is an attempt to escape the human and results in madness. Harry, in contrast, is eager to transcend his experience of life as he has known it until now, and is happy to learn what Hagrid has to say.

Jackson examines fantasy using Lacanian theory to do so. While it is true that, as psychoanalyst Thomas Ogden writes, the 'different psychoanalytic perspectives are much like different languages,'[227] nevertheless whichever psychoanalytic 'language' is being used, fantasy has always played a major part.

Fantasy as Subversion and Subversive elements of Harry Potter

The idea that fantasy is subversive, and even dangerous, remains very much alive. In particular Rowling's work was seen as dangerously subversive in the matter of religious belief where she does not adhere to orthodox ideas. Attebery addressing the burning of Rowling's books by some conservative Christian groups, writes that although

> Fantasy can function as a safe zone for exploring controversial beliefs because of its inconsequentiality, the book burners would argue that it is not so trivial after all. The issue is myth: how and by whom it can be invoked and interpreted. Fantasy's way of linking us to myth is not merely wrong but dangerous, according to those who allow only a single, literal interpretation of any sacred text.[228]

Attebery argues that what the Bible and myth have in common is that neither

> means what it says, nor does either direct the reader to a nonproblematic extratextual reality… The same is true of all mythic texts. They invite applications beyond their boundaries – to explain creation and death, to guide moral decisions, to justify social institutions – and yet at the same time they defy rational comprehension of their symbols and transformations. Myths are disturbing and inexplicably comforting; they never seem the same from reading to reading. It is no wonder that there is disagreement about their meaning and use, or that people have fought to the death over the right to interpret them one way or another.[229]

Understanding the Bible as myth, as Attebery does, is in line with current theological debate, but it is anathema to literalist Christians.[230] The latter, believing that every word

[227] Thomas H. Ogden, *The Matrix of the Mind: Object Relations and the Psychoanalytic Dialogue* (London: Karnac, 1992), 1.
[228] Brian Attebery, *Stories about Stories: Fantasy and the Remaking of Myth,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 160.
[229] Ibid., 164.
[230] Among them Alister McGrath, *The Great Mystery: Science, God, and the Human Quest for Meaning* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2018).

in the Bible is the word of God, quote passages condemning witchcraft and magic and believe that witchcraft is real, connected to Satanism, and a moral threat to children. 'To those who believe in the reality of witchcraft, the threat of the Harry Potter books is that they might desensitize children to the sinfulness of magic…'[231] The apparent subversion of orthodox beliefs which called for the books to be banned, most recently in a Catholic school in Tennessee in September 2019,[232] begs the question of whether children are capable of distinguishing between fantasy and reality. I have discussed this topic elsewhere: in my paper 'The Book and the Child', an account of a patient with a very active fantasy life from early childhood and into her teens. I emphasise that although 'this inner life was quite real to her she was well aware of the distinction between fantasy and reality, and naming it *The Secret Game* makes this quite clear…Had she not been aware of the difference, fantasy could have tipped into psychosis.'[233] While the majority of children are capable of this distinction from a young age, and see characters such as witches, wizards, half-giants, unicorns and Blast Ended Skrewts as belonging to an unreal world of fantasy, this fact does not mean that child readers do not find elements in Rowling's work to be uncanny and disturbing. The introduction of the Dementors in the third novel and their presence, or potential presence throughout the remainder of the books is one such element.[234]

The subversive quality and potential of Rowling's work, and indeed of any work of fantasy, lies with the reader. Attebery writes 'If fantasy means anything at all, that meaning must come indirectly, through analogies and symbols whose meanings are

[231] Deborah J. Taub and Heather L. Servaty-Seib, 'Is Harry Potter Harmful to Children?' in *Critical Perspectives on Harry Potter* second edition, ed. Elizabeth E. Heilman (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 15.
[232] Antonia Noori Farzan, *The Washington Post*, September 3, 2019.
[233] Mary Pyle, 'The Book and the Child,' 2019 https://www.confer.uk.com>essay
[234] Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (London: Bloomsbury), 65-66.

unstable and dependent on the reader's experiences and circumstances.'[235] In fact, what is really subversive in Rowling's narrative is not that her protagonists are witches and wizards but that the intense spirituality and morality which run through the series do not involve church going or overt religious teaching, thus reflecting the current *Zeitgeist*, or spirit of the time: I address this significant detail later in my study, but mention it here as an aspect of subversion.

Voldemort's hooded Death Eaters with their insistence on the importance of Pure Blood, and distain for 'Mud Bloods,' that is, witches and wizards with two Muggle parents, may be seen by some as a reference to the Ku Klux Klan, or to other readers it may seem reminiscent of Nazi Germany. The Malfoys' view of themselves as being superior to the Weasleys (both Pure Blood families) is based on wealth, and this gives Lucian Malfoy access to Minister Fudge and influence over what happens at Hogwarts.[236] These particular associations and prejudices may be conscious or unconscious but the fact that they are likely to be made by adults rather than children is, I suggest, an element in the appeal to adult readers. Children are more likely to relate to issues such as being treated unfairly, and especially to loss of agency, which is a central aspect of *Order of the Phoenix.*[237] In this book Umbridge thwarts teachers and pupils at every turn, and in the series as a whole Rowling shows authorities becoming more and more corrupt – the Minister of Magic, Fudge, whose name calls attention to his incompetence – is determined to deny any evidence that Voldemort has returned, and so cannot be trusted to

[235] Attebery, *Stories,*164.
[236]J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (London: Bloomsbury, 1999), 162; Rowling, *Phoenix* 140.
[237] This feeling is present from the beginning of the book: having legitimately saved Dudley and himself from Dementors, Harry has to face a full court to decide his fate: the possibility of being expelled from Hogwarts and even sent to Azkaban; once back at Hogwarts Professor Umbridge is determined to make life unpleasant for Harry, ultimately giving him a lifetime ban on playing Quidditch. The fact of being helpless against a malevolent authority, a feeling which every child experiences from time to time, but which is now part of daily life at Hogwarts, makes this arguably the bleakest book in the series.

keep the wizard world safe and contained,[238] thereby serving the Muggle world as well, and so it falls to Harry and his friends and companions in Dumbledore's Army to lead the struggle against this overwhelming evil.[239] Sherrie Malisch in her thesis 'Kids Take Charge' postulates that teen protagonists can and do, in fact, claim agency and writes 'In a variety of settings from fantasy to realistic fiction, I encountered young adult characters solving grave social problems – or even saving entire worlds – more or less single-handedly, with unsettling levels of aplomb.'[240] Like Malisch, I posit that in Rowling's narrative the students do take over when the adults fail them, and this gives an important message to the reader, even at an unconscious level, that it is worth persisting in what one believes. This is a view diametrically opposed to that of Maria Nikolajeva who sees the stories as representative of Mikhail Bakhtin's Carnival theory in which the protagonists are allowed to play at being adults for a while but the real adults are still in charge of the situation.[241] Nikolajeva sees children playing at subversion, and her reference to the 'naughty-boy story'[242] infantilises the protagonists in a way reminiscent of Umbridge addressing the students as if they were babies: 'such happy little faces looking up at me…'[243] Like Malisch I see a real subversion, and although the protagonists make mistakes there is a message of encouragement to keep fighting for the good.

Subversion and Stereotype

[238] Rowling, *Goblet* 614-616.
[239] Rowling, *Phoenix* 346-351.
[240] Sherrie Malisch, *Kids Take Charge: Reflections on an Emergent Motif in School Stories for Young Adults*
Error! Hyperlink reference not valid. Charge Reflections on an Emergent Motif in School Stories for Young Adults 2.
[241] Maria Nokolajeva, 'Harry Potter and the Secrets of Children's Literature' in *Critical Perspectives on Harry Potter* second edition, ed. Elizabeth E. Heilman (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 225-241.
[242] Ibid., 233.
[243] Rowling, *Phoenix*, 191

One of the ways that Rowling introduces subversive elements to her series is through the introduction of stereotypes other than the archetypal figures usually seen in fantasy literature, the hero, the wise old man, dragons…[244] although these are present in the text. Rowling introduces caricatures and subversive stereotypes to the non-magical world from the very outset. I have already drawn attention to Mr and Mrs Dursley as being 'abnormally normal' but in addition Rowling presents them as caricatures rather than real people and there is a clear sense that she is making fun of, and subverting the ideals of, middle-class England:

> Mr Dursley…was a big, beefy man with hardly any neck, although he did have a very large moustache. Mrs Dursley was thin and blonde and had nearly twice the amount of neck, as she spent so much of her time craning over garden fences, spying on the neighbours.[245]

In fact, Rowling makes her readers aware that the magical people in her books are much closer to being real people to whom we can relate than the non-magical characters. Except for the barely-mentioned parents of Hermione, who are briefly glimpsed nervously changing money at the wizard bank, Gringotts,[246] the Muggle characters Rowling presents are people that her readers would not feel drawn to in any way. There is Mrs Figg, with whom Harry is sometimes left when the Dursleys go out, 'a mad old lady who lived two streets away…and [who] made him look at photographs of all the cats she'd ever owned.'[247] In *Order of the Phoenix* it emerges that she is, in fact a Squib, a wizard unable to perform magic, but this new fact makes little difference to how Rowling portrays her, allowing her readers to assume she is a Muggle and, thereby, to see Muggles as eccentric, boring and petty. Mr Dursley's sister, Aunt Marge, is another caricature who delights in taunting Harry. Like her

[244] Attebery, *Strategies,* 10.
[245] Rowling, *Stone,* 7.
[246] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (London: Bloomsbury, 1998), 47.
[247] Rowling, *Stone,* 22. By making them caricatures Rowling diminishes their power.

brother she is 'large beefy and purple-faced.' As well as lacking any stereotypically feminine physical qualities, she carries 'an old and evil-tempered bulldog,' a breed long associated with Englishness, thus suggesting that Rowling is carrying the ridicule beyond Aunt Marge to the national values the latter represents.[248] Her attitude that the weak, dogs or humans, are unimportant and should be got rid of is evident as she indicates Harry saying 'This one's got a mean, runty look about him. You get that with dogs. I had Colonel Fubster drown one last year… It all comes down to blood… bad blood will out…' From there her associations lead to the 'bad blood' of Harry's parents, who as no-good wastrels 'died in a car crash…and left you to be a burden on their decent hard-working relatives.'[249]

Other non-magical characters are merely functions of the narrative: the old man, Frank Byrne, murdered by Voldemort in the Riddle House; Mr Roberts, the campsite manager and his wife and children who are helpless as they are floated upside down in the air and mocked by a group of Death Eaters; the Muggle Prime Minister who is dismayed to be told by his magical counterparts, Fudge and Scrimgeour about the danger the non-magical world finds itself in, and is both bemused and helpless.[250]

Hagrid, the first person from the wizard world to intrude into the life that Harry has known up to now, is also a caricature, but a subversive one.[251] In most narratives giants are wicked and dangerous, but Rowling presents an opposite view:

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[248] Rowling, *Azkaban*, 22. Officially called the English Bulldog they were originally bred for bull fighting. They have a reputation for fighting to the death. During the second world war the bulldog came to represent England and in particular Winston Churchill.
[249] Ibid., 26.
[250] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000), 108; J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 7-24. When they are not caricatures they are helpless victims: Mr Roberts and Frank Byrne cannot protect themselves and the Muggle prime minister cannot protect his country.
[251] Roald Dahl in *The BFG* (1982) also presents a kindly giant. In my chapter on the Quest I compare Hagrid to the giant Grendel in the Beowulf narrative.

> A giant of a man was standing in the doorway. His face was almost completely hidden by a long, shaggy mane of hair and a wild, tangled beard, but you could make out his eyes, glinting like black beetles under all the hair.

Despite Hagrid's terrifying appearance, when 'Harry looked up into the fierce, wild, shadowy face [he] saw that the beetle eyes were crinkled in a smile.'[252] Hagrid brings some normality to the Hut-on-the-Rock in the form of food and a fire, demonstrating from the beginning his propensity to care for people.[253] Hagrid also carries an incongruous pink umbrella about which we are given hints although its purpose is never spelled out. Hagrid swishes it at Dudley who instantly grows a pig's tail, taps it on the edge of the boat bringing him and Harry away from the island and the boat speeds up, and in Mr Ollivander's shop while admitting that he has kept the pieces from his broken wand 'Harry noticed he gripped his pink umbrella very tightly as he spoke.'[254] To some readers the fact that Rowling has made it pink might suggest a certain discomfort around Hagrid's feminised character: like Winnicott, a man who is perhaps the most 'mothering' of psychoanalysts, Hagrid with his love of and care for all creatures, even the most unattractive, can be seen as the most 'mothering' of all the wizards. It is significant that it was Hagrid who carried the baby Harry to Privet Drive after the death of his parents, and who also carried the 'dead' Harry cradled in his arms back to Hogwarts castle.[255]

Fantasy can afford a safe place in which racial and social differences can be addressed, and Rowling makes some use of this. However, although she addresses social issues, such as house-elves and the Malfoys's contempt for the impoverished Weasleys, the non-white characters are given token parts and racial difference is confined to the

[252] Rowling, *Stone* 39.
[253] Ibid., 40.
[254] Ibid., *Stone* 64.
[255] Rowling, *Hallows*, 582.

differences between magical creatures.[256] When Hermione is told by Nearly headless Nick that all work done at Hogwarts, including food preparation, is done by house-elves, she is horrified: 'There are house-elves *here*?... Here at *Hogwarts*?... But they get *paid*?' she said. 'They get *holidays*, don't they? And – and sick leave, and pensions and everything?'[257] Despite being assured that house-elves are happy with their lives, without any of the rules of the Muggle world, Hermione is determined to correct the situation. When she visits the house-elves in the kitchen they show no inclination to be freed, and appear slightly embarrassed by Dobby's pleasure at being a free elf and having some money. While Hermione complains that it is not much, Dobby boasts that he was able to beat down Dumbledore's more generous offer. Winky, meanwhile is crying and ashamed of being free, and says she has not yet sunk so low as to take money.[258] Rowling here shows the clash of culture between the Muggle-born Hermione with her principles from the Muggle world, and the elves, secure in their own culture and anxious at any perceived threat to it. Hermione is still convinced that she knows best, and with a kind of missionary zeal resorts to knitting garments for them and leaving them lying around, hoping that they will pick them up inadvertently, thus being set free against their wishes. Ron who has grown up in the wizard world and is aware of its culture is shocked:

> 'You're leaving hats out for the house-elves?... And you're covering them up with rubbish first?... That's not on,' said Ron angrily. 'You're trying to trick them into picking up the hats. You're setting them free when they might not want to be free.' 'Of course they want to be free!' said Hermione… Ron waited until she had disappeared… then cleared the rubbish off the woolly hats. 'They should at least see what they are picking up,' he said firmly.[259]

[256] Ebony Elizabeth Thomas has an interesting chapter 'Hermione is black' in her book *The Dark Fantastic: Race and the Imagination from Harry Potter to the Hunger Games* (New York: New York University Press, 2019).
[257] Rowling, *Goblet*, 161.
[258] Ibid, 327-335.
[259] Rowling, *Phoenix*, 230-231.

Contrary to Hermione's certainty that she knows better than they do what their real wishes are, the elves reject the change which she is determined to force on them and refuse to clean Gryffindor common room, leaving it to Dobby who is happy to pick up whatever Hermione knits.[260] Rowling indicates that the position of the elves and their relationship with wizards is considerably more nuanced than Hermione realises, involving the deeper issue of agency and hegemony.[261] Hermione represents an attitude belonging to the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century with its paternalism towards colonial states, and reflected in psychoanalysis of the time in the certainty that Freud and many of the early psychoanalysts had that they knew what was happening in the patient's unconscious mind. In the twenty-first century many psychoanalysts, myself included, are more likely to offer reflections which can be accepted or rejected, and respect the choice that others make for themselves. Hermione's certainty that she knows best prevents her from giving credence to the elves' feelings and is very close to the false, but sometimes still assumed position of 'the analyst is always right.'

The Elves are among several races that coexist with wizards and in Rowling's world this does not always happen smoothly. The Forbidden Forest is out of bounds to the students for good reason, but she brings her readers there in the first novel when as a detention Harry, Hermione, Neville and Malfoy go into it with Hagrid in an effort to discover what has been injuring unicorns. The Forbidden Forest can be seen as a metaphor for a dangerous space containing several different races, among them unicorns, centaurs and giant spiders. While they seem to tolerate each other, there is no sense of relationship between them. Hagrid is the only one who is accepted by all and can go there

[260] Ibid., 341-342.
[261] Rowling may be making a further point which is that the elves may compared to those who choose to live in a community specially a religious community of any denomination, without personal money. This is a choice rather than slavery, and in return the community offers companionship and security for life, a choice that many people find hard to understand.

freely. Like Suzanne Lake,[262] I see the wizard world as representing the unconscious, and thus the Forest represents much that is dark and potentially dangerous: the Forest may be explored in Hagrid's company, and in psychoanalysis, the journey is shared with a psychoanalyst.

Among the inhabitants are the centaurs, contemptuously referred to by Umbridge as 'half-breeds.'[263] Rowling shows that the centaurs are equally prejudiced: the centaurs also despise the wizards. '"We are a race apart and proud to be so…We are an ancient people…We do not recognise your laws, we do not acknowledge your superiority…"'[264]

The use of fantasy enables Rowling to address issues of prejudice, and in particular the position of the werewolf Remus Lupin. Werewolves present a great danger as once bitten by one the victim becomes a werewolf. Dumbledore shows a great measure of trust in Lupin, and in the efficacy of Snape's potion, to keep the inhabitants of Hogwarts safe. Now that Snape has let it be known that Lupin is a werewolf, the latter has no choice but to resign. He tells Harry, 'this time tomorrow, the owls will start arriving from parents – they will not want a werewolf teaching their children…'[265] This is despite the fact that Lupin is the best teacher of Defence Against the Dark Arts the students have had. At a deeper level Rowling is addressing the fear and prejudice with which many people view those with any kind of difference: colour or sexuality, for instance, unable to see the reality of the person, a view sometimes shared by the person themselves.[266] In the final and sad meeting between the living Lupin and Harry, Rowling makes this very clear:

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[262] Suzanne Lake, 'Object Relations in Harry Potter' in *The Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis and Dynamic Psychiatry* 31 (2003), 509-520.
[263] Rowling, *Phoenix,* 665.
[264] Ibid., 667.
[265] Rowling, *Azkaban* 309.
[266] As I indicated above, there is little discussion of colour and no discussion of different sexual preferences. It seems likely that Rowling is hinting at racial difference in thee person of Hagrid, and sexual difference in Lupin: someone suspected of being harmful to children when this is far from the case.

Lupin's assertion that he regrets having married Tonks, that he has made her an outcast like himself and that his child will be ashamed of having a werewolf as a father, is poignant, as is his idea that to remove himself from them would be the best choice. A choice which appals Harry who identifies with the potentially abandoned infant and loses his temper, calling Lupin a coward.[267]

Rowling portrays the giants, too, as being despised by wizards as they also are a race apart and seen to be vicious. Although not acknowledged as a half-giant, Hagrid, because of his appearance and size is mocked by the Malfoys from the beginning of the series, when Draco tells Harry 'I hear he's a sort of *savage* – lives in a hut on the school grounds and every now and then he gets drunk, tries to do magic and ends up setting fire to his bed.'[268] Madame Maxime, the headmistress of Beauxbatons, when Hagrid tells her he had never met another half-giant, is outraged at the suggestion that she is part giant: 'I 'ave nevair been more insulted in my life!...I 'ave – I 'ave big bones!'[269] Harry, who with Ron, overhears the conversation, does not understand how shocked Ron is to think that Hagrid is part giant, and asks 'Who cares?... 'There's nothing wrong with Hagrid!' Ron, brought up in wizard culture, remarks 'blimey, no wonder he keeps it quiet… I always thought he'd got in the way of a bad Engorgement Charm when he was a kid or something…' and the Muggle-born Hermione is quite relaxed about it:

> 'Well, I thought he must be,' she said shrugging. 'I knew he couldn't be pure giant because they are about twenty feet tall. But honestly, all this hysteria about giants. They can't *all* be horrible … it's the same sort of prejudice that people have towards werewolves … it's just bigotry, isn't it?'[270]

[267] Rowling, *Hallows*, 175-176.
[268] Rowling, *Stone*, 60.
[269] Rowling, *Goblet*, 373.
[270] Ibid., 374; 376

A scurrilous article by the journalist Rita Skeeter stressing his giant ancestry results in Hagrid refusing to come out of his house for days:[271] In showing the impact of Rita Skeeter's article on Hagrid Rowling also draws attention to the destructive power of some of the popular press. Rita Skeeter is a particularly clever caricature: the tone and style of her article, with its half-truths and innuendos is a close parody of some tabloids, and Skeeter's Quick Quote Quill is a clever symbol of the disregard for accuracy in the interests of speedy publishing.

Rowling shows Dumbledore as endeavouring to bring members of the various races together, and not only to unite against the common enemy, Voldemort.[272] Dumbledore respects the different knowledge of the centaurs and invites Firenze, to teach; he appreciates the feelings of house elves, as we see in his care for Dobby and Winky,[273] and after Kreacher's betrayal of Sirius tells Harry 'Kreacher is what he has been made by wizards… he is to be pitied.'[274] After the return of Voldemort Dumbledore sends Hagrid to talk to the giants and hopefully to gain their support.[275]

Rowling invites us not to make hasty judgements: the 'small' giant, Grawp, although he damages the forest and upsets its inhabitants, inadvertently saves Harry and Hermione from the wrath of the centaurs, and is ultimately tamed by Hagrid's care.[276] The werewolf, Lupin,a skilled and sympathetic teacher, showing the class how to deal with fear in the form of a Boggart, and teaching Harry how to conjure a Patronus to drive off depression and despair in the form of Dementors. From Tom Riddle's diary Harry learns that Hagrid was falsely accused by Riddle of opening the Chamber of Secrets, and

[271] Ibid., 380; 393.
[272] Rowling uses Dumbledore and his wisdom as an example of positive attitude and behaviour. Coming from the Muggle world Hermione and Harry cannot understand Ron's prejudice: Dumbledore understands it and rejects it.
[273] Rowling, *Goblet*, 327-331.
[274] Rowling, *Phoenix*, 733.
[275] Rowling, *Goblet*, 624.
[276] Rowling, *Phoenix*, 670.

the headmaster at the time believed Riddle: 'On the one hand, Tom Riddle… school Prefect, model student; on the other hand, big blundering Hagrid, in trouble every other week, trying to raise werewolf cubs under his bed…'[277] Throughout the series Rowling challenges our assumptions over and over: there is the continuing question about where Snape's loyalties lie; we are given disturbing details about the youthful Dumbledore;[278] Harry is confronted by the fact that his father was a bully and a show-off. The use of fantasy that made it possible for Harry to see this happen, not merely to be told about it adds to the vivid shock to both Harry and the readers all of whom have accepted the idealised image of James. I discuss this in more detail in chapter three.

Intersection of primary and secondary worlds

In Rowling's series the wizard world is very similar to the consensual world of everyday with the addition of magic. Wizards are human people with special gifts, and some, like Hermione, and Harry's mother, Lily, are born to families with no knowledge of or skill in magic. This criterion of possessing the special gift of magical ability is the only requirement needed for admission to Hogwarts, described by Hagrid as 'the finest school of witchcraft and wizardry in the world.'[279]

Rowling begins her series by bringing the fantasy world into the consensual real world, which Mendlesohn calls 'Intrusion Fantasy' where 'the world is ruptured by the intrusion, which disrupts normality and has to be negotiated with or defeated, sent back whence it came, or controlled.'[280] On this first occasion Mr Dursley tries not to notice strange people wearing odd clothes which are seen about the place and unusually a

[277] Rowling, *Chamber,* 230.
[278] It is only in the final book, *Deathly Hallows* that Rowling makes Harry and her readers assess Dumbledore's fallibility.
[279] Ibid., 47.
[280] Farah Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2008). 115.

number of owls flying around in daylight. He does notice a cat which he thought was reading a map, but which on second glance appeared to be just standing there. Rowling makes it clear that Mr Dursley will always use denial and insist that what he observed was not there. Eleven years later the intrusions begin to dominate as hundreds of owls bringing letters from Hogwarts turn the complacent world of the Dursleys upside down. Harry learns that he belongs in two worlds, that of the Dursleys and also that of the wizard world. This overlapping of the two worlds is unusual in children's fantasy literature, although Will Stanton in Susan Cooper's *Dark is Rising* sequence also learns on his eleventh birthday that he belongs to a company known as the Old Ones while still being a child in the world he shares with his family.[281] There are other children who learn at that age that they have abilities they were unaware of, among them Eric 'Cat' Chant in Diana Wynne Jones's *Charmed Life* (1977) who learns that he is really a powerful wizard and the heir to the office of Chrestomanci; Ged, in Ursula le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea* (1968) discovers his powers when he saves his village from raiders, and Denizen Hardwick in Dave Rudden's *Knights of the Borrowed Dark* (2016) finds that he is one of the Knights standing between humanity and the dark. However, none of these heroes starts from the consensual world in the way that Harry Potter and Will Stanton do, and despite the fact that Harry's Muggle world is to some extent a caricature I suggest that this portrayal of an ordinary child who is also extraordinary offers every child the opportunity to see themselves as having unique qualities. The pre-pubescent years, especially around eleven, can be seen as a liminal age: between childhood and adolescence, it spans both stages. Roni Natov suggests that it is 'an age associated with coming into consciousness…when children begin their "serious" study to prepare them

[281] Susan Cooper, *The Dark is Rising* (Harmondsworth: Puffin Books, 1976).

for adult life.'[282] Psychoanalyst Eric Rayner writes: 'By about the age of 11, intelligent children at least show a change…' Rayner then goes on to discuss adolescence, where the child has an understanding of abstract possibilities, and idealism often becomes a feature.[283] This idealism underlies the narrative of Rowling's series and I address this in more detail in the Chapter 'Reading Harry Potter as a Quest,' and in the chapter on Death.

From Intrusion Fantasy, where the magical world enters the primary world, Rowling brings Harry into the secondary, magic world which Mendlesohn calls Portal Fantasy, and which she says 'is about entry, transition and exploration… characteristically…the protagonist goes from a mundane life… to direct contact with the fantastic…'[284] For the protagonists, and for Rowling's readers moving between the Muggle and wizard worlds involves the use of portals, about which Carroll writes:

> They offer connection while simultaneously illuminating the distinctions between two different kinds of space. In the case of portal fantasies the 'inward side' is turned towards the fantasy realm and the 'outward side' is the primary world of consensual reality.[285]

Portals abound in the Harry Potter series and nowhere more than in the first book as Rowling sets the structure for moving between the worlds. Harry's first entrance into the wizard world from the consensual world and a busy shopping street is through the portal of The Leaky Cauldron, 'a tiny grubby little pub' which faces the street, although passers-by do not seem to notice it. Once inside Harry is in the wizard world, and there in 'a small walled courtyard where there was nothing but a dustbin and a few weeds,' Hagrid taps on a wall and makes an arch into the shopping street Diagon Alley.[286] Carroll writes: 'The

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[282] Roni Natov, 'Harry Potter and the Extraordinariness of the Ordinary' in *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter:Perspectives on a Literary Phenomenon,* ed. Lana A. Whited (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 2002) 125.
[283] Eric Rayner, *Human Development: an Introduction to the Psychodynamics of Growth, Maturity and Aging* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1978) 106-107.
[284] Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics* 2.
[285] Jane Suzanne Carroll, 'Spatiality in Children's Literature,' in *The Edinburgh Companion to Children's Literature* ed., Clémentine Beauvais and Maria Nikolajeva. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017),58.
[286] Rowling, *Stone*,54.

moment when both character and reader become aware for the first time that there is another world, a wider, stranger, fantastic world that exists alongside the primary space is a crucial one in portal fantasy.'[287] A portal, and how it is accessed, is a significant element in the series and I address this in more detail in the Quest chapter. From this initial entry Rowling moves Harry and the readers back and forth between the two worlds which coexist. Mendlesohn asserts that 'very occasionally both categories [of fantasy: intrusion and portal] may occur in the same book… one of the few crossovers are the Harry Potter novels, which typically begin as intrusion fantasies… but very rapidly transmute into … portal fantasies.'[288] This apparent ease of moving between the wizard and Muggle worlds leaves open the fantasy, for the young reader at least, that this might actually be possible. The movement also echoes the process of psychoanalysis and the recognition of an unsuspected hidden world of the unconscious which also offers 'a wider, stranger and fantastic world' than the material one. Those undergoing psychoanalysis are aware of moving between their own inner and outer lives, but, as Natov suggests, this is, in fact, a universal experience. She writes:

> The interpenetration of the two worlds suggests the way in which we live – not only in childhood, though especially so then – on more than one plane, with the life of the imagination and daily life moving in and out of our consciousness.[289]

One of the unconscious reasons for the popularity of the series, that it never quite loses touch with the world of everyday, thus making it possible for readers to move from the wizard world to the consensual world. This fact makes for boundaries different from the rigid boundaries of some fantasy worlds, such as those in C. S. Lewis's Narnia series.

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[287] Jane Suzanne Carroll, 'Spatiality in Fantasy for Children,' in *The Edinburgh Companion to Children's Literature*, ed. Clémentine Beauvais and Maria Nikolajeva. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 2017), 63.
A portal, and how it is accessed, is a significant element in the series and I address this as portals recur in my study. Portals can be between worlds or between places in the wizard world. For the most part access is from some unprepossessing place or object, a dingy street, a closed shop or even an old boot.
[288] Mendlsohn, *Rhetorics* 2.
[289] Natov, 'Extraordinariness,' 129.

Animals like Hermione's cat, Crookshanks, and Harry's owl, Hedwig, may be very clever and highly sensitive but they do not use human speech, they remain animals in both worlds. Hedwig, who moves between the worlds with Harry, behaves more like a wild owl away from the wizard world, going out to hunt for food and returning with a frog in her beak, at a time when Harry, angry and frightened, wants her to take messages to people in the wizard world. '"About time!" Harry snarled… "You can put that down. I've got work for you!"… She took off immediately…' [290] Hedwig, too, belongs in both worlds and responds appropriately. Likewise, Voldemort's snake, Nagini, appears more feral when she acts within the Muggle world and more sentient within the wizarding world. The easy way that animals move between the worlds suggests that the connections and intersections between the worlds are natural and part of the accepted fabric of Rowling's overlapping worlds.

Fantasy is part of our lives from the beginning when as infants we struggled to make sense of our experiences. For those who choose to engage in fantasy either in literature or daydreams or play it offers a rich and colourful universe. For those who, like the Dursleys, are afraid of anything outside the boundaries of what they see as 'normal' fantasy is seen as a threat, and any hint of something unfamiliar, can lead to mental collapse. Moving in and out of fantasy or the unconscious in unthinkable. Rowling does move her readers' attention from one world to another, between the unknown exciting fantasy world to the more familiar world of the school story. Ogden, quoted above, asserts that unconscious fantasy and conscious awareness are both necessary for wholeness: I posit that the unconscious appeal of the series lies in the mingling of fantasy and the familiar, while always being able to identify with the protagonists. In the next chapter I look at how Rowling not only combines the familiar boarding school story with

[290] Rowling, *Phoenix*, 44.

the fantasy wizarding world, but addresses issues in growing up, and especially the issue of loss.

Chapter three: School: Finding one's place in the world

In the previous chapter I addressed Rowling's use of the fantasy genre in her Harry Potter series, and the importance of fantasy for both adults and children. The introduction of the protagonists and the readers to the unboundaried worlds of fantasy and the unconscious offers the excitement of new territory to explore. But an element of familiarity is also necessary if readers are to be able to identify fully with the characters in the story, and Rowling's use of the school story genre offers this. Children's lives are structured by the school year and Rowling's use of this frame allows her to write the series as a *Bildungsroman*,[291]-- a novel of development, in this case a series of development — describing how the characters grow from pre-pubescent eleven-year-olds to adulthood. Despite the fact that the majority of children attend day school, as did Rowling herself, school stories are almost always set in a boarding school.[292] The advantage of using the boarding school as a setting is that by removing child characters from home and parents the focus is entirely on school life and its issues, especially the relationships between pupils and those between teachers and pupils. Object Relations theory with its emphasis on relationship from the beginning of life and with much of its focus on love and loss as the character develops, is an appropriate branch of psychoanalysis with which to explore this. The boarding school setting has become almost essential to the school story genre. As Sheila Ray notes,

[291] A *Bildungsroman* is a novel of development. Roberta Seelinger Trites makes a distinction between *Bildungsroman* where the young hero comes of age and the *Entwicklungsroman* which is a novel of development. Roberta Seelinger Trites, *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2000), 10-11. In her later book *Literary Conceptualisations of Growth* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2014) she develops her theories on *Bildungsromane* considerably, especially on pages 22-23 and 26-27. See footnote 11 Introduction.
[292] A notable exception is the BBC's successful series *Grange Hill* which ran from 1978 to 2008, but as it did not originate in a book I am not considering it here.

> The term 'school story' is generally to describe a story in which most of the action centres on a school, usually a single-sex boarding school… the world of school is a microcosm of the larger world [and] offers a setting in which young people are thrown together and in which relationships between older and younger children, between members of the peer group and between children and adults can be explored.[293]

The boarding-school story has now become a literary topos rather than a real-world experience, and these fictional schools have become the familiar and idealised places for readers rather than actual schools.[294] While Sarah Fielding's *The Governess* (1749) pre-dates it by over a hundred years, Pat Pinsent notes that Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857) is in many ways a template for boarding school stories with its emphasis on sport and on moral development under the guidance of an enlightened headmaster. Thomas's work established some of the narrative motifs, imagery and stereotypical characterisation that are commonly repeated in the genre.[295] Pat Pinsent, writing chiefly about girls' school stories, identifies some of the recurring elements of these stories, which are repeated throughout series such as Brent-Dyer's Chalet School stories (1925-70), Blyton's St Clare series (1941-45), and Malory Towers series (1946-51), several of which also occur in the Harry Potter series: the importance of the train journey, the way in which the school itself becomes a character in itself, the introduction of new students together with new readers.[296] In addition to these three elements which I will discuss below, I also identify three other elements which are crucial to the school story genre and which are central to structural and narrative importance in Rowling's

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[293] Sheila Ray 'School Stories' in Peter Hunt, ed., *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature* (London: Routledge, 1996), 348-359.
[294] David Rudd writes about the discrepancy with some amusement saying 'First, there is the notion of a magical space, which Malory Towers certainly gives, as many readers have found. In fact, some readers…have recorded getting themselves dispatched to what they thought would be similarly magical institutions, to their subsequent regret.' David Rudd, *Enid Blyton and the Mystery of Children's Literature* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan Press Ltd., 200), 123.
[295] Pat Pinsent, 'Theories of Genre and Gender: Change and Continuity in the School Story' in *Modern Children's Literature: An Introduction,* ed., Kimberly Reynolds (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 10.
[296] Ibid., 14.

Harry Potter series. These are the struggle between good and evil as evidenced between Harry and Draco Malfoy; their respective houses, Gryffindor and Slytherin; and, in the wider world, Dumbledore with the members of the Order of the Phoenix and Voldemort with his Death Eaters, the emphasis on sport, and the wise and benign head teacher. Although Hogwarts shares some of these features the school bears little relation either to fictional boarding schools or actual ones, indeed, some elements maybe closer to the real ones: a description of life in a public school by Pico Iyer, recounting his years at the Dragon School and Eton, offers a setting of school life not unlike Hogwarts. Iyer remarks that readers may not be aware of how much realism there is in Rowling's description:

> The classical boarding-school process favoured by the English middle classes is esoteric – in fact, mad – to the point of resembling some Charms School for apprentice mages. The main languages we learned from 7 to 14, were ones that had been out of use for 2,000 years or more… Every Sunday night, in our flowing black robes… we would gather in a classroom dating from 1441 to sing hymns in Latin, and whenever we passed a 'beak' – i.e., a teacher – in the street we were allowed to greet him only by raising one solemn finger silently into the air… the trip to dusty old shops with creaky family names…where aged men would fit us out with the approved uniform and equipment… The special school train that would be waiting in a London station to transport us to…an alternative reality where none of the usual rules applied … everyone wore tails every day…[297]

In Iyers's world as in the fictional and indeed the real boarding schools, students have to acquire the 'approved uniform and equipment' and Rowling shows Harry's excitement as, with Hagrid's help, he gets his money from Gringott's Bank and buys the items on his list.[298]

In the matter of school uniform Rowling parodies some English public school uniforms and once more caricatures Dudley: 'Smeltings boys wore maroon tailcoats, orange knickerbockers and flat straw hats called boaters.' In addition, Smeltings boys carry a knobbly stick, 'used for hitting each other while the teachers weren't looking. This was

[297] Pico Iyer, 'The Playing Fields of Hogwarts' *The New York Times on the Web* October 10, 1999. ' movies2.nytimes.com/books/99/10/10bookend/bookend.html
[298] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997), 22.

supposed to be good training for later life' and is the only piece of equipment he is to bring. Here I suggest Rowling is hinting at the bullying understood to be an accepted aspect of public schools, and perhaps that toughening up is the only important lesson they need to learn..

Harry's uniform, on the other hand consists of

> Three sets of plain work robes (black)
> One plain pointed hat (black) for day wear
> One pair of protective gloves (dragon hide or similar)
> One winter cloak (black, silver fastenings)[299]

The black robes and cloak are suggestive of ecclesiastic or academic garb and therefore worthy of respect rather than ridicule, and as well as eight books his equipment consists of

> 1 wand1 cauldron (pewter, standard size 2)
>
> 1 set glass or crystal phials
> 1 telescope
> 1set brass scales

Rowling ridicules the Dursleys and their attitude to education in the difference she makes bewteen the demands of the two schools. She is also strengthening the idea that the Dursleys lack any imagination, whereas Harry's school lists suggest exciting learning.

Describing young wizards in Diagon Alley Rowling makes it clear that they are not much different from young people in the real world which immediately is an area of identification between readers and the characters in the narrative: enthusiasm for the latest and fastest broom could, in the Muggle world, be applied to the latest bike. 'Several boys of about Harry's age had their noses pressed against a window with broomsticks in it. "Look," Harry heard one of them say, "the new Nimbus Two Thousand – fastest

[299][299] Ibid., 52.

ever…"'[300] There are different kinds of materialism: Rowling contrasts Harry and Dudley in their attitude to material possessions: Dudley is only concerned with the number of presents he gets for his birthday, not with their possibilities, while Harry, despite being tempted by a gold cauldron, gets what he needs and takes pleasure especially in his wand, the symbol of potential power.[301] Rowling stresses that materialism plays a part in the relationships among the pupils: one of the ways in which Malfoy continually taunts Ron is about the poverty of the Weasley family. It starts on the train in *Philosopher's Stone* when he says 'My father told me all the Weasleys have red hair, freckles and more children than they can afford.'[302]

Writing about school stories Roberta Seelinger Trites posits 'Two types of adventures occur: competition at physical activities, such as sports, and some sort of social conflict that allows the text to explore morality.'[303] Among the institutions that Trites refers to as being those against which the teenager rebels, are the school, the church and politics: she writes: 'The role of politics in adolescent literature appears more subtly: relatively few novels deal directly with the role of the state in regulating teenagers' power.'[304] Rowling's series, however, does exactly this: it is the growing corruption of the political government that is challenged by the protagonists. Hogwarts, unlike other schools, does not have a unified identity and ethos. It acts more like a container of the very disparate houses within it. Even within the houses there is no sense of learning to

[300] Ibid., 56
[301] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997), 21, 63.
[302] Ibid., 81.
[303] Roberta Seelinger Trites, *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000), 32. The earlier school stories from *Tom Brown's Schooldays* onwards through the popular girls' school stories by Enid Blyton, Elinor Brent-Dyer, Antonia Forest or Dorita Fairlie Bruce, the initial rebellion is against the institution of the school and the rebel, usually a new pupil, learns to identify with the school ethos. Trites refers to another institution that invites rebellion, the church: In *The Chocolate War* (Robert Cormier, 1974) and *Is that you, Miss Blue?* (M. E. Kerr, 1975), both set in corrupt religious schools where the protagonists struggle against the hypocrisy, there is no accepting of the institution.
[304] Ibid., 22.

adapt to its ethos. The moral development in Rowling's series is not a struggle or rebellion against the school, which is more a containing presence than an institution to be rebelled against, but a struggle on an altogether deeper level: Rowling shows Harry learning to accept that he has to be the one who will save the world from being taken over by the killer of his parents, he needs to grow physically, mentally and spiritually, he has to learn to accept that people he loves and respects are not flawless, and to confront aspects of himself that he dislikes. Moreover in novel after novel he is challenged by Voldemort. This ever-present battle between good and evil gives a parallel narrative to the usual school story issues. For Harry, Ron and Hermione the task of trying to save the world is an ever-present aspect of their lives. The fact that it is a fantasy means that it is possible for the protagonists to take on a powerful corrupt character and win.

The Significance of the train and the Introduction of New Characters

Despite significant differences, Rowling's series is sufficiently faithful to the traditional boarding school topos to have a familiarity that balances the uncanny quality of the fantastic.

Among the tropes identified by Pinsent is the first train journey to the school where characters are introduced to each other and to the readers, a frequent narrative device in school stories as it links the world of home with the world of school.[305] The chronotope – the connectedness of time and space – is effected through the symbolism of the train, creating 'a kind of liminal time-space zone.'[306] In Rowling's series it also links the consensual world of King's Cross station as, once through the barrier, they find an old-

[305] Enid Blyton uses the train journey to introduce both her 'Naughtiest Girl' series and her 'Malory Towers' series, introducing several of the characters and especially the new girls. Antonia Forest uses the train journey to introduce her characters but also for dramatic happenings in the time-space zone between home and school in her novels *Autumn Term* and *End of Term.*

[306] Pinsent, 'Theories,' 13.

fashioned steam train. The journey is also significant in that Rowling moves her characters from the contemporary world by means of a nineteenth century train to the medievalist setting of Hogwarts. Except for *Chamber of Secrets* when Harry and Ron arrive in Mr Weasley's modified car, and *Deathly Hallows* where they do not return at all, the train journey plays an important part in each book. As with other authors, among them Enid Blyton, Antonis Forest, Dorita Bruce, -- the journey is important for Tom Brown too, but in his case it is by coach -- she uses the first journey to introduce some of the other new students, but before doing so she introduces her readers to the members of Harry's future surrogate family: at King's Cross, wondering how to get on to platform nine and three quarters, he sees the Weasley family including Mrs Weasley and Ginny, and asks for help.[307] During the journey Harry shares a compartment with Ron who answers some of his questions about the wizard world and, for the first time in his life, Harry has money to buy treats and a friend to share them with.[308] Ron tells Harry about his family: 'I've got a lot to live up to. Bill as Head Boy and Charlie was captain of Quidditch. Now Percy's a Prefect. Fred and George mess around a lot, but they still get really good marks and everyone thinks they're really funny.'[309] Pinsent points out the similarity of Ron's description of his family to Forest's description of the Marlowe family in *Autumn Term*: on the train to school she introduces twins Nicola and Lawrence, and their older sisters, Karen (headgirl), Rowan (in the netball team) and Ann (a patrol leader in the Guides).[310] Both Ron and the Marlowe twins have a lot to live up to. In Rowling's novel besides Ron and the twins, Fred and George, on this first journey she also introduces a tearful Neville, who has lost his toad for at least the second time, and Hermione Granger, who has 'a bossy sort of voice, lots of bushy brown hair and rather

[307] Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997), 69.
[308] Ibid., 76.
[309] Ibid., 75.
[310] Pinsent, 'Genre' 16.

large front teeth.'[311] Although we do not yet know it, Rowling has introduced the main protagonists of the series, and the knowing reader, familiar with the tropes of the school story, may guess that the main players are introduced during this train journey, with the exception of Ginny who is left behind on platform nine and three quarters with her mother. Rowling also uses this journey to reintroduce Draco Malfoy, first encountered by Harry when they were both being measured for robes.[312] On the train, now that he realises who Harry is, Malfoy offers to help him make friends with those he sees as being the right sort of people, telling him 'You hang around with riff-raff like the Weasleys and that Hagrid and it'll rub off on you.'[313] This encounter is significant in that Rowling uses it to mark from the beginning Harry's capacity to recognise Ron's integrity and Malfoy's sneering snobbery. It puts in place the enmity between Harry and Draco Malfoy, later widened into the rivalry between Gryffindor and Slytherin, and finally into the war between the Order of the Phoenix and the Death Eaters. On this occasion Rowling introduces Harry and her readers to a whole new world of moving pictures in which the people disappear and return and exciting snacks such as Chocolate Frogs and Bertie Bott's Every-Flavour Beans.

Going through the portal of platform nine and three quarters has brought protagonists and readers firmly into the wizard world but Rowling uses the train as a liminal space outside the authority of Dumbledore or other wizard authorities. Thus, it was possible for a Dementor, forbidden to enter the grounds of Hogwarts, to appear on the train. This is the first appearance of a Dementor, a being which will play an important part in the series from now on:

> Standing in the doorway… was a cloaked figure that towered to the ceiling. Its face was completely hidden beneath its hood… There was a hand protruding from the cloak and it was glistening, greyish, slimy-looking and scabbed, like

[311] Rowling, *Stone*, 78-79.
[312] Ibid., 60.
[313] Ibid., 81.

> something dead that had decayed in water… And then the thing beneath the hood, whatever it was, drew a long, slow, rattling breath, as though it was trying to suck something more than air from its surroundings. An intense cold swept over them all… And then, from far away, [Harry] heard screaming, terrible, terrified, pleading screams…[314]

All the children were affected by its appearance: Neville said '"It was horrible… Did you feel how cold it went when it came in?"' '"I felt weird," said Ron, "Like I'd never be cheerful again"'… Ginny 'was huddled in her corner looking nearly as bad as Harry felt, [and] gave a small sob.' Harry, however, was the only one to have heard screaming and to slide off his seat in a faint.[315] Later, when Harry asks Professor Lupin why he is more affected by the Dementors than the other students, Lupin tells him: 'It has nothing to do with weakness… the Dementors affect you worse than the others because there are horrors in your past that the others don't have.'[316]

Although several authors use the journey as a way of meeting, and Antonia Forest describes dramatic happenings which occur in her books *Autumn Term* (1948) and *End of Term* (1959), Rowling uses the space for several other incidents in addition to the appearance of the Dementor. This often takes the form of Malfoy bullying Ron[317] or teasing Harry. But more dangerously, when Malfoy discovers Harry spying on him, he immobilises him, stamps on his face breaking his nose, and throws the Invisibility Cloak over him.[318]

School Lessons as Life Lessons

Despite using the structure of a boarding school, thereby increasing the intensity of relationships and using the familiar structures of the school story genre, thereby

[314] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (London: Bloomsbury, 1999), 66.
[315] Ibid., 67.
[316] Ibid., 140.
[317] Rowling, *Stone* 81-82, *Goblet* 149-150, *Phoenix* 175-176.
[318] Rowling, *Prince* 146-147.

increasing the intensity of relationships among the child characters and among the children and their teachers and effectively isolating these characters from the wider world, the underlying narrative is always the struggle between good and evil, between Harry and Voldemort. This struggle is always present although not always consciously, which means that the lessons tend to carry an emotional significance. As an example, learning how to repel a Boggart is a lesson that she describes in great detail in *Prisoner of Azkaban*: not only is it one of the most entertaining, but it demonstrates that being afraid of something is not a disgrace, everyone fears something. A Boggart, a shape-shifter who takes on the appearance of what one most fears, is one of Rowling's most unpleasant creations. The spell to use against the shape-shifter is to make it look comical, and cry 'Riddikulous.' Professor Lupin chooses the inept and terrified Neville, whose worst fear is Professor Snape, to be the first to cast the spell:[319] Besides giving Neville confidence in himself, in this lesson Rowling foreshadows some crucial plot points: Harry is wondering how he could make a Dementor look ridiculous when Lupin diverts the Boggart from Harry and towards himself. For a moment a bright orb hangs in the air before Lupin turns the Boggart into a cockroach.[320] When Harry admits to Lupin his distress at not being challenged by the Boggart, Lupin, who had assumed that Voldemort would have appeared, is impressed that Harry's greatest fear is fear itself, as represented by the Dementor rather than the enemy.[321]

In the same book, Hagrid's first lesson on Care of Magical Creatures similarly has wide significance for the characters involved and for the narrative of the novel. Hagrid proudly introduces a herd of Hippogriffs, a legendary creature with the body, hind legs and tail of a horse but with the head, front legs and wings of a giant eagle-like bird. It was

[319] Rowling, *Azkaban* 104.
[320] Ibid., 105.
[321] Ibid., 119. Later we learn that Hermione recognises the white orb representing Lupin's greatest fear as the moon, thus confirming her awareness that Lupin is a werewolf.(253).

said to be so powerful that it was able to fly around the moon.[322] Rowling gives it some additional characteristics: respect is necessary in approaching the creature. Harry approaches with respect and Hippogriff then permits Harry to ride him. Malfoy, on the other hand, refuses to perform the required ritual and is slashed by the creature's steely talons.[323]

This incident is significant structurally as well as psychoanalytically: Rowling shows the Gryffindors as being outraged by Draco – pretending to be seriously injured – and on behalf of Hagrid. For Harry Ron and Hermione, apparently helpless to prevent the Hippogriff being killed as a dangerous animal, it also for the first time makes them realise that Dumbledore is not all powerful either. Dumbledore says:

> 'I have no power to make other men see the truth, or to overrule the Minister for Magic…'
> Harry stared up into the grave face and felt as though the ground beneath him as falling sharply away.[324] He had grown used to the idea that Dumbledore could solve anything. He had expected Dumbledore to pull some amazing solution out of the air…[325]

Although Dumbledore does pull a solution out of the air in the form of a time-turner, it comes as a shock to Harry, as it does to children realising that their parents, or their teachers, are not all powerful.

Structurally the incident is important too, as the time turning leads them to the Shrieking Shack and the revealing of who was really responsible for the deaths of Harry's parents. It also leads to an abrupt change in Harry's thinking: although ready to kill Sirius when he believed him responsible for his parent's death, at the moment when Sirius and Lupin are on the point of killing the real murderer, Pettigrew, Harry stops them, saying

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[322] The Hippogriff is first described by Ludovico Ariosto in his poem *Orlando Furioso,*1516. '*Harry Potter: A History of Magic: The Spellbinding Introduction to a Unique Exhibition* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 212-213.
[323] Ibid., 88-90.
[324] Rowling, *Hallows* 55.
[325] Rowling, *Azkaban* 287-288.

'You can't kill him' and to Pettigrew 'I'm not doing this for you. I'm doing it because I don't reckon my dad would've wanted his best friends to become killers – just for you --.' Interestingly Rowling gives no clear idea of what caused Harry's change of heart, but what we do know is that using the spell 'Expelliarmus' to make an enemy drop his wand, became his defence. It almost cost him his life in his final escape from Privet Drive, but Rowling is emphasising that respect for life is central to Harry, and by extension to her readers, from that moment in the Shack. Although we are not told about Harry's thinking, it is an important aspect of his maturing. There is one further development: when Harry is angry with himself for letting Pettigrew escape, Dumbledore tells him 'This is magic at its deepest, its most impenetrable, Harry. But trust me … the time may come when you will be very glad you saved Pettigrew's life.' That time does come in the cellar at Malfoy Manor when Wormtail spares Harry's life in return.[326]

Significance of Games

As in all school stories games play a large part at Hogwarts, as they do in schools in the world. In the real world games are considered to be an essential part of overall education, building team spirit, and promoting healthy competition; in boys' schools and in boys' school stories rough contact sports are often considered necessary for toughening up the pupils, and in the majority of schools pupils are expected to play whether they choose to or not. Just as in *Tom Brown's Schooldays* even students who do not actively play partake enthusiastically in rugby from the sidelines: at Hogwarts pupils are not obliged to play the game of Quidditch, but everyone is interested in it, even Hermione comes to matches to support Gryffindor and especially Harry and Ron. Played on broomsticks, Quidditch is a complicated game unique to Hogwarts, and Rowling explains it on two occasions, first

[326] Rowling, *Hallows* 380-381.

when the captain, Wood, is initiating Harry into the details,[327] and later when Harry explains it to Colin Creevey.[328] Pico Iyer writes that 'the stranger the detail in Rowling's world, the closer it is to something everyday to us… we had three brutal sports not played in any other school, the most savage of which had "walls" and "behinds" and no official goal scored since 1909.'[329] Rugby, as described in *Tom Brown's Schooldays,* is equally confusing for and the readers but in the last moments of the match he and a senior boy manage to save the goal.[330] For Tom this early initiation into the school game marks his acceptance into his new world. Likewise, Harry's first Quidditch match serves as a sign of his new status within the school and, particularly, within Gryffindor. Finding one's place in the community starts from the beginning of conscious awareness, as Winnicott shows (*The Child, the Family and the Outside World* 1964). Being accepted in the school community is an important step. For Harry, famous for something he had no conscious part in, to find something he was instinctively good at felt wonderful 'in a rush of fierce joy he realised he'd found something he could do without being taught – this was easy, this was *wonderful.*'[331] From this point on Harry's sense of identity is closely linked to his position as Seeker on the Quidditch team – the youngest house player in a century – and the same position his father had held. Rowling describes several matches in detail, and incidents which are significant in terms of Harry's development and need. In his first match he catches the Golden Snitch in his mouth: in his Will Dumbledore leaves the Snitch he caught in his first match; Scrimgeour, presenting it to Harry, tells him 'A Snitch

[327] Rowling, *Stone,* 124-125.
[328] Rowling, *Chamber,* 82-83.
[329] Pico Iyer, 'Playing Fields,'2. Iyer is presumably here referring to the Eton Wall Game , a mixture of football and rugby, played along a narrow strip of grass beside a wall, and which, it is said, nobody outside the school and even many of the players knew what the rules were. Perhaps in a nod to the Eton Wall Game Wood explains to Harry 'a game of Quidditch only ends when the snitch is caught, so it can go on for ages – I think the record is three months, they had to keep bringing on substitutes so the players could get some sleep.' Rowling *Stone,* 125.
[330] Thomas Hughes, *Tom Brown's Schooldays* 82.
[331] Rowling, *Stone,* 111.

is not touched by bare skin before it is released…this Snitch…will remember your touch…Dumbledore might have enchanted this Snitch so that it will only open for you.'[332] On his way to meet Voldemort the Snitch does open when he breathes on it, revealing the Resurrection Stone, and enabling his parents and Lupin and Sirius to accompany him. [333] He performs his Patronus during a Quiddich match: it is significant that this great personal achievement occurs during a game which he loves.[334] There are echoes here of Winnicott's insistence on the importance of play which I addressed in chapter one.

When his broomstick is smashed to pieces, for Harry the loss of what for him is an object and symbol of power not unlike a wand, is a shattering experience and he refuses to allow the remains of it to be thrown away: 'He knew he was being stupid, knew that the Nimbus was beyond repair but [he] couldn't help it; he felt as if he had lost one of his best friends.'[335]

The teachers and their relationships

Several of the Hogwarts teachers are stereotypical: McGonagall is the typical benign but strict teacher who can be relied upon. Trelawney is a caricature of a psychic, seen to be slightly batty and not unlike the stereotypical 'Mamzelle' in girls' school stories, for example, the Malory Towers series. McGonagall sees through her as being a fraud[336]as does Hermione who storms out of her class.[337] In his first meeting with her, Dumbledore, too, thought she had no gift for prophesy and was about to refuse her the position of

[332]Rowling, *Hallows,* 107.
[333] Ibid., 559.
[334] Rowling, *Azkaban,* 194.
[335] Ibid., 137.
[336]Ibid., 84.
[337]Ibid., 220.

teacher of Divination, when, as he shows Harry in the Pensieve, she suddenly made the prophecy concerning Voldemort and Harry which is at the centre of the series:

> *'The one with the power to vanquish the Dark lord approaches… born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies… and the dark lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not…'*[338]

Rowling shows her making one more prediction shortly before Pettigrew's escape:

> *'The Dark Lord lies alone and friendless, abandoned by his followers… Tonight, before midnight, the servant will break free and set out to rejoin his master. The Dark Lord will rise again with his servant's aid, greater and more terrible than ever before…*[339]*'*

When she recovers, she has no awareness of what happened and tells Harry she would not presume to predict anything so far-fetched, suggesting that the predictions she makes in class are conscious and fraudulent.

Snape is the most intriguing of the teachers, and Rowling paints him as a dislikeable character from the beginning. He hates Harry from the beginning and uses every possibility of bullying him in class and elsewhere. Harry is the son of the man he hated but also of the woman he loved, and so, throughout the series he attacks the son of the hated man and at the same time protects the son of the only woman he ever loved. Rowling shows both situations: he begins the first Potions class by taunting Harry, and ends it by blaming him for a mistake made by Neville.[340] For Snape, Harry is a reincarnation of his father, James, who bullied Snape when they were at Hogwarts together.[341] Snape, as head of Slytherin House, favours Malfoy who is in his house, and on a cursory reading it could be no more than House favouritism, treating Malfoy as a favourite and punishing Harry whenever possible. But, acting as a double agent between the Order of the Phoenix and the Death Eaters he promises Narcissa Malfoy to look after

[338] Rowling, *Phoenix*, 741.
[339] Rowling, *Azkaban*, 238.
[340] Rowling, *Stone*, 101-104.
[341] Rowling, *Phoenix*, 569-573.

and protect Draco as the latter tries to carry out Voldemort's order to kill Dumbledore,[342] and finally killing Dumbledore himself.[343] Only at the end of his life as he gives Harry his memories does he look beyond the image of James to the green eyes of Lily.[344] Snape has always hated Lupin and Sirius, James's best friends, and although at Dumbledore's request, he makes a potion every month at the full moon so that the werewolf, Lupin, can 'curl up in [his] office, a harmless wolf, and wait for the moon to wane again,'[345] the enmity remains; on one occasion when Snape takes Lupin's class, he makes the pupils study werewolves, hoping that they will realise what Lupin is.[346] Finally, in exasperation at the escape of Sirius Black and the loss of the promised Order of Merlin for his part in the capture of Black, Snape tells the Slytherins that Lupin is a werewolf, thereby ensuring that the whole school will know and it would be impossible for Lupin to remain at Hogwarts.[347]

Rowling explores the intergenerational relationships and the way in which the relationships between the older generation impact on the students, who are, for the most part unaware of what is being played out between their teachers, but suffer from its effects. Transgenerational trauma has always been of interest to psychoanalysts, but especially in recent decades starting with an emphasis on the children of Holocaust survivors.[348] Concern with the inner lives of the teachers is not a usual aspect of school stories, and Maria Nikolajeva suggests that the narrative is really about the character of

[342] Rowling, *Prince*, 40-41.
[343] Ibid., 556.
[344] Rowling, *Hallows* 529.
[345] Rowling, *Azkaban*, 258.
[346] Ibid., 128-130.
[347] Ibid., 308.
[348] Thomas Jefferson University has a program on Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma, and new books on the topic appear regularly on the website of Karnac, the main supplier of books on psychoanalysis. Among several published in 2022 is Clara Mucci *Resilience and Survival: Understanding and Healing Intergenerational Trauma* (Confer 2022). Although there was always some awareness of this it came to the fore in the 1960s working with children of Holocaust survivors, and is now looked at more widely.

Snape.[349] While not agreeing with Nikolajeva's argument, there is no doubt that Snape plays a huge part in the series, both as the hated teacher, and protector of both Harry and Malfoy, but also as finally clarifying some essential points in the chapter 'The Prince's Tale.'[350]

The arrival of Professor Umbridge changes the atmosphere of the school. In *Order of the Phoenix* Dumbledore appears to be largely absent from the school which is now being run by the Ministry through Umbridge. A sadist who is particularly eager to damage Harry as much as possible, she makes his punishments include writing lines in his own blood and to Harry's horror and Professor McGonagall's dismay, a lifelong ban on playing Quidditch. At this point the character of Hogwarts changes and becomes less of a containing space for both students and teachers and, as a result, for Rowling's readers. Umbridge sacks Professor Trelawney, although on Dumbledore's orders she continues to live at the castle.[351] She also sacks Hagrid and attempts to arrest him in the middle of the night: Hagrid escapes but McGonagall who had gone to prevent the arrest, is hit by four stunning spells which almost kill her.[352] Containing and holding are important psychoanalytic concepts especially in the work of Winnicott and Wilfrid Bion and part of the unconscious appeal of the traditional school story is precisely this sense of being contained so that adventures can be played out safely. The fact that even the teachers and in particular McGonagall, can be overruled and attacked means that there is no longer any safety. The school, which Harry has felt to be his home, is no longer a home: it has become a prison. An important aspect of the school story is the academic and

[349] Maria Nikolajeva argues that it is 'a complex existential narrative of a life and death of a pathetic man who longs for the son he has never had, and who, through thick and thin, remained true to his one and only love.' Maria Nikolajeva, *Power, Voice and Subjectivity in Literature for Young Readers* (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2010), 25.
[350] Rowling, *Hallows* 'The Prince's Tale,' 532-553.
[351] Rowling, *Phoenix* 524-526.
[352] Ibid., 635-637.

emotional growth of the school community and this Umbridge tries to prevent, not only through punishment but by treating the adolescent students in her class like small children.[353]

Challenges of Development

Rowling's series begins when the protagonists are eleven, just as adolescence is beginning. Psychoanalyst Eric Rayner, writing about adolescence, suggests that it is a process rather than a state and as such should be referred to as adolescing. He reminds us that while the process may begin at puberty it does not have a definite end and may indeed never be completed fully. He draws attention to some of the characteristics of this process, idealism and omnipotence, denigration of parents, anger, and grandiosity.[354] The process of adolescing coincides with the school story in which many characters enter a new school at the beginning of adolescence or in which the start of the first term at the new school is seen to coincide with the beginning of pubescence. If the school story and adolescing are seen as running in tandem, this allows us to view the school story as a *Bildungsroman*, as a narrative in which the characters grow up, and the passage of time is marked as they move into the next school year. In this way Rowling's characters are seen to progress through adolescence as they move through the years at Hogwarts.

Rayner's description of the often painful experience is very close to some of the experiences that Rowling constructs for her characters especially in *Order of the Phoenix*. Here Rowling's characters reach the age of fifteen, and this, I suggest, is the pivotal book in the series, recounting the year where Harry moves from being a child to being an adult. As a school story, this volume is very different in tone from the previous four, not only

[353] Rowling, *Phoenix*, 215-221.
[354] Eric Rayner, *Human Development: An Introduction to Psychodynamics of Growth, Maturity and Aging* (London: George Allen and Unwin 1978), 104-119.

because Professor Umbridge has taken over: psychically as well as physically Rowling first brings her characters to the dreary Twelve, Grimmauld Place. Anger runs through the book as a *leitmotif:* beginning with Harry's anger with Ron and Hermione for not letting him know what has been happening during the holidays, followed by a state of shock at the appearance of the Dementors which attack him and Dudley on their way home to Privet Drive, which he fights off by conjuring a Patronus. The confusing and conflicting letters from the Ministry threatening him with expulsion from Hogwarts and summoning him to a disciplinary hearing, combined with discovering that Aunt Petunia knows about Dementors and has communications from the wizard world means that Harry is mentally and emotionally in a completely unfamiliar space.[355] There is a sense of bewilderment at the change in circumstances, and a sense of being alone, with neither adult containment nor the company and support of friends. When Harry joins Ron and Hermione, Rowling shows him much more angry than we have ever seen him before, anger deflected from his rage against Dumbledore, the father-figure who has apparently deserted him.[356] Seen through Object Relations, Harry's anger is a symptom of the frustration often felt in growing up. Winnicott writes of this stage: 'In the time of adolescent growth boys and girls awkwardly and erratically emerge out of childhood and away from dependence, and grope towards adult status…'[357]

Part of Harry's anger is precisely because he is not allowed adult status despite having faced down Voldemort on four occasions, something which none of the adults has done. Even when Harry's rage has dissipated to some extent, the underlying tensions among the others in the house begin to surface, focusing in particular on how much information should be given to Harry. Sirius is bitter at being cooped up in the house he

[355] Rowling, *Phoenix*, 19-42.
[356] Ibid., 63-64.
[357] Winnicott, 'Contemporary Concepts of Adolescent Development' in *Playing and Reality*, 144.

hates and eager to share what they know with Harry, saying 'He's not a child,' while Mrs Weasley insists 'He's not an adult either.'[358] This is the quintessential place of the adolescent: Winnicott writes:

> It is legitimate, I believe, as well as useful, to look at the game 'I'm the King of the castle'… We need to translate this childish game into the language of the unconscious motivation of adolescence and society. If the child is to become an adult, then this move is achieved over the dead body of an adult. (I must take it for granted that the reader knows that I am referring to unconscious fantasy, the material that underlies playing.)[359]

I view this issue – the struggle for the adolescent to become an equal adult – as underlying the discussion among the adults and is part of what makes it so uncomfortable as it reveals splits among the adults. Sirius is encouraging Harry to disregard the views of his substitute mother, Molly Weasley, thereby making her, not dead in the literal sense, but no longer effective in her dealings with Harry, who no longer wants to be mothered like a child. Mrs Weasley is correct, too, in her awareness that Sirius does tend to forget that Harry is not his father, James, best friend of Sirius: it is as if Sirius has returned from his long stay in Azkaban, reverted to the daredevil he once was and wants to encourage Harry to join him as James would have done. On a later occasion, when Hermione and Harry reject Sirius's idea of meeting in Hogsmeade saying it would be too dangerous, Sirius tells Harry coldly 'You're less like your father than I thought… the risk would have been what made it fun for James.'[360]

Usually, Harry enjoys the time spent with the Weasleys before term begins but on this occasion he faces too many challenges. The prospect of the hearing is hanging over him and although Hermione insists that it is

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[358] Rowling, *Phoenix*, 84.
[359] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 144-145. In referring to the parent as 'dead' it is important to think 'as if dead.' Essentially it means that the adolescent has to think for himself, make decisions for himself as if the parent figure were not there. It is not to be taken literally: but growing up means taking the parents place as an adult.
[360] Rowling, *Phoenix*, 273.

> ‘just outrageous, I’ve looked it all up, they can’t expel you, they just can’t, there’s provision in the Decree for the Reasonable Restriction of Underage Sorcery for the use of magic in life-threatening situations --’[361]

The awareness that the Ministry has been infiltrated by people who refuse to believe that Voldemort had returned, who are working to discredit both Harry and Dumbledore is not reassuring.[362] When the authorities change the time and place of the hearing in the hope that Harry can be condemned in his absence, they are shown to be not only unreasonable but, in fact, corrupt.[363]

While still staying with the Weasleys Rowling shows Harry having to cope with another extremely painful situation when she describes his disappointment and jealousy when Ron and Hermione are made prefects and he is not. The inner rage he feels could lead him to spoil Ron’s happiness, but

> *He felt sickened with himself… Was he, Harry, Ron’s best friend in the world, going* to sulk because he didn’t have a badge, laugh with the twins behind Ron’s back, ruin this for Ron when, for the first time, he had beaten Harry at something?[364]

A lot is contained in this incident. Harry is not the only one shocked by Ron being chosen and not him. Hermione, seeing the badge in Harry’s hand, assumes it is his; the twins mock and tease, and Ron himself seems to wonder if it is a mistake. Rowling focuses on Harry’s reaction, that of one who has always come first and finding that another has been chosen in his place. He is suffering from natural jealousy, but he is also deeply hurt, seeing it as further rejection by Dumbledore. Rowling describes his inner conflict:

> If he *had* remembered [about prefects being chosen]… what would he have expected? *Not this*, said a small and truthful voice inside his head… Did he really believe he was *better* than Ron? *No*, said the small voice defiantly. Was that true, Harry wondered, anxiously probing his own feelings. *I’m better at Quidditch*, said the voice. *But I’m not better at anything else*.

[361] Ibid., 61.
[362] Ibid., 107, 114, 68-71.
[363] Ibid., 123.
[364] Ibid., 152.

Harry reflects on all of the times he had to face Voldemort alone, fighting Quirrell, Riddle and the Basilisk, conjuring a Patronus to save Sirius and himself, the struggle in the graveyard when Cedric was killed and Voldemort returned…

> *But maybe*, said the small voice fairly, *maybe Dumbledore doesn't choose prefects because they've got themselves into a load of dangerous situations… maybe he chooses them for other reasons… Ron must have something you don't…* [365]

This is the first time that Harry has had this kind of inner struggle with himself, questioning how he sees himself, his identity. So far in the series Harry, and Rowling, have been concerned with how he appears to others, but here he has to face the teenage angst about how he sees himself in society, and his certainties are shaken. In a short time, it has not only become apparent that the authorities, led by the Minister, Fudge, are not interested in the truth but only concerned with their own positions and comfort, but also that Dumbledore for some reason is avoiding Harry. Now Harry has to look at aspects of himself that he does not like.

The idea that Dumbledore is avoiding him remain with Harry right through this year at Hogwarts: Ron urges him to tell Dumbledore about the damage to his hand, and Hermione urges him to tell Dumbledore that his scar hurt when Umbridge touched him, he refuses and snaps 'that's the only bit of me Dumbledore cares about, isn't it, my scar?'[366] In his hurt and anger Harry thinks Dumbledore is only interested in his connection to Voldemort.

All of this is painful but the worst shock of disillusionment for Harry is the discovery that his father, who until now had been presented to him as admired by all, could be an arrogant bully, with Snape as his preferred victim, while they were both

[365] Ibid.,151-152.
[366] Ibid.,250.

students at Hogwarts.[367] That his father was encouraged in his bullying by his best friend, Sirius, Harry's recently discovered and greatly loved and idealised godfather, and was not discouraged by Lupin, a teacher whom he likes and respects, makes the situation even more shocking and bewildering.[368]

> He felt as though the memory [of what he had seen in the Pensieve] was eating him from inside. He had been so sure his parents were wonderful people… Hadn't people like Hagrid and Sirius *told* Harry how wonderful his father had been?... For nearly five years the thought of his father had been a source of comfort, of inspiration. Whenever someone had told him he was like James, he had glowed with pride inside. And now…now he felt cold and miserable at the thought of him.[369]

Hoping for some kind of explanation Harry manages to contact Sirius and Lupin but finds that even now as adults they see it as no more than a bit of fun, and laugh indulgently at the memory, with Lupin telling him '"I wouldn't like you to judge your father on what you saw there, Harry. He was only fifteen—" "I'm fifteen!" said Harry heatedly.'[370] Rowling is gradually marking the difference between father and son in this book and readers are likely to become aware of these differences more quickly than Harry, starting with the uncomfortable confrontation in Grimauld Place when Molly Weasley says 'Harry, you are *not* your father, however much you might look like him!'[371]

There is a palpable sense of loss, akin to a death, not only losing his father for a second time, but also losing something of himself in his identification with his father. As quoted in the Introduction, Rustin and Rustin write 'it is the relationship in Harry's mind with his lost parents which is crucial to his sense of identity, and which is put to the test at the crises of the narratives of each of these books.'[372] Harry has now lost the ideal of his father, an ideal that he was often told he resembled, and this pushes him back into the

[367] Ibid., 570-571.
[368] Ibid., 569-573.
[369] Ibid., 576.
[370] Ibid., 590-591.
[371] Ibid., 84.
[372] Rustin and Rustin, *Narratives*, 273.

binary position of oscillating between love and hatred so typical of adolescence. Furthermore, Harry has also lost something of the relationship he had with both Sirius and Lupin.

Rayner refers to the omnipotence that many adolescents feel, but fails to mention its opposite, impotence. These feelings frequently go together from the infant feeling that his rage will destroy all around him while in fact being totally helpless, to the adolescent chafing under the rules of adults, especially when, like here, the actions of the latter are felt to be wrong. Feeling unable to turn to Dumbledore, Sirius or Lupin, Rowling's portrayal of Harry feeling that there is no adult he can turn to makes much of the book bleak reading.

A more complex and sinister episode occurs later in the novel which causes Harry to not only dislike but to fear himself. Rowling creates a situation in which Harry has a dream/fantasy of actually being Voldemort's snake and attacking Mr Weasley:

> His body felt smooth, powerful and flexible… he was gliding… flat along the floor, sliding along on his belly… a man was sitting on the floor ahead… Harry put out his tongue… he tasted the man's scent on the air… Harry longed to bite the man…he reared high from the floor and struck once, twice, three times plunging his fangs deeply into the man's flesh, feeling his ribs splinter beneath his jaws, feeling the warm gush of blood…[373]

Harry wakes with his scar aching, blinded by the pain, but knowing it is essential to get help for Mr Weasley and to insist to Ron that it was not just a bad dream. 'It wasn't a dream…not an ordinary dream…I was there, I saw it… I *did* it…[374] Shortly afterwards as he looks at Dumbledore for a moment, 'unbidden, unwanted, but terrifyingly strong, there rose within Harry a hatred so powerful he felt, for that instant, he would like nothing better than to strike – to bite – to sink his fangs into the man before him --'[375]

[373] Rowling, *Phoenix*, 409.
[374] Ibid., 410.
[375] Ibid., 419.

Here Rowling is making the point that power can be used for good or evil and that we all have the capacity for both, and symbolically Voldemort can be seen as the dark side of Harry. They are linked through the scar which Voldemort gave Harry as an infant, and the latter becomes more and more identified with Voldemort's thoughts and feelings as the series proceeds, more and more frequently being able to see what Voldemort is doing and feeling. on this occasion the identification is with the snake Nagini, a receptor of Voldemort's desires.

Harry is badly shaken by this new awareness of feelings that he has never experienced before, the fear that he is being possessed by Voldemort, the fear that he is going mad, the horror that he was the snake that attacked Mr Weasley. He tells Sirius of his fears, hoping for reassurance but it is not forthcoming. Like many adults faced with children's deepest anxieties, and especially the surge of new anxieties that emerge at adolescence, Sirius does not know how to cope with it, and so minimises it, leaving Harry feeling even more alone and frightened.

The anxieties and struggles Harry faces culminate in the battle in the Department of Mysteries, a battle that symbolises and makes outwardly visible much of what has hitherto been the central characters' private and personal experience of adolescence. The inner turmoil, confusion, uncertainty of what they are seeking, taking wrong turns and finding themselves trapped, all are symbolic of the confusion to which Rayner refers above under the term adolescing.[376] On the one hand the adolescent protagonists, outnumbered and struggling for survival, are fighting a battle against powerful adult enemies, on the other hand there is a return to childish humour when Ron grabs Harry's robes giggling 'Harry, we saw Uranus up close… Get it, Harry? We saw Uranus – ha ha

[376] Ibid., 689-722.

ha.'[377] Rowling points up the fact that they are neither children nor adults: the swinging between laughing at a childish joke and fighting for their lives is symbolic of that space between child and adult. The clinging to comedy in the midst of tragedy can also be seen as an aspect of denial, a means of dealing with a threatening or anxiety provoking situation.[378] The battle is fought at great cost: Ron is first trapped in childhood giggles, and then almost suffocated by a brain with tentacles; Ginny has a broken ankle, and is then knocked out by one of the Death Eaters; Hermione and Luna are left unconscious. By the time the Members of the Order of the Phoenix arrive, only Harry and Neville are left, the latter badly wounded. Even with their arrival the battle is far from over as the Death Eaters fight the Members of the Order, resulting in the death of Sirius.[379] With this death, a shattering trauma for Harry, Rowling moves her readers into a new area of painful awareness of loss.

At the end Rowling offers no comfort: while Cedric's death was a shock and a sadness, Sirius's death is devastating for Harry. As he waits for Dumbledore alone in the latter's study, Harry's sense of guilt at allowing himself to be tricked into luring Sirius to his death in the Department of Mysteries becomes overwhelming… 'filling the whole of Harry's chest like some monstrous, weighty parasite… he could not stand being himself any more…'[380] The guilt, anger and hatred he feels for himself is unbearable and so, as psychoanalysis recognises, it is projected outward in anger. When Dumbledore arrives, Harry turns the anger onto him as a way of getting rid of the pain and shouts at him in a rage similar to the anger he had felt at the beginning of the book. Now he smashes Dumbledore's possessions in his fury, and would have run away had the door not been locked. Only when Dumbledore claims that he, himself, is partly responsible for Sirius's

[377] Ibid., 701.
[378] *Edinburgh Encyclopaedia* 322, 'negation.'
[379] Rowling, *Phoenix* 710.
[380] Ibid.,742.

death does Harry calm down. Dumbledore offers an explanation clarifying what has been happening, through which Rowling is offering an explanation to her readers as much as to Harry, for whom 'it was meaningless compared to the gaping chasm inside him that was the loss of Sirius.'[381] This is a particularly significant scene, in that Dumbledore is able to accept and contain all of the anger and aggression thrown at him. In admitting his own mistakes rather than becoming defensive Dumbledore absolves Harry from his guilt. Both have survived this crisis of adolescence and although Harry will not escape feeling angry in the future, this is the last time he will give vent in a childish fury.

His relationship with Dumbledore is becoming more like that of equals, as gradually happens as children emerge from the confusion of adolescence. Tamyra Dixon-Rankin, a teacher wondering why so many of her young pupils were reading Harry Potter, writes 'So I read *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* and I understood immediately – this was a book about them.'[382] *Phoenix* is a book about teenagers. In this, the darkest book in the series, Rowling brings Harry and her readers through the confused, uncertain and painful stage of finding a new sense of identity.

At the beginning of the next volume Harry is waiting for Dumbledore's arrival at Privet Drive. Rowling marks Harry's awareness of and ambivalence about the change in relationship with his headmaster:

> Despite the fact that he had spent every waking moment of the past few days hoping desperately that Dumbledore would indeed come to fetch him, Harry felt distinctly awkward as they set off down Privet Drive together. He had never had a proper conversation with his headmaster outside Hogwarts before; there was usually a desk between them.[383]

This occasion is different. The relationship between Harry and Dumbledore is restored and Dumbledore tells him that, although he has already told Harry as much as he

[381] Ibid.,730.
[382] Tamyra Dixon-Rankin, 'And All Was Well' in *The Alchemical Harry Potter: Essays on Transfiguration in J. K. Rowling's Novels,* ed., Anne J. Mamary (McFarland, in press), np.
[383] Rowling, *Prince*, 59.

knows ‘from this time forth, we shall be leaving the firm foundations of fact and journeying together through the murky marshes of memory into thickets of wildest guesswork.[384] The word ‘together’ is important here: in this book Harry, although not yet quite an adult, has emerged from the angry adolescent stage to become more like a disciple to a medieval master of learning.

In this novel Rowling shows the gradual decline of Dumbledore, starting with the reference to his blackened and withered hand.[385] Gradually it transpires that this is a poison which will kill him, so we are made aware that time is limited for whatever he and Harry need to do together. The narrative here is bookended by journeys, the first to persuade Slughorn to teach at Hogwarts, the final one to retrieve what they assume to be a Horcrux. The journeys balance each other: on their first journey together as they leave the Dursley’s house, Dumbledore tells Harry he does not expect any danger ‘because you are with me.’ In an echo of their first journey as they set out to return from their last journey, this time, like the first, a real journey, not just through the Pensieve, the weakened Dumbledore tells Harry ‘I am not worried, ‘I am with you.’[386]

Keeping the temporal structure of the school year enables Rowling to use the series as a *Bildungsroman* so that readers ‘grow up’ with the protagonists. I show that from the youthfulness of the early novels, through the storminess of adolescence to the young adult, albeit one who has had adulthood forced on him by Dumbledore’s death, the series encapsulates human development from child to adult from a psychoanalytic viewpoint.

Conclusion

[384] Ibid., 187.
[385] Ibid., 50.
[386] Ibid., 540.

From this point Rowling relinquishes the school story genre. The light-heartedness of the first three books, where the school story tropes are in evidence and younger readers have been offered protagonists with whom they can identify and who are engaged in wonderful adventures, has already begun to darken with the fourth novel, especially with the death of Cedric, and there is more focus on Harry's inner growth and development in the later books. But even in the final novel she does not relinquish Hogwarts itself, and the last battle takes place there.[387] It is the physical place and the emotional space linking all the characters: apart from the visiting foreign schools, Beauxbatons and Durmstrang, all the witches and wizards in the series have been educated there. It is also the place which has been the most important to Voldemort, and assuming that he will be victorious, he wants to announce his triumph from there.

By placing her narrative in a boarding school Rowling uses a setting with which most children can identify, and within that structure keeps open the struggle between good and evil. This struggle also underlies the genre of the quest narrative where the hero sets out to find something of value to save his society. The quest narrative is one of the earliest forms of literature, and in the following chapter I show how Rowling's narrative can be read as a quest and address some intertextual links with early English literature.

The light-heartedness of the first three books, where the school story tropes are in evidence and younger readers have been offered protagonists who are engaged in wonderful adventures with which they can identify. Keeping the temporal structure of the school year enables Rowling to use the series as a *bildungsroman* so that readers 'grow up' with the protagonists. I argue that from the youthfulness of the early novels, through the storminess of adolescence to the young adult, albeit one who has had adulthood

[387] Rowling, *Hallows* 489-512.

forced on him by Dumbledore's death, the series encapsulates human development from child to adult from a psychoanalytic viewpoint.

The series has begun to darken with the fourth novel, as Rachel Falconer, also observes.[388] She writes:

> Between the third and fourth books… the emphasis of her work may be seen to shift from expressing the magic 'lightness of childhood' to representing the child as master of death. Beginning with *Goblet*, the narrator shows a consciousness of addressing a global, well-informed, adult and young adult readership, in contrast to the British children implicitly addressed in the first three books.[389]

But prior to becoming master of death Harry has first to confront death and the darkness in his own character in the challenges addressed in this chapter.

Harry is also the Chosen One, the Hero, and the series as a whole concerns his learning and preparation for his role as Voldemort's vanquisher. Learning about himself is as important as learning about Voldemort or learning skills by which to defeat him. In this chapter I have focused on issues of disappointment and disillusion which are an inevitable part of growing up, and these issues Rowling has set in the context of school. But the series can also be read as a quest, the best known of which is John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), where the hero moves from one place to the next on his journey. In the next chapter I read the narrative as a quest and address links to early English literature.

[388] Rachel Falconer, *The Crossover Novel: Contemporary Children's Fiction and Its Adult Readership* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2009), Chapter Two: Harry Potter, Lightness and Death. 43-72.
[389] Ibid., 47-48.

Chapter four, The Hero's Quest: Stopping Places on the Quest

The hero's quest is one of the oldest forms of literature, dating back thousands of years. Of the ancient quest narratives the best known are likely to be Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey,* which as Beatrice Groves reminds us 'Rowling studied Homer as an undergraduate and has spoken of how deeply moving she found him.'[390] As a student of French, Rowling would also have encountered medieval French Romances which also often take the form of quest. Moreover, as an English writer Rowling has inherited the wealth of centuries of English literature which is reflected in her narrative, particularly in her allusions to the *Beowulf* and *Gawain* narratives.[391] Unsurprisingly, then, Rowling uses the quest narrative to structure her Harry Potter series. The longevity of the quest narrative, and the global spread of the narrative pattern, suggests that there is felt to be a depth of meaning and significance, both conscious and unconscious in the story, and looking at the quests within Harry Potter through the lens of Object Relations allows us to see how these conscious and unconscious dimensions come into play. In quest narratives the hero's quest is simultaneously external and internal. Clute and Grant note that:

> Quests come in two categories. There is the external quest... [where] the protagonist of a tale embarks upon a search…for something important to his survival or the survival of the land for which he is or will be responsible… Second, there is the internal quest… [where] the protagonist, whose goal is (broadly) self-knowledge, embarks upon an internal search, [and] engages on a rite of passage…[392]

More recently, writing of the medieval quest, Norris J. Lacy says 'Any quest has the potential to serve also as an opportunity for self-discovery…,'[393] and Clute and Grant also

[390] Beatrice Groves, *Literary Allusion in Harry Potter* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2017), 1.
[391] Groves addresses Rowling's literary allusions from Greek myth through Plato, through English literature from the Medieval hallos, Mystery Plays, Shakespeare, Jane Austin and others, all, apart from the classical references, from English authors. She does not, however, refer to *Beowulf.* This a significant gap in the critical discussion of Rowling's sources.
[392] John Clute, and John Grant, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, (New York: St Martin's Griffin, 1999), 796.
[393] Norris J. Lacy, *The Grail, the Quest and the World of Arthur* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: D. S. Brewer, 2008), xv-xvii.

comment that the two categories can be combined. Indeed, Farah Mendlesohn sees this as being a usual aspect of the quest writing:

> Most modern quest fantasies are not intended to be directly allegorical, yet they all seem to be underpinned by an assumption embedded in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678): that a quest is a process, in which the object sought may or may not be a mere token of reward. The real reward is moral growth…[394]

This I see as underlying Rowling's series: the quests are a process through which the main characters are able to grow. Insofar as the series is a *Bildungsroman* we see the protagonists facing the usual challenges of growing up which I addressed in the previous chapter, but always with an aspect of inner, moral growth. Joseph Campbell, arguing from both a Jungian and a Freudian position, views the two kinds of quest as complementary. Campbell's summary of the adventure is as follows:

> The mythological hero…proceeds to the threshold of adventure. There he encounters a shadow presence that guards the passage. The hero may defeat… this power and go alive into the kingdom of the dark, or be slain… the hero journeys through a world of unfamiliar yet strangely intimate forces, some of which severely threaten him (tests), some of which give magical aid (helpers). When he arrives at the nadir… he undergoes a supreme ordeal and gains his reward… At the return threshold the transcendental powers must remain behind; the hero re-emerges from the kingdom of dread… the boon that he brings restores the world.[395]

Although Campbell does not refer to it here, these meetings and tests have a profound effect on the hero's character and self-awareness, and in Rowling's series, after each episode she gives Harry space to reflect on the adventure, to consolidate the effect of these events on his character and to enable the reader to recognise and reflect upon the consequences of Harry's actions. It is in this space that the underlying theme of death can be observed.

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[394] Farah Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), 4.

[395] Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (London: Fontana Press, 1993), 245-246. In this case the 'boon' is not to bring something back but to destroy the Horcuxes in which Voldemort has hidden parts of his soul and through destroying them vanquishing Voldemort. Two of the three powerful Hallows, which can be used for good or for evil are also removed: the Resurrection Stone lost in the forest and the Elder wand replaced in Dumbledore's tomb. In Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy (1967), too, the task was to destroy the Ring of Power rather than to bring back a token. In both cases, however, the world is restored.

Rowling's series combines the external and internal quests and sets them in a contemporary context, which nevertheless has echoes of the medieval. The series as a whole is the story of an external quest: the quest to save the world from the malevolent Lord Voldemort, but Rowling weaves into this the maturing of the protagonists and the rites of passage which they, and particularly Harry, undergo. Each novel in the series also functions as a self-contained quest in which one of Voldemort's schemes is thwarted, after which Voldemort retreats only to grow stronger and more menacing in the subsequent novel. For the protagonists, the climax of each novel is a rite of passage which is part of their maturing. In this manner, each novel and the series as a whole mirrors the narrative structures of the heroic quest narrative.

The struggle between good and evil as portrayed by Rowling in school rivalries between Harry and Malfoy and their Houses, Gryffindor and Slytherin, and widening into the greater conflict between Dumbledore with members of the Order of the Phoenix, and Voldemort and his Death Eaters, is one of the two central themes around which Rowling's narrative is structured.[396] At first glance, then, the characters in the series appear polarised in much the same way that Bruno Bettelheim argues fairy tale characters are polarised, either good or bad.[397] However, Rowling's series has more subtle and complex characterisations and, as Anne Klaus writes, 'Harry Potter can by no means be labeled a pure fairy-tale character,' and further comments that 'a one-to-one equation of the Harry Potter series with a fairy tale would neglect precisely those aspects of Rowling's work that determine its appeal, namely the amalgamation of different narrative traditions.'[398] In this chapter I examine the intersection of these narrative traditions within

[396] Groves points out that Rowling 'has adopted the phrase "morality and mortality" as a shorthand for her central themes.' *Allusions,* 81.
[397] Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment:the Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Peregrine Books, 1978), 9.
[398] Anne Klaus, 'A Fairy-tale Crew? J. K. Rowling's Characters under Scrutiny,' in *J. K. Rowling: Harry Potter,* edited by Cynthia J. Hallett and Peggy J. Huet (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 22-23.

the series and the ways in which Rowling draws on literary tropes and motifs drawn from quest narratives to enhance her depiction of characters and the places through which they move. While Jack Zipes, writing when only four of the novels had been published, sees them as 'conventional fairy tale' quests,[399] I suggest that when the series of seven novels is taken as a whole the theme is closer to a medieval heroic quest. By paying close attention to the elements of the series that intersect with heroic quest narratives, including the Arthurian cycle, Harry and his companions can be seen as chivalric knights, striving to save their civilisation from a rule of darkness. This is a significant theme in fantasy: Susan Cooper's series *The Dark is Rising* tells the story of Will Stanton's struggle against the Dark, and the hobbits in J. R. R. Tolkien's trilogy *The Lord of the Rings* are symbolic children in their struggle against Sauron. Both Harry and Will Stanton are eleven when their stories start and I suggest there is a developmental significance in this fact. Psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott addressing the idealism of adolescence writes 'One of the exciting things about adolescent boys and girls can be said to be their idealism. They have not yet settled down into disillusionment.'[400] Fantasy quest literature allows the idealism to be played out successfully in the imagination.[401]

Often linked to the quest element is a medievalist setting. Although Rowling keeps her series in the late twentieth century, once through the barrier at King's Cross the protagonists move from a contemporary world to a world which draws on medieval elements as well as modern and early modern motifs. Hogwarts has a distinctly

[399] Jack Zipes, *Sticks and Stones: The Troublesome Success of Children's Literature from Slovenly Peter to Harry Potter* (New York and London: Routledge, 2001), 177.
[400] D. W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1971), 149.
[401] In *Deathly Hallows* Dumbledore's brother, Aberforth, tells the three protagonists that in order to save themselves they should get as far away from Hogwarts and Hogsmead as possible. He tells them that the Order of the Phoenix is finished. When they refused to comply, he opened the passage between the Hogs Head and Hogwarts and Neville appeared limping, 'one of his eyes was swollen, yellow and purple, there were gouge marks on his face…' Even if the adults have settled into acceptance the adolescents are determined to keep fighting. J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 451-464.

medievalist chronotope.[402] Clare Bradford marks the difference between 'medieval studies (the study of the literature and history of the Middle Ages)' and medievalism studies which she defines as 'post-medieval texts which respond to and deploy medieval culture.'[403] As I will show, the subjects taught at Hogwarts are akin to those taught by the alchemists, many of the plants and animals are drawn from old herbals and bestiaries, and Rowling uses several medievalist tropes including werewolves and castles with towers, the fact that students write with quills on parchment and lighting is with candles. And of course there are dragons, one of the most exciting medieval tropes. Clute and Grant suggest that a dragon is 'the ultimate antagonist which a hero faces at the culmination of his career.'[404] Linking these two worlds is a train drawn by an old-fashioned steam engine which is appropriately interstitial and belongs in neither of these chronotopes but to an industrial nineteenth century. Into this medieval wizard world the structure of the quest narrative fits appropriately. In tracing the history of fantasy Farah Mendlesohn and Edward James write:

> The ancient Greek and Roman novel, the medieval romance, and early modern verse and prose texts all commonly use what we consider to be the tropes of fantasy: magical transformations, strange monsters, sorcerers and dragons, and the existence of a supernatural world… stories about gods and heroes… [These stories] about the travels of a hero through a world inhabited by giants, sorcerers and monsters and prey to the vagaries of interested supernatural parties, [are] a precursor for much later fantasy fiction.[405]

These tropes drawn from medieval narratives constitute a large part of the fantasy in Rowling's world, including as it does the half giant, Hagrid, dragons, merpeople, and 'magical transformations' where those wizards known as Animagi can transform into

[402] Maria Nikolajeva translated Baktin's definition as the indivisible 'unity of time and space.' 'Theories of Genre and Gender' in Kimberly Reynolds, ed., *Modern Children's Literature: An Introduction* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 13.
[403] Clare Bradford, *The Middle Ages in Children's Literature* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 3 and 2.
[404] John Clute and John Grant, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1999), 295.
[405] Farah Mendlesohn and Edward James, *A Short History of Fantasy* (Faringdon, Oxfordshire: Libri Publishing, 2012), 7.

animals. Although a search of the literature has shown papers on the influence of medieval writings on Rowling, demonstrating her use of mythology drawn from bestiaries and herbals, in particular in the book *Harry Potter: A History of Magic,*[406] to date there has been little critical examination of the parallels between Rowling's series and the medieval quest narrative, although Groves does include links to Chaucer in her work.[407] I see the links between these medieval quests as being significant: from the early English epic poem *Beowulf,* written probably early in the ninth century, for several centuries these supernatural creatures and occurrences were part of the narrative, and the monsters had to be overcome by the hero. The introduction of these fantasy creatures in Rowling's narrative offers a link to medieval quest narratives including the accounts of the doings of King Arthur's knights, the literary compositions by Crétien de Troyes at the end of the twelfth century, the story of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* written by an unknown poet in about 1400, and Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* in 1469.[408] These stories are concerned with the journey of a hero on a quest, it may be in search of an object, grail, ring or stone which is seen to have some great power attached to it, or alternatively to rescue someone, or to perform some feat which will save others.

Narrative Structures of the Quest

A quest or a hero's journey is always a chronologically told story, and in her book, *The Crossover Novel,* Rachel Falconer acknowledges the desire for such stories among readers of all ages: 'There do seem to be compelling psychological reasons for readers,

[406] British Library Board and Bloomsbury Publishing, *Harry Potter a History of Magic: The Spellbinding Companion to a Unique Exhibition* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).
[407] Beatrice Groves does include a chapter on 'Harry Potter's Medieval Hallows: Chaucer and the Gawain Poet' in *Literary Allusion in Harry Potter* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 38-59. One of her particularly interesting commentaries is on the parallels between Chaucer's Pardoner's Tale and Rowling's 'Tale of the Three Brothers.'
[408] Rowling does not engage with the Mabinogion or with Welsh Arthur and so they are not included in this discussion.

both adults and children, to engage with chronologically ordered, accessible narrative.'[409] This is borne out by the popularity of the continuing narrative of domestic soap operas on television, and by science fiction series such as *Star Trek* as well as the Harry Potter series which, apart from some analeptic sequences, move forward in clear chronological increments. I suggest that these psychological reasons are the unconscious recognition that our life is a journey with challenges to be overcome and therefore, as readers engaged on our personal journey, we identify with the hero or the heroine as they confront their own inner demons. The chronological sequencing lends a sense of progress to the narrative action too, a sense that after each incident the narrative drives the hero forward, both temporally and in terms of personal growth.

In Campbell's description of a monomyth, when the hero enters the unknown world of strange and potentially dangerous adventures, he must face challenges either alone or with assistance. In the series of smaller quests throughout the novels, Rowling does grant Harry the assistance of friends, in particular Ron and Hermione, but ultimately he always has to face Voldemort alone, and invariably the situation is life threatening. A notable exception to the solitary confrontation is in *Order of the Phoenix* where the six core members of Dumbledore's Army fight the Death Eaters in the Department of Mysteries. Later in this chapter I will discuss how on this occasion Rowling brings the second version of a quest into focus: the death of Sirius is a searing rite of passage for Harry. For now, I will focus on the sub-quests and encounters with monsters in the series.

Many of the smaller quests involve tackling monsters such as a Basilisk and dragons. Harry's fight with the Basilisk[410] resembles Beowulf's fight with the dragon[411]: both heroes are wounded by the monster, and both are poisoned by the wound.

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[409] Rachel Falconer, *The Crossover Novel: Contemporary Children's Fiction and Its Adult Readership* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2009), 5.
[410] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (London: Bloomsbury, 1998), 234-236.
[411] *Beowulf*, translated by Seamus Heaney (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), 80-85.

> One long, poisonous fang was sinking deeper and deeper into [Harry's] arm… he gripped the fang that was spreading poison through his body and wrenched it out of his arm. But he knew it was too late. White-hot pain was spreading… from the wound… his vision went foggy…[412]

> Then the wound
> dealt by the ground-burner earlier began
> to scald and swell; Beowulf discovered
> deadly poison suppurating inside him,
> surges of nausea…[413]

Harry, a child, recovers; Beowulf, an old man, does not. For Harry this is the third of his life and death confrontations with Voldemort: for Beowulf his third and final battle. Both are fighting to save their people. There are other parallels between Beowulf and Harry too, in the fact that both heroes fight battles under water: in the second task of the Triwizard Tournament, Harry, on Dobby's instructions, swallows Gillyweed to be able to breathe underwater as he searches for and rescues Ron.[414] Beowulf, fighting Grendel's formidable mother in the mere, does not seem to need anything other than carefully chosen armour.[415] Both heroes were attacked by water creatures, Beowulf by 'droves of sea-beasts'[416], Harry by the merpeople. [417] Rowling's dragons are fierce and dangerous but do not possess the power or the poison of the Beowulf dragon or the Basilisk. Much more sinister is Voldemort's great snake, Nagini, who has a special kind of power that she shares with her master and which results in Harry being forced to struggle with her in different ways. In Godric's Hollow she attacks him physically,[418] as did the Basilisk, and on this occasion he and Hermione have to escape rather than do battle, as Nagini's task is to hold Harry for Voldemort.

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[412] Rowling, *Chamber,* 236.
[413] *Beowulf,* 85.
[414] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000), 427-428.
[415] *Beowulf,* 47-48.
[416] Ibid., 49.
[417] Rowling, *Goblet,* 435.
[418] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 278-279.

Chivalric literature is not only about fighting monsters. In his foreword about quests in Arthurian literature, including Grail quests, Norris Lacy writes 'in many instances Arthurian (and other) works featured not the Grail quest – or not *only* the Grail quest – but instead, the rescue of a person or the recovery of a person or the recovery of a relic or other object.'[419] Rowling has Harry engage in both of these aspects of medieval chivalry: Sir Orfeo's rescue of his abducted wife from the kingdom of death where she is 'asleep beneath a grafted tree',[420] is echoed in *Chamber of Secrets* where Harry rescues Ginny, by now barely alive, from Tom Riddle, Voldemort's original persona, who has abducted her.[421] His instinct to rescue people comes into play again in *Goblet of Fire* when on several occasions he risks losing the Triwizard Tournament, in the second task by making sure all the hostages tied under the lake are about to be saved, and, with no sign of Fleur coming to the rescue, bringing her little sister to the surface as well as his own hostage, Ron.[422] Later, in the third task, he saves Cedric Diggory on two occasions, first when the *Cruciatus* charm had been performed on him, and secondly when he is about to be attacked by a giant spider.[423] Both Cedric and Harry argue gallantly as to who deserves the cup, finally agreeing to take it together, which proves to be fatal for Cedric and leads to another confrontation between Harry and Voldemort.[424]

The cup has clear echoes of the grail that is the object of the knight Percival's quest. This is surely no accident but an indication that Rowling has deliberately and consciously connected her narrative to the heroic monomyth. To emphasise the link with the knight Percival, Rowling has given the name Percival, or a variant of it, to two

[419] Norris J. Lacy, ed., *The Grail, the Quest and the World of Arthur* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: D. S. Brewer, 2008), xvi.
[420] J. R. R. Tolkien, translator, 'Sir Orfeo' in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* ed. Christopher Tolkien (London: HarpurCollins*Publishers.* 2006), 128-144.
[421] Rowling, *Chamber*, 221-238.
[422] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000), 435.
[423] Ibid., 544 and 548.
[424] Ibid., 550-551.

characters: to Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore, the visionary leader of the forces of good, and to Percy Weasley, the least likeable of that family. In another link to the medieval narratives, many of the significant material objects in the series reflect items found in the Arthurian quest narratives. Jessie Weston addresses the significance of objects: 'these objects, the Grail itself, whether Cup or Dish; the Lance; the Sword; the Stone—one and all invested with a certain atmosphere of awe, credited with strange virtues…'[425] In Rowling's series the first significant object is the Philosopher's Stone which is reputed to offer immortality and the possibility of turning base metal into gold. As the series continues more objects become imbued with power, including an equally powerful Stone, the Resurrection Stone, until in the last book Harry, Ron and Hermione are searching for two types of object: Horcruxes in which Voldemort has hidden parts of his soul in an effort to cheat death, and Hallows, the three powerful objects comprising the Resurrection Stone, the Elder Wand and the Invisibility Cloak which together would make the owner omnipotent.[426] Dumbledore has the Elder Wand and returns to Harry the Invisibility Cloak which had belonged to Harry's father. When Dumbledore tracks down the Resurrection Stone he cannot resist trying on the last of the Hallows and realises too late that it is a Horcrux. This not only damages his hand but introduces a fatal poison that even Snape's potions can only slow.[427] Voldemort chooses with care the objects in which he hides his Horcruxes: among them objects that once belonged to the four founders of Hogwarts which for him have both symbolic and emotional value.

While the Horcruxes are the objects of Harry's final quest, they are also the focus of an earlier quest: Voldemort's search for meaningful objects within which he can

[425] Jessie Weston, *From Ritual to Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920), 63.
[426] Only the cloak is there from the beginning of the series, when it comes to Harry as a mysterious Christmas present. At the beginning of the series it is a fun object, enabling Harry and the others to move about unseen; only later in the series does it take on more significance as one of the three powerful Hallows.
[427] Rowling, *Hallows,* 546.

conceal a fragment of his soul. The objects, then, are equally meaningful to both Harry and Voldemort and are a further connection between them. One of the traits which Voldemort shares with Harry is their attachment to Hogwarts, the first place that feels like home to both these orphaned boys. However, from a psychoanalytic reading, Harry received enough loving care and bonding with his parents in his first year of life to enable him to have the capacity to love. What Hogwarts gives him are friends, the love of the Weasley family, of Hagrid, and also the love of teachers: Dumbledore, Lupin and McGonagall. Voldemort, as Tom Riddle, never had this early parental care as his father had rejected his mother, and she had died giving birth to him.[428] Lacking this early nurturing he turns to the security of material objects, first those objects he takes by magic from other children in the orphanage, later searching for the unique and valuable objects belonging to the four founders of the school: the sword of Gryffindor, the diadem which belonged to Rowena Ravenclaw, the cup of Helga Hufflepuff, and Salazar Slytherin's locket. Psychoanalysis has much to say on the importance of the transitional object, first defined by Donald Winnicott, and which I explained in chapter one.[429] However, it is evident that this first not-me object is likely to be replaced by other significant objects: objects such as an important piece of jewellery, of furniture, something inherited or given and which can carry huge significance for both adults and children. Also, as we have seen, certain objects like the Grail have always been important symbolically, and for the solitary and greedy Voldemort the possessions of the founders have powerful emotional value as well cultural and significance and monetary worth.

[428] In the early novels Harry uses the Invisibility Cloak to visit the Mirror of Erised, and to visit Honeydukes. He, Ron and Hermione also use it to rescue Buckbeak. It is a valuable and useful object. Only in the later books does its true significance become clear as being one of the three Hallows.
[429] D. W. Winnicott, 'Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena' in *Playing and Reality* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1971), 1-25.

Of all the objects in the series, the most important are the sword of Gryffindor and the wands carried by various characters. In some ways these objects are very similar. For the medieval knights, swords represented power; in Rowling's series wands replace swords, and, while still representing power, offer more subtlety in what can be achieved with them. In Rowling's version of the chivalric quest, witches can be as skilled as wizards in using this phallic object of power. In medieval literature several swords had their individual qualities: Beowulf was lent 'a rare and ancient sword named Hrunting…',[430] and King Arthur's magic sword was Excalibur. In the wizard world, as with the medieval swords, wands have to suit the wizard and great care is taken in choosing a wand. When Harry chooses his wand, Mr Ollivander, the wand-maker, tells him 'every Ollivander wand has a core of a powerful magical substance…we use unicorn hairs, phoenix tail feathers and the heartstrings of dragons. No two Ollivander wands are the same, just as no two dragons or phoenixes are quite the same. And of course, you will never get such good results with another wizard's wand.'[431] Like swords, some wands possess particular virtues: Harry's wand and Voldemort's are twins in that both have a feather core from Dumbledore's phoenix, Fawkes: in the struggle in the graveyard in *Goblet of Fire* the two wands connect and the shades of the people Voldemort had killed emerge from his wand enabling Harry to escape. Later Dumbledore explains that when a wand meets its brother 'they will not work properly against each other… if, however, the owners of the wands force the wands to do battle… one of the wands will force the other to regurgitate spells it has performed – in reverse…'[432] Harry's wand saves him again when the group of seven decoy Potters, each with a companion, are moving Harry from the Dursleys' house for the last time. As Voldemort attacks, Harry's wand 'acted of its

[430] *Beowulf*, 48.
[431] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997), 64.
[432] Rowling, *Goblet*, 605.

own accord; he felt it drag his hand round like some great magnet, saw a spurt of golden fire through his half-closed eyelids…'[433] On this occasion, without Dumbledore to explain what had happened, Harry realises that no one believes his wand had acted by itself, and Mr Weasley's offer of a simplistic explanation is worse than useless. Living in contemporary time Harry wants an explanation of what happened, but if he had been mindful of the Romance tradition he may have been satisfied that the object can, indeed, act of its own accord,[434] and Weston notes that 'medieval romance supplies numerous instances of self-acting weapons…'[435] Rowling does not elaborate, and Harry and the readers will have to wait until Harry meets Dumbledore at King's Cross: Dumbledore explains that when the two wands duelled in the graveyard Harry's wand

> imbibed some of the power and qualities of Voldemort's wand that night, which is to say that it contained a little of Voldemort himself. So your wand recognised him when he pursued you, recognised a man who was both kin and mortal enemy, and it regurgitated some of his own magic against him… Your wand now contained the power of your enormous courage and of Voldemort's deadly skill…[436]

Although wands are the objects of power in the series there is one sword which has a place in the narrative: the sword of Godric Gryffindor, which Rowling first introduces in *Chamber of Secrets.* When Harry is attacked by the Basilisk, Fawkes, the Phoenix, brings it wrapped in the Sorting Hat: 'A gleaming silver sword had appeared inside the Hat, its handle gleaming with rubies the size of eggs.'[437] Armed with the sword Harry is able to kill the Basilisk. Rowling uses the classic trope of only the appropriate person being able to claim a particular sword, deliberately harking back to how Arthur was recognised as King when only he was able to draw the sword from the stone. Later, when Harry worries

[433] Rowling, *Hallows*, 56.
[434] Ibid., 73-74.
[435] Weston, *Ritual*, 9.
[436] Rowling, *Hallows*, 570.
[437] Rowling, *Chamber*, 5.

that perhaps he does not belong in Gryffindor, Dumbledore reassures him that only a true Gryffindor could have pulled the sword from the hat.[438]

In *Deathly Hallows* the sword appears again, on this occasion at the bottom of a lake. This time it is Ron who retrieves it, at the same time saving Harry's life as he is being strangled by the chain of the Horcrux.[439] Harry insists that it should be Ron who uses the sword to destroy the bit of Voldemort's soul contained within the locket. This is a huge ordeal for Ron as it involves confronting one of his greatest fears, that of always being the least loved, first by his mother who wanted a daughter, and now by Hermione, who, he is convinced, prefers Harry.[440] The sword of Gryffindor is used on a third occasion, this time, as mentioned in chapter three, by Neville who pulls it from the Sorting Hat and cuts off Nagini's head.[441] Unlike Arthur's sword, the Gryffindor sword does not belong exclusively to one person but is available to any 'true Gryffindor' who needs it. Significantly, each time the sword appears, it is used by a male character to defeat a monster. By repeating this motif, Rowling embeds a recurring pattern from medieval heroic literature into her series, reinforcing the connections between Harry Potter and earlier quest narratives and reminding the reader that these young characters have heroic qualities.

A further point of connection between the development of Rowling's characters and the behaviour of their medieval antecedents lies in the way these characters adhere to or diverge from the accepted codes of honour. Accepting and honouring a challenge is a part of the code of Chivalry. The climax of the poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* is the point at which Gawain keeps his promise to meet the Green Knight at the Green

[438] Ibid., 245.
[439] Rowling, *Hallows,* 301-302.
[440] Ibid., 305-307.
[441] Ibid., 587.

Chapel to receive what he expects to be a fatal blow from an axe.[442] I argue that the climax of Rowling's series is when Harry goes to meet Voldemort in the Forest, aware that he is going to his death but willing to do so to save others. This is the climax of the series as it is not only the ultimate confrontation with Voldemort but the only time that Harry does not intend to fight but to accept death. Unlike Gawain, whose guide, having failed to persuade him to turn back, abandons him, Harry is not deserted as he approaches Voldemort: the Snitch that Dumbledore had bequeathed to him opens revealing the Resurrection Stone. Harry's use of it brings the spirits of his parents as well as the spirits of Sirius and Lupin to support him emotionally and psychologically as he undertakes the most daunting quest of all.[443] In this moment, the external and internal personal quests undertaken by the hero converge.

Internal Quests

At the beginning of this chapter I posited that Rowling combines the two types of quest: the external and the internal. Norris Lacy says 'any quest has the potential to serve also as an opportunity for self-discovery…'[444] The external quest addresses issues of power, courage and integrity, which are also the issues of the internal quest. Harry, in particular, learns something about himself and his place in the world through the minor quest which he undertakes in each novel, a lesson whose significance is usually clarified by Dumbledore. Many, though not all, of these learning experiences are about death and attitudes to death; this starts with the first book when Harry is dismayed to realise that

[442] Groves devotes three pages linking *Gawain and the Green Knight* with *Harry Potter*. However her focus is on the similarities in both stories: the beheading game; the latent Christianity among others. Significantly she makes a link between the Green Man's branch of holly and Harry's wand which is made from holly. She writes that 'Rowling, in a nod to the traditional Christological connections of the tree, has noted that "holly wands often choose owners who are engaged in some dangerous and often spiritual quest."' Groves, *Literary Allusions* 48-50.
[443] Ibid.,.560-561.
[444] Lacy, ed., *Quest,* xvi.

because the Philosopher's Stone has been destroyed Nicolas and Perenelle Flamel will die. Dumbledore explains that 'to the well organised mind, death is but the next great adventure.'[445] The awareness of death, always a possibility when undertaking a quest, and a central theme of the narrative, will be examined in the final chapter. In this first novel Rowling hints at the destiny to which Dumbledore is introducing Harry: when Ron and Hermione are horrified that Dumbledore might have pushed Harry to risk his life, Harry tells them

> 'He's a funny man, Dumbledore. I think he sort of wanted to give me a chance. I think he knows more or less everything that goes on here… I reckon he had a pretty good idea we were going to try, and instead of stopping us, he just taught us enough to help… It's almost like he thought I had the right to face Voldemort if I could…'[446]

As the series continues, through each encounter with Voldemort Harry learns more about himself and his destiny. In *Prisoner of Azkaban,* the only book in which Harry does not find himself confronted by Voldemort himself but rather with one of his acolytes, Peter Pettigrew, Harry prevents Sirius and Lupin from killing Pettigrew, the betrayer of his parents, 'because I don't reckon my dad would've wanted his best friends to become killers – just for you.'[447] As a result Pettigrew escapes and Harry is dismayed to think that he has thereby helped Voldemort to return. Dumbledore, however, reassures him:

> 'Pettigrew owes his life to you… When one wizard saves another wizard's life, it creates a certain bond between them … and I'm much mistaken if Voldemort wants his servant in the debt of Harry Potter… This is magic at its deepest, its most impenetrable…trust me … the time may come when you will be very glad you saved Pettigrew's life.'[448]

Rowling presents this as a particularly significant point in the series and an important rite of passage for Harry: although he had been ready to kill Sirius, assuming it was he who had betrayed his parents, his decision not to allow Pettigrew to be killed by Lupin and

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[445] Rowling, *Stone*, 215.
[446] Ibid., 219. The first epigraph in the final book, from Aeschylus's *The Libation Bearers*, echoes this idea: Voldemort has killed Harry's parents and so an important element in the series is that Harry must avenge their death.
[447] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (London: Bloomsbury, 1999), 275.
[448] Rowling, *Azkaban,* 311.

Sirius marks the beginning of his choosing to disarm his opponents rather than kill them. This marks a moment of maturation, a new awareness of the enormity of killing, which Rowling shares with the reader. Lupin and Sirius are prepared to do this together rather than to let just one of them become a killer. Harry, having been saved from taking that step, has made the decision to avoid taking life and this decision informs his future actions. At this particular stage of the quest Harry comes to realise that situations are less straightforward than he had supposed, although Rowling does not clarify how he came to that decision. I argue that this turning point is still more nuanced: when Sirius admits that he had killed Harry's parents he is not speaking literally, as Harry initially assumes, he is recognising that responsibility can sometimes lie with the person who, in this case in all innocence, makes a wrong decision. With this new awareness Harry becomes more thoughtful, reluctant to rush into violence and known for disarming rather than killing, a reputation which almost costs him and Hagrid their lives as they leave the Dursley's house. [449] However, Pettigrew is, indeed, years later forced by the 'deep and impenetrable magic', to spare Harry's life.[450] This magic is the essence of chivalry, a code of honour that binds the noble and ignoble characters alike. Achieving that deep bond involves learning how to use one's skills in the service of the community: this is seen in the chivalric tradition, where, for example, Arthur's court was joined by knights who admired him and who wished to join their peers, to learn skills and to compete, but always ready to undertake a task in the interests of society. 'A knight must also have a range of virtues… his "inner courage" is as important as his physical prowess…he should also defend women and the weak….'[451] An aspect of the personal developmental quest consists in learning how to develop as an individual while contributing to society. This, I

[449] Rowling, *Hallows,* 65.
[450] Ibid., 380-381.
[451] Alan Lupack, *The Oxford Guide to Arthurian Literature and Legend* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 85.

suggest, is part of the unconscious enjoyment of tales of chivalry and thus the Harry Potter narrative. In Rowling's series as the events get darker the need for co-operation becomes stronger: what began with Harry, Ron and Hermione extends to include Neville, Luna and Ginny, then to Dumbledore's Army and the Order of the Phoenix and ultimately to the battle between all the forces of good against the forces of evil.

Places of Quest

Places are important in quest fantasies. Often, the places that delineate the quest narrative are seen as unproblematically polarised into safe and dangerous, just as the characters seem straightforwardly polarised into good and evil. In medieval narratives, this simple binary of place often holds true. There is the familiar place from which the hero sets out and to which he returns, the place which he can call home. This may be a great court with many people: in the *Beowulf* poem, because 'friends and kinsmen flocked to his ranks' King Hrothgar gives orders for a great mead-hall to be built, 'meant to be a wonder of the world for ever.'[452] However, this hall, far from being a place of safety becomes a place of conflict as the monster Grendel enters to attack and kill the sleeping warriors, and it is here that Beowulf fights and kills him: the boundaries of even the apparently safe places can be breached. From here Beowulf sets out to fight Grendel's mother in the depths of the mere.[453]

However, between these polarised places, there are interstitial spaces where the mood and function are rather more mixed, and the places in between the home and away spaces are also significant within the narrative. These stopping places on the journey are a common trope of the quest genre. Here the hero may be tested or he may pause and

[452] *Beowulf*, 5.
[453] Ibid., 46.

prepare for the next stage: on occasion they can have both characteristics as in the Gawain poem where the hero, who had been travelling through an inhospitable land, at Christmas finds himself at a castle offering everything he could wish for, food, company and religious observance. It is also a place where he is tested and has to choose between loyalty to his host and obedience to a lady, both required of a knight. These interstitial places, therefore, play an important role in both driving the plot of the quest and in character development. In this way, person and place are inextricably connected.

Just as with the medieval quest fantasies from which she draws inspiration, places in Rowling's series always have significance. In addition to examining the narrative structure of the quest, in this chapter I also focus on the physical spaces of Harry's journeys, the various places where he finds himself on his journey through adolescence and also his moving from the world of everyday to the wizard world, from consensual reality to fantasy. There is a parallel here in psychoanalysis in the movement from the outer, practical world to the inner world of unconscious phantasy.[454] Elsewhere I address the existential space between these two worlds, but here I focus on the physical places that Rowling describes in the series and the movement back and forth between them. Because places reflect their inhabitants, I will also consider the people that Rowling sets within them and their relationships with Harry.

Of the many locations in the series, houses are among the most significant as they create a clear correlation between the physical place and the internal state of their primary occupants. The 'soul' of a house reflects the personality of the dominant person to live in it. It is impossible to imagine Hogwarts without the presence of Dumbledore: not only do Harry, Ron and Hermione not return after his death, but Rowling does not describe the

[454] As I explained in the Introduction in psychoanalysis the spelling 'phantasy' is used for unconscious material. The spelling 'fantasy' is used for conscious imagining such as daydreaming.

school when it has settled back to normality at the end of the series. In this house the dominant person is a man: in the other three houses, all family homes, the influence is that of a woman. Petunia Dursley, Molly Weasley, and Sirius's mother have all created the atmosphere in the house in which they live. Gaston Bachelard writes 'A house that shines from the care it receives appears to have been built from the inside…In the intimate harmony…we become conscious of a house that is built by women…' and 'Through housewifely care a house recovers not so much its originality as its origin.'[455] The gender dynamics in Bachelard's statement reflect the unconscious link between house and woman: both are containers, a woman's body contains her baby and keeps it within safe boundaries, a house contains those who live in it. This unconscious link recurs in dreams and associations: Bachelard, also recognises it when he refers to 'the maternal features of the house.'[456] Bachelard is reflecting beyond the practical care when he describes the house as being a 'psychic state,' when he writes 'A psychoanalyst should…turn his attention to this simple localization of our memories. I should like to give the name of topoanalysis to this auxiliary of psychoanalysis. Topoanalysis, then, would be the systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives.'[457] This is how I view the significant houses as places on Harry's quest.

The house where Harry has lived from babyhood is the Dursleys' house at No. 4 Privet Drive, in a street of similar houses. In contrast to the other houses in the series it lacks individuality. It is a caricature of normality where everything is clean and polished and in its place. As the witch, Tonks, observes, the house is unnaturally clean.[458] Petunia Dursley's life revolves around her house and her son, Dudley, and she does her best to

[455] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, translated by Maria Jolas (New York: Penguin Books, 2014), 88-91.
[456] Ibid., 29.
[457] Ibid., 30.
[458] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (London: Bloomsbury, 2003), 51.

ignore her nephew, Harry. Rowling makes it clear from the beginning of the series that Harry only lives with them on sufferance: he sleeps in the cupboard under the stairs, wears Dudley's old clothes and there is consternation when he has to be included in Dudley's birthday visit to the zoo.[459] Apart from *Goblet of Fire* and *Deathly Hallows* all the novels start with Harry living unhappily with the Dursleys, and the Dursleys living equally unhappily with Harry. Dumbledore recognises that Aunt Petunia 'May have taken you grudgingly, furiously, unwillingly, bitterly, yet still she took you…'[460] The resentment that all three Dursleys feel about Harry living there is expressed by ignoring his existence as far as possible, confining him to his room for long periods and sometimes locking him in.[461] This is the house of people who have no imagination and want no surprises. In an effort to run away from the letters from Hogwarts a place he does not want to admit exists, Mr Dursley drags them away from reality to a small hut on a desolate rock in the ocean. This hut is a liminal stopping place in Harry's first quest (however unconscious he is of this quest at the time), and Hagrid, who comes to rescue Harry, being a half-giant is an appropriately liminal figure who combines magic with normality. The essential element of the quest is emphasised with the similarity between Hagrid's entry into the 'Hut-on-the-Rock' and Grendel's entry into Heorot. Jane Suzanne Carroll writes 'Like Beowulf, Harry is the only one left awake. Like Grendel, Hagrid approaches in the dead of night and when he lays his hand upon the door it falls inwards. But there the monsters diverge: Grendel's eyes burn with… an "unholy and an unlovely light," whereas Hagrid's shine like black beetles.'[462] Hagrid, who as well as being a half-giant, has arrived there by magic, represents everything that terrifies Mr Dursley, but

[459] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997) 19-27.
[460] Rowling, *Phoenix*, 737.
[461] J. K. Rowling, *Chamber* 21; *Phoenix*, 44.
[462] Jane Suzanne Carroll, *Landscape in Children's Literature* (Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2011), 24.

Hagrid lights a fire, produces food and introduces both healthy reality and normality in the form of practical necessities: 'a copper kettle, a squashy packet of sausages, a poker, a teapot, several chipped mugs… soon the hut was full of the sound and smell of sizzling sausage.'[463] The comfort of normality after the turmoil of the 'return of the repressed'[464] belong together, the normality acting as a container for the inner chaos as the terrifying ideas are forced into consciousness. Hagrid addresses the repressed topic of the wizard world, the dimension so fiercely rejected by the Dursleys, and the cause of Mr Dursley's flight.[465] The hut on the rock is a liminal space, a threshold between the world in which Harry has lived until now and the life in which he is about to engage. The magic elements introduced by Rowling have thus far been intrusions: strangely dressed people, a cat reading a map, owls bringing letters, and finally Hagrid entering the space inhabited by Harry and the Dursleys. As often happens with liminal space, Harry leaves it a different person, for the first time knowing the truth of what had happened to him and to his parents. He leaves the rock and the Dursleys, to enter the wizard world with Hagrid.

From the sterility of Privet Drive, Harry finds himself at Hogwarts Castle, a place of infinite possibility which is at once strange and homely. The strangeness of Hogwarts is signalled to the reader through details about its spatial characteristics. Hogwarts has 'a hundred and forty- two staircases… wide, sweeping ones; narrow, rickety ones; some that led somewhere different on a Friday… doors that wouldn't open unless you asked

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[463] Rowling, *Stone* 40.

[464] Morris Eagle writes of repression: 'One of the earliest psychoanalytic concepts defined as the banishment of an unacceptable mental content from consciousness… its primary function is to ward off the anxiety that one would consciously experience were the forbidden mental contents that are repressed to reach consciousness. Hence one would expect, and as one can readily observe clinically, that when repression fails and there is a return of the repressed, the anxiety…hitherto held in check by repression erupts.' In Ross M. Skelton, editor, *The Edinburgh International Encyclopaedia of Psychoanalysis* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 402. While Mr Dursley was able to repress all thoughts of magic he could present as normal. However, once the magic intruded, beginning with the owls bringing letters, all his anxiety took over and sent him into a psychotic panic. His anxiety reaches its peak with the terrifying arrival of Hagrid who represents his worst fears. But with Hagrid comes a kind of normality.

[465] Rowling, *Stone.* 39-40.

politely… and doors that weren't really doors at all, but solid walls just pretending…'[466] With all of its spatial oddities Hogwarts is at the narrative centre of the series; it is the place where the majority of the main characters are to be found, both adults and children, and the place within which most of the learning for Harry, and by extension the reader, takes place. It is the locus of the action and, after the first book, becomes the familiar place from which the hero sets forth on his quest and to which he returns. It is the second significant home within the series.

Hogwarts is a complex space and comprises several distinct smaller spaces within it. This allows the castle to encompass apparently incompatible spaces. For example, Gryffindor house is situated in one of the towers and has a comfortable common room.[467] By contrast 'the Slytherin common room was a long, low underground room with rough stone walls and ceiling, from which round greenish lamps were hanging on chains,'[468] and the Ravenclaw common room, at a pinnacle of one of the towers, and reached by a spiral staircase, 'was a wide, circular room, airier than Harry had ever seen at Hogwarts. Graceful arched windows punctuated the walls… by day the Ravenclaws would have a spectacular view of the surrounding mountains. The ceiling was domed and painted with stars…'[469] Bachelard reflecting on the polarity of attic and cellar writes: 'Up near the roof all our thoughts are clear,' and 'when we dream of the heights we are in the rational zone of intellectualized projects.' But 'As for the cellar… it is first and foremost the *dark entity* of the house, the one that partakes of subterranean forces.'[470] The situating of the intellectual Ravenclaws and the dark Slytherins is appropriate. Again, the spaces represent the people who live in them, and Harry's place is neither in the lofty intellectual

[466] Ibid., 98.
[467] Rowling, *Stone*, 96.
[468] Rowling, *Chamber*, 165.
[469] Rowling, *Hallows*, 472-473.
[470] Bachelard, *Poetics*, 39. (Italics in the original)

heights of Ravenclaw nor in the murky depths of Slytherin but in the comfortable middle space of Gryffindor.

Looking at Hogwarts as a stage on the journey of Harry's life and quests, both the external one of the struggle between good and evil and the inner quest of self knowledge, it is for the most part a benign place under the direction of the Headmaster Albus Dumbledore. Throughout the series there is a close association between Dumbledore and the school, and indeed his death marks the point at which Harry decides to leave Hogwarts for good. Even at Hogwarts, however, life is not entirely safe: Dumbledore has other commitments and is sometimes absent from the school. When he is not present at Hogwarts there is much more possibility of danger: in the first book, Professor McGonagall informs Harry that Dumbledore has received an urgent message from the Ministry of Magic and left immediately for London. He arrives back just in time to rescue Harry from Professor Quirrell.[471] In the second novel Lucius Malfoy contrives to have Dumbledore suspended and removed; on this occasion, suspecting that Harry is listening, Dumbledore says 'you will find that I will only *truly* have left this school when none here are loyal to me. You will also find that help will always be given at Hogwarts to those who ask for it.'[472] Both statements are shown to be true when Fawkes comes to Harry's rescue.[473] Nevertheless, Rowling makes the point that without Dumbledore's presence there is no certainty of safety.[474] In *Order of the Phoenix*, Dumbledore seems to be mostly absent from the school, although Rowling is not precise about his whereabouts. The sadistic Professor Umbridge has taken charge of Hogwarts on Ministry Orders and the atmosphere has changed from being a place of happiness and learning to being a place of punishment and repression. As a result this book is markedly different in tone from the

[471] Ibid., 194, 214.
[472] Rowling, *Chamber,* 195.
[473] Ibid., 232.
[474] Ibid., 197.

previous volumes and neither Rowling's protagonists nor her readers can enjoy the sense of containment they have experienced up to now. Even Professor McGonagall is powerless against Umbridge, saying to Harry '[This] is about keeping your head down and your temper under control.'[475] However the lack of a safe, containing space and the recognition that even the most senior teachers are helpless, proves to be a stimulus: the children realise that if the adults are not capable of protecting them against Umbridge and the Ministry, and Umbridge is determined that they should be kept in ignorance both of Voldemort's return and of any need for protection,[476] they need to find the means to protect themselves, and so they initiate Dumbledore's Army.

The fact that Hogwarts is a place that comprises both lofty ideals and dark secrets, hints that Dumbledore, too, as the person most closely associated with this space, has a complex personality. His brother, Aberforth, says 'Secrets and lies, that's how we grew up, and Albus … he was a natural.'[477] As we discover, Dumbledore carries a burden of guilt from his past which he sublimates by nurturing and caring for his students.[478] In particular his relationship with Harry is similar to that of Merlin with young Arthur, preparing him for the destiny that lies ahead. Rowling has already hinted at a link between Dumbledore and Merlin at the beginning of the series. When Harry is finally able to read his letter from Hogwarts he reads 'Headmaster: Albus Dumbledore (Order of Merlin, First Class, Grand Sorc., Chf. Warlock, Supreme Mugwump, International Confed. of Wizards).'[479] Merlin has always been seen as a mysterious wizard, but in twentieth century literature his counterparts are usually portrayed as the wise leader of the forces of good such as Tolkien's Gandalf or Cooper's Merriman. Rowling draws on these

[475] Rowling, *Phoenix*, 223-225.
[476] Ibid., 220-221.
[477] Ibid., 453.
[478] Rowling, *Hallows*, 575.
[479] Rowling, *Stone*, 42.

established tropes of representing an older, male wizard, but makes Dumbledore a more complex character than either Gandalf or Merriman. An aspect of Dumbledore's complexity is shown in the mistakes he makes, among them caring so deeply for Harry's happiness that he delays giving him the answer to his question as to why Voldemort tried to kill him as a baby.[480] Throughout the series Rowling shows Harry, and with him the readers, relying on Dumbledore always to have the right answer and indeed to represent the 'good object' in Klein's polarised paranoid-schizoid position. After his death Rowling brings Harry and readers into the depressive position of having to recognise that he was not perfect, that he had been close friends with the dark wizard, Grindelwald and had planned wizard domination. In Dumbledore's own words: '"Grindelwald. You cannot imagine how his ideas caught me, Harry, inflamed me. Muggles forced into subservience. We wizards triumphant. Grindelwald and I, the glorious young leaders of the revolution."'[481] Rowling suggests that even as an old man the lure of the Hallows never quite left Dumbledore: he could not resist trying on the Resurrection Stone ring when he found it in the Gaunt's cottage, forgetting that it was now likely to be a Horcrux and thereby introducing a fatal poison into his body.[482] The complexity of the Hogwarts castle from lofty towers of learning and from which it is possible to study the stars,[483] to the darkness of the dungeon where the Slytherins live, are outward and visible signs of Dumbledore's character. Psychoanalytically both Hogwarts and Dumbledore can contain the extremes of good and evil. It is Dumbledore who decides to use his power for good, thereby ensuring that Hogwarts is a benign establishment teaching young wizards to use their powers responsibly.

[480] Rowling, *Phoenix,* 38-739.
[481] Rowling, *Hallows,*573.
[482] Ibid., 576.
[483] Rowling, *Phoenix,* 633

Although Hogwarts is the narrative centre of the series the other houses where Harry spends time each have their own atmosphere created by the people who live in them. Pauline Dewan writes:

> Children's literature does not make use of psychological analysis of motive and behaviour to the same extent as does its adult counterpart. It has learned from the fairy tale the technique of using settings to function as externalized projections of the inner self.[484]

If Privet Drive represents a place of 'normotic' sterility, The Burrow, the Weasleys' house, is its complete antithesis. Its comfortable disorder is immediately apparent when Harry first catches sight of the house: it 'looked as if it had once been a large stone pigsty, but extra rooms had been added here and there until it was several storeys high and so crooked it looked as though it was held up by magic.'[485] Inside is equally quirky:

> the clock on the wall had only one hand and no numbers at all. Written round the edge were things like "Time to make tea", "Time to feed the chickens", and "You're late"… [Mrs Weasley] flicked her wand casually at the washing-up in the sink, which began to clean itself, clinking gently in the background'.[486]

The defamiliarisation of household chores is carried through with Rowling's description of de-gnoming the garden: the gnomes here are not like what Ron describes as 'those things [Muggles] think are gnomes…like fat little Father Christmases with fishing rods…' but are 'small and leathery-looking, with a large knobbly, bald head exactly like a potato.' They kick with their 'horny little feet' and bite with their 'razor-sharp teeth' as they are flung over the hedge.[487] Rowling uses this episode to hint at the relationship between Mr and Mrs Weasley: while the latter wants the garden de-gnomed, Ron tells Harry 'They'll be back… Dad's too soft with them, he thinks they're funny…'[488] A little

[484] Pauline Dewan, *The House as Setting, Symbol, and Structural Motif in Children's Literature* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2004), 7.
[485] Rowling, *Chamber,* 29.
[486] Ibid., 31.

[487] Ibid., 33.
[488] Ibid., 33.

later their different attitudes can be seen as Mrs Weasley is furious with her husband for enchanting an old car to make it able to fly, and furious with her sons for flying it to collect Harry. Mr Weasley is more interested in whether the car worked well, but quickly changes to 'that was very wrong, boys – very wrong indeed…'[489] Rowling makes it clear that the Burrow is Mrs Weasley's domain, a situation which grows stronger through the series. An idealised mother figure, she provides warmth and comfort and above all food, tipping sausages and eggs onto Harry's plate.[490] Here Harry is offered everything that he was deprived of at Privet Drive: food, family and emotional warmth. He is accepted as a member of a large chaotic family. Again and again through the series Rowling has him return here for the safety and respite from danger that he needs. It is all the more shocking when, after the escape from Privet Drive, those who reach that protected place have to prove their identity to make sure no enemy can come in disguised by Polyjuice Potion .[491] The protection lasts until the wedding of Bill and Fleur. This event is an important rite of passage not only in the lives of Bill and Fleur but in the whole family. The garden of the Burrow has been transformed, and Fleur 'whose radiance usually dimmed everyone else by comparison, today beautified everybody it fell upon.'[492] It is a luminal moment, an occasion of joy and light set apart from the growing darkness. But the protected boundary is breached and the festivities are interrupted by the arrival of Kingsley Shackelbolt's lynx Patronus saying '*The Ministry has fallen. Scrimgeour is dead. They are coming.'* With all the magical protection bestowed on it The Burrow has always felt like a secure fortress against the enemy, now it disintegrates into chaos.[493]

[489] Ibid., 35.
[490] Ibid., 31,
[491] Rowling, *Hallows,* 63.
[492] Ibid., 121.
[493] Ibid., 133.

Very different from the Burrow is Number Twelve, Grimmauld Place, dark and dingy, with gas lamps 'casting a flickering insubstantial light over the peeling wallpaper and threadbare carpet of a long, gloomy hallway, where a cobwebby chandelier glimmered overhead…'[494] This is the Headquarters of the Order of the Phoenix, the family home of the divided Black family. With a row of shrunken heads of house-elves, a life-sized portrait of Sirius's mother who screams with rage whenever she is woken up, a filthy and disagreeable house-elf, Kreacher, complaining about 'Mudbloods and werewolves and traitors and thieves…,'[495] the gloomy atmosphere of the house has a depressing effect on everybody. It is a house of discord. Sirius shows them a large tapestry with the Black family tree embroidered on it, pointing out the hole where his name used to be until his mother blasted it off. 'Any time the family produced someone halfway decent they were disowned.' This includes Tonks and her mother Andromeda. The name of Sirius's younger brother, Regulus, remains on the tapestry: he had joined the Death Eaters and, as far as Sirius knows, died when he tried to back out.[496] Only in the final book does Rowling tell the true story of his heroism in removing one of Voldemort's Horcruxes from its hiding place. While his parents and brother represent opposite polarities, Regulus is the one who on reflection turned away from Voldemort and tried to undo the evil that he had been involved with. Hearing Kreacher's story we realise that far from being 'the idiot brother', 'convinced that to be a Black made you practically royal,' Regulus was the more reflective brother, kind to Kreacher and lacking Sirius's recklessness.[497]

The atmosphere in the house is corrosive. Even the members of the Order of the Phoenix are riven by tensions and disagreements: Mrs Weasley is very angry with

[494] Rowling, *Phoenix*, 59.
[495] Ibid., 100.
[496]Ibid., 104.
[497] Rowling, *Hallows*, 163.

Mundungus Fletcher for having left Harry without protection against the Dementors who attacked him on his way home to Privet Drive, as well as for lighting a smelly pipe;[498] Sirius is feeling bitter at being cooped up in a house he hates, and clashes with Mrs Weasley about how much information should be given to Harry;[499] Mrs Weasley is trying to protect all the children from being told too much; Lupin and Mr Weasley are trying to hold things together.[500] The older generation who have experienced the previous struggle with Voldemort are haunted by their memories of that struggle: this is brought home very clearly to Harry through Mrs Weasley's fears as she saw every member of her family one after the other apparently dead on the floor. Lupin banishes the Boggart responsible, but Mrs Weasley is badly shaken. '"I see them d – d -- dead all the time!... I d – d – dream about it."'[501] This house whose 'soul' has been formed by a divided family continues to divide those who live in it. It is also the house in which Harry's relationship with Ron and Hermione is put to the test, where he is living while he is waiting for the hearing which will decide his future. It is a house that has been and to some extent still is, ruled by hatred in the person of Sirius's mother, but it is also a house where change can take place: when Harry presents the house-elf Kreacher with the locket which had belonged to his adored Regulus, the gesture of kindness transforms Kreacher.[502]

The four houses not only reflect the personalities of their owners and occupants, they also reflect aspects of Harry's life: Privet Drive represents extreme limitation of mind and body, and ignorance of the possibility of any richness of life. Hogwarts represents unlimited possibility of knowledge, and also a growing awareness of the struggle of good and evil forces. The Burrow is symbolic of warmth, relationship and

[498]Rowling, *Phoenix*, 78.
[499] Ibid., 85-86.
[500] Ibid., 91.
[501] Ibid., 160-162.
[502] Rowling, *Hallows*, 165, 185.

security, and offers the idealised image of family life and parents which Harry cannot remember ever having experienced. The bleakness of Grimmauld Place brings out tensions even among people anxious to work together to bring about Voldemort's downfall. Harry's heroic journey and the phases of development he moves through can be charted through his sojourns within these houses. The physical journey from place to place is an outward and visible sign of the inner journey that occupies him.

Chronologically the houses can be seen as stages in Harry's inner quest, but I also see them as *positions* in the Kleinian sense: as I explained in chapter two, Klein prefers to think of developmental positions rather than stages, positions to which all of us can and do return. In the first novel Harry is eleven, the age at which, in Britain, there is usually a change of school, a moving away from earlier situations towards new ideas. The liminal space on the rock affords a rite of passage to Harry: he is a different person when he leaves. It is with reluctance that he has to return to Privet Drive every year, back to the sterility of a life where he is barely tolerated. Grimmauld Place is symbolically a place of depression in the sense that people talk of 'being in a bad space.' It is not a place where one chooses to go, either literally or symbolically, and Sirius, in particular, has spent most of his life trying to escape from it.[503]

Accessing places.

In addition to the houses, Rowling's series is filled with other important places that function either as stopping places or as destinations for the questing hero. From Harry's introduction by Hagrid to the idea of an exciting life, more full of possibilities that he ever imagined, Rowling enlarges on the concept by bringing him and her readers to Diagon Alley, a wizard shopping street in the middle of London. Here for the first time in

[503] Rowling, *Phoenix*, 106-107.

the series she makes use of a portal, a trope so much a part of quest fantasy that Farah Mendlesohn refers to the genre as 'The Portal-Quest Fantasy.'[504] She defines the portal as being about 'entry, transition, and exploration.'[505] Jane Suzanne Carroll writes: 'The moment when both character and reader become aware for the first time that there is another world, a wider, stranger, fantastic world that exists alongside the primary space is a crucial one in portal fantasy.'[506] Hagrid leads Harry along 'an ordinary street full of ordinary people', through a scruffy looking pub which is almost invisible, out into a courtyard where he taps a particular brick in a wall and

> a second later they were facing an archway… onto a cobbled street which twisted and turned out of sight… there were shops selling robes, shops selling telescopes and strange silver instruments Harry had never seen before, windows stacked with barrels of bat spleens and eels' eyes, tottering piles of spell books, quills and rolls of parchment, potion bottles, globes of the moon…[507]

This, I suggest, is the 'crucial moment' to which Carroll refers when Rowling brings Harry and the readers into the magic of the wizarding world. In psychoanalysis, too, it is a crucial moment when, for example, a patient realises that behind the seemingly nonsensical dream or within the stream of free association lies a whole area of enriching fantasy which in turn hides important ideas, memories and feelings. On several occasions Rowling uses this trope of external banality hiding a wide inner well-organised world, situating the buildings in insalubrious places and giving them dilapidated exteriors in total contrast to the interiors. To enter Twelve Grimmauld Place, for example, Harry has to read and memorise *'The Headquarters of the Order of the Phoenix may be found at number twelve, Grimmauld Place, London'.* When he focuses on what he has just read 'a battered door emerged out of nowhere between numbers eleven and thirteen, followed

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[504] Farah Mendelsohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), 1-4.
[505] Ibid., 2.
[506] Jane Suzanne Carroll, 'Spatiality in Fantasy for Children,' in *The Edinburgh Companion to Children's Literature,* edited by Clémentine Beauvais and Maria Nikolajeva. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 2017), 63.
[507] Rowling, *Stone,* 55-56.

swiftly by dirty walls and grimy windows. It was as though an extra house had inflated, pushing those on either side out of its way…'[508] Similarly, the façade of St Mungo's Hospital is

> A large, old-fashioned…department store called Purge & Dowse Ltd… The place had a shabby, miserable air; the window displays consisted of a few chipped dummies… [including] a particularly ugly female dummy. Its false eyelashes were hanging off and it was modelling a green nylon pinafore dress… Tonks leaned close to the glass… 'Wotcher,' she said, 'we're here to see Arthur Weasley.'… the dummy gave a tiny nod and beckoned with its jointed finger, and Tonks had seized Ginny and Mrs Weasley… stepped right through the glass and vanished… They were in what seemed to be a crowded reception area where rows of witches and wizards sat upon rickety wooden chairs… Witches and wizards in lime-green robes… were asking questions and making notes on clipboards…[509]

The visitors' entrance to the Ministry of Magic is situated in an equally unlikely 'street that contained several rather shabby–looking offices, a pub and an overflowing skip'. The entrance itself is

> through an old red telephone box, which was missing several panes of glass and stood before a heavily graffitied wall…The floor of the telephone box shuddered. They were sinking slowly into the ground' … It opens onto a 'very long and splendid hall' with a fountain where 'a group of golden statues, larger than life-size, stood in the middle of a circular pool…tallest of them all was a noble-looking wizard… grouped around him were a beautiful witch, a centaur, a goblin and a house-elf. The last three were all looking adoringly up at the witch and wizard.'[510]

Any link that connects the Muggle and wizarding worlds is carefully hidden. Even Hogwarts castle, is hidden from Muggles: As Hermione tells them 'If a Muggle looks at it, all they see is a mouldering old ruin with a sign over the entrance saying DANGER, DO NOT ENTER, UNSAFE.'[511] As Hagrid has told Harry, those in the wizarding world want to 'keep it from the Muggles that there's still witches and wizards up and down the country.'[512] There is a parallel here, I suggest, with the hidden world of the unconscious:

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[508] Rowling, *Phoenix*, 58.
[509] Ibid., 427-428.
[510] Ibid., 115-117.
[511] Rowling, *Goblet*, 148.
[512] Rowling, *Stone*, 51.

Hogwarts looks like a 'mouldering old ruin,' only the initiates know the magic it contains. Similarly, dreams and fantasy ideas may seem meaningless until they can be untangled also by an initiate.

One of the most significant spaces that connects the Muggle world to the wizarding world is the Hogwarts Express. Like the Knight Bus,[513] this train serves as a mode of transport and as a space within its own right. The train is a common trope of school stories, which offers an intermediate space and time between the world of home and the world of school, and is often used by the authors to introduce characters to the readers and to each other. But in Rowling's series her protagonists have first to move from the primary, real world of Kings Cross station to the magic world where they will find platform nine and three quarters and the train which will bring them to Hogwarts. Learning to negotiate the portals is not always easy: standing at King's Cross between platforms nine and ten and wondering where platform nine and three quarters might be, Harry sees the Weasley family and asks for help. Mrs Weasley tells him

> 'All you have to do is walk straight at the barrier between platforms nine and ten. Don't stop and don't be scared you'll crash into it, that's very important'… Harry… broke into a heavy run – the barrier was coming nearer and nearer – he wouldn't be able to stop – …he closed his eyes ready for the crash – It didn't come – …a scarlet steam engine was waiting next to a platform packed with people… He had done it.[514]

Once through the wall and onto the platform Harry and the readers find the old-fashioned steam train that is going to bring them to Hogwarts. As I describe in Chapter three, Rowling uses the time and space of the journey to introduce her characters: the Weasley twins have noticed Harry's scar and point it out to Ron; Draco Malfoy's overtures of friendship are rebuffed by Harry, and Hermione, who 'had a bossy sort of voice, lots of bushy brown hair and rather large front teeth…' informed them that she had '"learned all

[513] Rowling, *Azkaban,* 30-31.
[514] Rowling, *Stone,* 70-82.

our set books off by heart, of course,"'…[515] earning instant dislike from Ron and Harry. The train itself is a chronotope and Pat Pinsent writes:

> The use of the train to boarding school is particularly characteristic of the school story… The train marks the transition between the parental territory (as it exists in time and space) of the home, and the teacher/pupil territory of the school. It is a kind of liminal time-space zone…[516]

I suggest that there is a parallel 'liminal time-space zone' in the psychoanalytic fifty minute session. As with the train journey it is bounded by a definite time and space, but within those limits what happens can vary greatly. A psychoanalytic session requires the analysand to say whatever comes to mind, which may be pleasant or unpleasant. Harry's experiences on the Hogwarts Express range from companionably sharing food with Ron[517] to having his nose broken by Malfoy.[518] However, it is not necessary to have knowledge of psychoanalysis or extraordinary experiences to be aware of the special qualities of the time-space zone that is the experience of travel. Invariably there is a sense of helplessness, of being unable to leave this place, which for some people is a relaxing 'nowhere' feeling, but for others feels more like a prison. From accessing physical places in the outer quest, I move to accessing stages on the inner quest.

Inner and Outer Quests

Throughout the series Rowling draws connections between physical spaces and psychological ones as Harry's inner quests parallel the external quests. Each of the novels results in his learning, often something about death, but also, invariably related to his overall task, the destruction of Voldemort. The teaching is gradual and Harry shares it with Hermione and Ron as they become his companions in both his external and internal

[515] Ibid., 74-79.
[516] Pat Pinsent, 'Theories of genre and Gender' in *Modern Children's Literature: an Introduction,* edited by Kimberly Reynolds (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 13.
[517] Rowling, *Stone*, 76-78.
[518] Rowling, *Prince*, 147.

quests. However, they do not have the same learning arc as he does, and they do not internalise the same ideas. For example, when Harry repeats to Ron what he has learnt from Dumbledore after his first encounter with Voldemort, '"To the well-organised mind, death is but the next great adventure,"' Ron replies '"I always said he was off his rocker."'[519] While Ron has engaged in the physical, external quest, he lags some way behind Harry in terms of the internal quest for self-knowledge and understanding. Ron is not the hero that Harry is: Harry is the one who adheres to the codes of Chivalry and who is constructed as a hero in the model of the knights and warriors of medieval literature. To be the hero goes beyond being a protagonist. In Rowling's series, to be a hero is to strive for self-improvement, to learn and to change, to move towards internal and moral growth and allow physical journeys and experiences to become transformative. Harry doesn't set out on these quests because he is heroic, rather the act of questing makes him a hero.

Prisoner of Azkaban presents Harry with several significant lessons, as well as the profound change of heart about revenge killing. Chief among these lessons being the fact that Dumbledore is not omnipotent. As Dumbledore tells Harry and Hermione '"I have no power to make other men see the truth, or to overrule the Minister for Magic…"' This is a huge moment of disillusion for Harry, a move to the depressive position as seen by Klein, away from the position of seeing the father as perfect. But Dumbledore does, however, remind Hermione of how she and Harry can save both the Hippogriff, Buckbeak, and also Sirius.[520] It is in this book, too, that Harry discovers he is capable of achieving more than he thought possible, as he produces a Patronus which drives away the Dementors, so saving Sirius, Hermione and himself.[521] Although realising that this is unlikely to be true, Harry at first thinks it is his father conjuring the Patronus, but the realisation that he had

[519] Rowling, *Stone.* 218.
[520] Rowling, *Azkaban*, 287-288.
[521] Ibid., 282.

done it himself makes it possible for him to do it a second time, this time aware that he is doing so.[522] Harry is becoming more skilful and also more thoughtful, but it is in the fifth book that there is a particularly shattering rite of passage

In both kinds of quest, external and internal, the rite of passage is usually a terrifying ordeal and this is especially the case in the fifth novel of Rowling's series. On this occasion Harry faces an army of Death Eaters, first with a small group of fellow students from Dumbledore's Army, and then joined by members of the Order of the Phoenix. At the point where he is about to confront Voldemort alone he is joined by Dumbledore, leading to a fierce battle between the two most powerful living wizards. But the conflict in the Department of Mysteries leads to the death of Sirius and to the loss of Harry's hope of living a family life with his god-father, the man who had been his father's best friend. In addition to the huge loss, Harry feels partly to blame for Sirius being there at all: he came to save Harry's life when Harry had mistakenly gone there to save his. Pain and grief lead Harry to rage at Dumbledore, who also blames himself. On this occasion Dumbledore finally tells Harry the truth about his destiny and the end of the prophecy which states that 'neither can live while the other survives.'[523] In this discussion between Harry and Dumbledore the latter explains many of the mysterious aspects of Harry's quest which had so far been withheld from Harry and the readers.[524] It is, I suggest, a particularly difficult conversation as it presents Harry with knowledge of the task which awaits him. It marks an important change in Harry as he reaches this particular stage in his maturing: Rowling has portrayed him having the last of his adolescent rages. Including as it does guilt and grief it is a particularly searing rite of passage which changes him profoundly. While he has a long way to go to complete his quest, and

[522] Rowling, *Azkaban,* 300.
[523] Rowling, *Phoenix.* 744.
[524] Ibid., 723-744.

although there will be future occasions when he moves from the role of 'hero' to that of 'ordinary boy,' he is on a new level of relationship with Dumbledore. This is evident in the next book, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince,* when he accompanies Dumbledore to persuade Horace Slughorn to come and teach at Hogwarts. Dumbledore, until now apparently invincible, has a badly wounded hand. Observing it Slughorn remarks

> 'Reactions not what they were, I see.' 'You're quite right,' said Dumbledore serenely, shaking back his sleeve to reveal the tips of those burned and blackened fingers… 'I am undoubtedly slower than I was.' [525]

The injury echoes the 'dolorous stoke' suffered by the Fisher King, an injury that left him unable to look after his country which became the waste land.[526] Dumbledore's injury cannot be cured by any of Snape's potions, and as we learn, is gradually killing him. Though he is undoubtedly a Merlin-figure, Dumbledore's increasing fragility is similar to the ageing Arthur in Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* as Hogwarts-Camelot becomes unsafe. But the quests and the medieval romances symbolise the reality of growing old and that the next generation must take over, a fact of which we are all aware, even if not consciously. Early in the book when Harry asks Dumbledore why he is unlikely to be attacked on this occasion, Dumbledore replies 'You are with me.'[527] There is a reversal of this phrase when Harry tries to reassure Dumbledore who seems close to death after the adventure in the cave, 'I am not worried, Harry…I am with you.'[528] There is a hint here of Dumbledore's death, and that Harry will find strength in himself to finish the task.

Conclusion

[525] Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (London: Bloomsbury, 2005), 68.
[526] Elizabeth Archibald and Ad Putter Eds. *The Cambridge Companion to the Arthurian Legend* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), passim.
[527] Rowling, *Prince*, 59.
[528] Ibid., 540.

Earlier in this chapter I quoted Rachel Falconer saying 'There do seem to be compelling psychological reasons for readers, both adults and children, to engage chronologically ordered, accessible narrative.'[529] A quest story is exactly this. I suggest that among the psychological reasons is the fact that, consciously or unconsciously, we recognise the story of our own life with its hopes and fears, its vicissitudes and successes. All of the houses and places through which Harry moves are liminal spaces which change him in some way. They are symbols of the psychological and developmental stages that he goes through on his way to becoming the Chosen One who can destroy Voldemort. Like many of the Arthurian knights while Harry is to some extent aware of his quest, he is not fully aware of the greater significance of his actions which enables him to act without prejudice or presentiment. His inner nobility is both a virtue and a shield, in that he knows instinctively who can be trusted, as he immediately trusted Ron and distrusted Malfoy, and that in several confrontations Voldemort cannot kill him: using Quirrell's body Voldemort could not touch Harry's skin without being burned by the love his mother had given him, and on two occasions his wand protected him.[530] Through the seven novels readers identify with Harry on his journey from Cinderella-like neglected and abused child to Hero, or at least to mature adult capable of enjoying work and love: this inner transformation is the aim of psychoanalysis for everyone.

In the next chapter I show how Rowling uses alchemy as a metaphor for Harry's academic and spiritual learning and how it transforms him. This chapter moves from the personal and interpersonal issues involved in growing up to the philosophical depth underlying the series. While this has been present from the first novel, and an aspect of

[529] Falconer, *Crossover*, 5.
[530] Rowling, *Stone*, 216; *Goblet*, 577; *Deathly Hallows*, 56.

the unconscious appeal from the beginning, in this next chapter I look more closely at the way in which Rowling weaves her philosophy through the series.

Chapter Five Alchemy as a Metaphor for Learning

As I explained in my Introduction, (p. 18), Object Relations theory posits that the desire to learn starts from the moment of birth. In t his chapter I look at the way in which Rowling uses alchemy, and examine it as a metaphor for learning, but not only for academic learning, but also as a path towards transcendence. In an interview with Anne Simpson Rowling said:

> I've never wanted to be a witch, but an alchemist, now that's a different matter...To invent this wizard world, I've learned a ridiculous amount about alchemy. Perhaps much of it I'll never use in the books, but I have to know in detail what magic can and cannot do in order to set the parameters and establish the stories' internal logic.[531]

Her statements make it clear that alchemy was important to Rowling as an element in the Harry Potter series, and poses the question: what part does alchemy play in the series? Because alchemy is so much based on learning in all its forms, I see the subject as being not only a metaphor for learning, but also as a metaphor for understanding the series as a progression towards transcendence: learning and transcendence were the twin goals of the early philosophers and remain so today for those who look for something in life beyond the materialist goal of the 'abnormally normal' Dursleys. Rowling tells us something about her reflections on alchemy in setting the background to the series, and it is useful to look behind the texts to find her own words. On the alchemical significance of the colours which she chose to represent the four houses she writes:

> Witches and wizards often reveal themselves to each other in public by wearing purple or green, often in combination… superstition says that [green] ought to be worn with care…Green is the colour of much 'Dark' magic; of he Dark Mark, of he luminescent potion in which Voldemort conceals one of his Horcruxes… and of Slytherin House… The four Hogwarts houses have a loose association with the four elements, and their colours were chosen accordingly. Gryffindor (red and gold) is connected to fire; Slytherin (green and silver) to water, Hufflepuff (yellow and black representing wheat and soil) to earth; and Ravenclaw (blue and bronze, sky and eagle feathers) to air… Colours also played heir part in the naming of

[531] Interview with Anne Simpson, 'Face to Face with J. K. Rowling: casting a spell over young minds,' *The Herald* 7 December 1998.

> Hagrid and Dumbledore whose first names are Rubeus (red) and Albus (white) respectively… the symbolism of the colours has mystic meaning representing different stages of the alchemic process (which many people associate with a spiritual transformation)… I named them for their alchemical colours… red meaning passion (or emotion); white for asceticism; Hagrid being the earthy, warm and physical man, lord of the forest; Dumbledore the spiritual theoretician, brilliant, idealised and somewhat detached…
> www.wizardingworld.com

These comments suggest that spiritual transformation and alchemy are important aspects of the series to Rowling. She says in an interview with Shawn Adler that she is a Christian and that the final book will make that clear.[532] In the interview she says that 'To me [the religious parallels have] always been obvious, but I never wanted to talk too openly about it because I thought it might show people who just wanted the story where we were going.'

John Granger, who recognises the appeal to readers of the spiritual and transcendent aspects contained in alchemy, insists that it should also be regarded as Christian allegory, writing 'Why does everyone love Harry Potter?... the answer is that it's the transcendent meaning of the books and specifically their Christian content…'[533] Granger does not use the word 'unconscious' but his comment 'unless you're a very unusual reader indeed, this will be an eye-opening ride the first time through,'[534] suggests that the reason for enjoying the books, the search for the transcendent, is, in fact, unconscious. Readers are drawn in by the exciting story and then begin to identify with the serious moral issues, especially the underlying issue of the struggle between good and evil. Granger explains the Christian symbolism and the alchemical details, and develops his ideas even more fully in his lectures on the Deathly Hallows.[535] He pursues the details

[532] Interview with Shawn Adler, mtv news, 17/10/2007
[533] John Granger, *How Harry Cast His Spell: the Meaning Behind the Mania for J. K. Rowling's Bestselling Books* (Illinois: Saltriver, 2008), xxii.
[534] Ibid., xviii.
[535] John Granger, *The Deathly Hallows Lectures* (Allentown: Zossima Press, 2008).

of alchemy and Christianity through all his writings, but although it makes for very interesting interpretations of these details of Rowling's writing, I see it as being too narrow a view: his interpretations do not explain the appeal of Rowling's writing to people of other beliefs, or none, who also respond to the spiritual and transcendent aspects: spirituality and the struggle of good and evil predate Christianity and have been a part of every civilisation. I suggest that 'those who just want the story' are also responding to the transcendent aspects, and can appreciate it. In this chapter I look at how Rowling uses both themes, that of alchemy and that of transformation, and the way in which they appeal to her readers.

Alchemy as a Metaphor for Learning

The alchemists, or hermetic philosophers,

> were actually chemists – and physicists, and astronomers, and mathematicians, physicians, botanists and biologists... they were the ones to discover that a polished lens of glass could focus the light of the sun to a hot, burning point, or could magnify what is seen through it. They were the ones who... worked out... how the human body worked... who studied plants, and learned which were poisonous and which beneficial, and which lethal ones could, in tiny doses, heal.[536]

All writers on alchemy make the point that it is not literally about turning base metal into gold, but that it was a symbol of the transmutation of base man to a more godly state, or the moving from ignorance to knowledge. It is as a metaphor of learning both academically and emotionally that I approach the topic.

The title of the first novel *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* introduces the topic of alchemy in the context that people most commonly associate with it: the search for the Philosopher's Stone, which is reputed to grant wealth as it can be used as a means of

[536] David V. Barrett, *Secret Societies: From the Ancient and Arcane to the Modern and Clandestine*, (London: Blandford, 1997), 67.

transforming base metal into gold. The Stone can also be used to produce an elixir which will grant immortality to the possessor, and so for both reasons possession of it has always been seen as something desirable and enviable. It is in this context that Rowling presents alchemy in the first novel. Historically, alchemy is much more than creating wealth and long life and involves philosophy, science and a way of seeing the world. The search for the Stone was a symbol of the search for perfection, as was the desire to transform base metal into the purest metal, gold. This was also a search for enlightenment, for new knowledge, and involved searching for new answers both about the nature of the physical world and also the purification and transformation of mankind.

Object Relations theory with its emphasis on learning from the beginning of life, is an appropriate medium through which to examine learning and its place in Rowling's series. Psychoanalyst Donald Meltzer writes about the inherent desire for learning and knowledge. He maintains that children are 'class-minded… the world is divided into adult (aristocrat) and child (peasant).' Among the tokens of rank is information, thus

> The school books of the next higher class appear to be so many holy tablets mysteriously inscribed by the gods. 'They do joined-up writing,' she whispers tremulously to her friend. 'Square root!' – heart thumping.[537]

For the young child learning is an esoteric exercise, an initiation into secret knowledge which will grant power and move them up the ranks. The desire for knowledge, and particularly secret, esoteric knowledge, runs very deep and from very early in life. David Barrett writes

> Secret societies are rooted in our everyday experience… As small children, many individuals … formed a secret society of their own, a private club… at school, it's important to join in… there's always some kid… you let tag along…[but] you let him know there are secrets you're not going to share with him – even if there aren't.[538]

[537] Donald Meltzer, *Sexual States of Mind* (Ballinluig, Perthshire: Clunie Press, 1979), 157-159.
[538] Barrett, *Secret Societies*, 9.

Psychologically this desire for secrecy goes back to the fact that originally 'They', the parents, are the 'in' group who make decisions. In the secret group the favoured ones are in the group and the others kept outside. Through her series Rowling offers her readers the possibility of becoming members of the secret society of wizardry, as Hagrid tells them and Harry about Hogwarts, and they prepare to go, with Harry, and share the secrets which are to be kept from the Muggles, the chief of which is the existence of witches and wizards. This desire to be in a secret society of wizards is part of the attraction of the way in which readers join in Pottermore and other sites.

Despite her evident interest in alchemy, Rowling does not have a subject entitled 'Alchemy' on the Hogwarts curriculum. In fact, she seems to shy away from it saying 'There are books [on alchemy] in the library at Hogwarts, and I always imagined that it would be studied by very clever students in their sixth and seventh years.[539] However, although they are not trainee alchemists, the young wizards study the topics which were in fact branches of alchemy. In Rowling's narrative this growing knowledge helps Harry and the others as they undertake ever more daunting tasks. At Hogwarts the core subjects are: Potions, Divination, Herbology, Care of Magical Creatures, Charms, Transfiguration and Defence Against the Dark Arts. The early alchemists relied on their experiments for knowledge rather than merely accepting received teaching**.**[540] Potions has always had a special place in the consideration of alchemy and for Rowling it is the most important of the branches of alchemy that she introduces. Many of these classes she describes in detail and on occasion in lyrical terms. In the first Potions class Professor Snape describing the process uses alliterative sibilants to sinister effect:

> '…the beauty of the softly simmering cauldron with its shimmering fumes, the delicate power of liquids that creep through human veins, bewitching the mind,

[539] https://www.pottermore.com/writing
[540] Paracelsus a surgeon and physician in the fifteenth century, publicly burned the works of Galen, a physician of the first century, saying that medicine must be based on what is observed, not on traditionally held beliefs. Barrett *Secret Societies* 72.

> ensnaring the senses… I can teach you how to bottle fame, brew glory, even stopper death…[541]

At Hogwarts, Potions is where learning by experiment takes place, sometimes in class and sometimes not. It is also where the protagonists learn that mistakes can be disastrous: Hermione learns the need to be careful when, in their second year she illegally makes Polyjuice Potion and accidentally turns herself into a cat.[542] As a result she is very careful in how she brews her potions, and this serves her well: she is accustomed to being at the top of the class, and in Professor Slughorn's first class she impresses him with her knowledge.[543] Hermione has the ability to combine book-learning with making an imaginative leap, as when she smells and recognises Amortentia.[544]

Alchemy and Illicit Knowledge

Just as Hermione discovers there are consequences for experimenting with things one does not fully understand, Harry, too, learns there are dire consequences for pursuing illegal knowledge. Initially, Harry's use of illegal knowledge is more successful than Hermione's. Using the unorthodox methods he finds in notes scribbled in the margins of the book which originally belonged to the mysterious 'Half-Blood Prince' he achieves better results than Hermione. Hermione is angry because she feels Harry has somehow

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[541] Rowling, *Stone*, 102.
[542] Rowling, *Chamber*, 168.
[543] Rowling, *Prince*, 175-177.
[544] Rowling hints that, despite the fact that the two Potions Professors in the series are men, women may be particularly skilled in the subject. Slughorn tells Harry 'it's clear you've inherited your mother's talent, she was a dab hand at Potions, Lily was.' And Luna tells Harry that the death she witnessed was 'my mother. She was a quite extraordinary witch, you know, but she did like to experiment and one of her spells went rather badly wrong one day. I was nine.' In an illustration from the *Ortus Sanitatis* of 1491, reproduced in *A History of Magic*, all of the characters are carefully drawn and among the students are several women, showing that it as acceptable for women to be involved in research on the Great Art. In contrast, on the following page there is a very different illustration from a book published in1489 *On Witches and Female Fortune Tellers*: a somewhat similar depiction of two elderly women standing over a bubbling cauldron into which they are putting a cockerel and a snake. (*Harry Potter: A History of Magic*. London: British Library Board and Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017) 43-44. This suggests two widely differing views on the brewing of potions: the first in the laboratory of an alchemist,(a man), a practitioner of Alchemy, the Great Art, a genuine scientific pursuit of knowledge, and the second an image of Witchcraft, a threatening but despised skill mostly practised by women.

cheated, and worried in case the book is dangerous.[545] She is right to be cautious: Harry continues to pursue unofficial and unorthodox knowledge found in the book with the result that he almost kills Malfoy.[546] I suggest that here Rowling is linking Harry with Voldemort and with the young Dumbledore in the pursuit of illicit knowledge, and, like Dumbledore turns away from it when this illicit knowledge leads to a child being seriously hurt: without the intervention of Snape Malfoy would have died. [547]

The grave consequences of seeking illicit knowledge, is at the centre of the legend of the alchemist Faustus, versions of which go back to the Middle Ages, and which was published in a *Faustbuch* in 1587 and translated into English in 1588. The legend depicts Faust as the seeker after knowledge who is prepared to pay the ultimate price for it. Faust sells his soul to Mephistopheles for all knowledge and enough time to enjoy it.[548] The fact that the legend is recreated by such disparate authors as Marlowe in the sixteenth century, and the poet and scientist, Goethe, in the nineteenth, testifies to its continued significance. The legend addresses the use and misuse of power and exploitation of others which derives from knowledge, a topic which runs through Rowling's series. Goethe's Faust was, as Iain McGilchrist observes,

> an essentially good man who has already done much for others through his skills as a physician before his lust for power and knowledge lead him to do many destructive things... He is brought back... to an awareness of the good his knowledge can bring to others... [and a] realisation of what he can do for humanity, not for himself.[549]

Goethe's Faust repents and finds salvation, but there is no such happy ending for Marlowe's protagonist. The two versions of Faust may be compared to Dumbledore and

[545] Rowling, *Prince* 182.
[546] Ibid., 489.
[547] Rowling, *Prince*, 489.
[548] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust Parts I and II,* Translated by Albert G. Latham (London: J. M. Dent and Sons,1948).
[549] Iain McGilchrist, *The Master and his Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 233.

Voldemort, the two most powerful wizards of their time, both ambitious to rule when they were young. Dumbledore tells Harry:

> I was gifted, I was brilliant…I wanted to shine. I wanted glory…And then, of course, he came…Grindelwald. You cannot imagine how his ideas caught me, Harry, inflamed me. Muggles forced into subservience. We wizards triumphant. Grindelwald and I, the glorious leaders of the revolution.[550]

However, Dumbledore who, like Goethe's Faust, was 'essentially a good man' stepped back from this ambition after the death of his sister for which he blamed himself.[551] Realising that he was not to be trusted with power he bent his energies to Hogwarts and the training of young wizards.

Voldemort, like Marlowe's Faustus, does not repent. Faustus is distracted from his noble aims by Mephistopheles's trickery: there is no equivalent figure for Voldemort who has always been alone. To gain power and to cheat death in order to enjoy that power has always been his aim. Becoming less and less human as he kills anyone who gets in his way, he uses his great skill to divide his soul into seven parts which he conceals in hiding places called Horcruxes, hoping by so doing to keep at least some small part of himself alive which could then be renewed, thus avoiding death. Rowling goes further than either Marlowe or Goethe in imagining the effects on the Faustian figures' souls: when Harry arrives in the transitional space of King's Cross station he meets the soul of Dumbledore 'sprightly and upright… Happiness seemed to radiate from Dumbledore like light, like fire: Harry had never seen the man so utterly, so palpably content.'[552] In contrast, the part of Voldemort's soul which is also there – only part of his soul as he is still alive and in the grounds of Hogwarts – has 'the form of a small, naked child… its skin raw and

[550] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 573.
[551] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (London: Bloomsbury, 2005), 535; Rowling, *Hallows*, 574.
[552] Rowling, *Hallows*, 567.

rough… shuddering under a seat… unwanted, stuffed out of sight, struggling for breath.'[553] Voldemort, through splitting his soul, has damaged it beyond repair.

Splitting is a central aspect of Kleinian theory, involving splitting off parts of the self and projecting them onto another person. Klein primarily saw the motivation for [this] as an aggressive defensive one, that is, for the purposes of ridding oneself of unwanted parts of the self…[554] and one goal of psychoanalysis is to reclaim the split off parts in order to become whole. In projective identification it is the unacceptable parts which are split off: Voldemort by contrast, splits what he values most highly, his soul, and hides the parts in objects that he values, on the assumption that as long as even one part survives he cannot die. Since being human means that dying is inevitable, Voldemort over time becomes less than human. Integration of the split off parts, a goal of psychoanalysis, involves recognising one's limitations and accepting the need for others, something which neither Voldemort nor the schoolboy, Tom Riddle, would ever do.

From the first novel, friendship and cooperation are key themes. Here, the focus is on the importance of communication and cooperation, and Rowling shows the way in which each of the three friends brings something necessary to solve the problems which they face. When they are working out how to get through the various spells protecting the trapdoor their combined skills are required: the academic Hermione, already skilled at potion making, solves the problem of which potion it is safe to drink; Ron, brought up in wizard traditions, plays the game of wizard chess, and Harry, the Quidditch Seeker, finds and catches the flying key.[555] This pattern of cooperation continues through the series as they grow in knowledge and respect for each other's capability. In this way, Rowling reinforces the idea that the selfish egotistical quest for knowledge and individual power is

[553] Ibid., 566.
[554]Shelley Alhanati, 'Projective Identification (Klein) in *Edinburgh Encyclopaedia*, 378.
[555] Ibid., 200-208.

destructive, but cooperation, sharing knowledge and working together for communal benefit leads to success for the main characters.

Alchemical and Mythical Creatures

Central to the alchemical tradition are the animals that Rowling introduces in the series, several of which have links to mythology, among them the savage three-headed dog, obviously based on Cerberus, guardian of the gates of the Underworld, in this case guarding a trapdoor and with the unlikely name of Fluffy.[556] Just as Orpheus had put several Caron and Cerberus to sleep by playing his flute, Fluffy also falls asleep to the sound of Harry's flute.[557] The centaurs are similarly drawn from classical mythology: Firenze is one of a herd of centaurs who live in the forest and recur throughout the series. They use the movements of the planets for their particular form of Divination, a branch of alchemy, but, as Hagrid complains, they will never give a straight answer. His query of what evil creature might be in the forest elicits the reply 'Mars is bright tonight.'[558] The discerning reader might notice that Mars is the god of war and that Firenze was in fact giving a warning of what was to come, but this interpretation depends on access to knowledge which is not presented to the readers or to the main characters at this point in the series. In the forest something has been attacking unicorns, a symbol of purity, and of whom the Book of Beasts comments: 'Not a single one has ever come alive into the hands of man, and although it is possible to kill them, it is not possible to capture them.'[559] When they find a dead unicorn with a sinister cloaked figure drinking its blood, the centaur, Firenze, tells Harry

> 'It is a monstrous thing to slay a unicorn…only one who has nothing to lose and everything to gain would commit such a crime. The blood of a unicorn will keep

[556] Rowling, *Stone*, 193-194.
[557] Ibid., 200.
[558] Ibid., 185.
[559] White, *Book of Beasts*, 44.

> you alive, even if you are an inch from death… You have slain something pure and defenceless to save yourself.'[560]

The centaurs are an independent race living apart from the wizards, and the unicorns are wild, but Hagrid is responsible for other creatures that appear in the series. He brings a herd of Hippogriffs to his first Care of Magical Creatures lesson, an episode I have addressed in chapter three. Hippogriffs belong in mythology but Hagrid's other herd, Thestrals, do not. These are the horses which pull the carriages from the station to Hogwarts and are invisible to anyone who has not witnessed a death.

> They were completely fleshless, their black coats clinging to their skeletons, of which every bone was visible. Their heads were dragonish, and their pupil-less eyes white and staring. Wings sprouted from each wither – vast, black leathery wings that looked as though they ought to belong to giant bats…[561]

The fact that Harry can see them while Ron cannot, is very disturbing to Harry who wonders if he is going mad. He is not entirely reassured when Luna, whom he has just met on the train reading her magazine upside-down and 'giving off an aura of distinct dottiness,' tells him 'I've been able to see them ever since my first day here. They've always pulled the carriages. Don't worry. You're just as sane as I am.'[562] Harry, already separated from Ron and Hermione by not being a prefect, is now separated from them through his ability to see Thestrals. He has knowledge that they cannot access. He has moved beyond them in his spiritual transformation.

Rowling continues her development of wonderful creatures with the introduction in the forest of the giant spider Aragog, and his innumerable progeny. Aragog, a pet of Hagrid's since the latter was a student, makes sure that Hagrid can go safely into the forest, but after Aragog's death even Hagrid is in danger from the spider population.[563] Other creatures such as the merpeople who live in the lake owe their origins to the belief

[560] Rowling, *Stone*, 186-188.
[561] Rowling, *Phoenix*, 178.
[562] Ibid., 180.
[563] Rowling, *Prince*, 451.

that ‘everything on the earth had its counterpart in the sea. The horse and the seahorse, the dog and the dog-fish, the snake and the eel… why should there not be men in both? Mermen?[564] Rowling does not give the merpeople much part in the narrative except when Harry meets them during the second task of the Triwizard Tournament. They ‘had greyish skins and long, wild, dark green hair. Their eyes were yellow, as were their broken teeth…’[565] They contribute to the narrative as they add to the difficulty in the second task, leering at Harry and discouraging him from rescuing Fleur’s little sister as well as Ron. I suggest that their presence in the narrative is a reflection of Rowling’s delight in creating her fantasy world and her readers’ pleasure in discovering it.

Another mythical creature is the Basilisk which is Voldemort’s weapon in Harry’s second confrontation with him which takes place in the Chamber of Secrets. A giant serpent, it was believed that its look could kill.[566] In Rowling’s text those whom it attacks in the course of the novel are Petrified rather than killed because they only see its reflection or glimpse it through another substance. When Harry confronts it, he avoids looking at it so as not to meet its gaze, stumbling around blindly, until the arrival of Dumbledore’s phoenix which puts out the creature’s eyes so that it can no longer look at Harry.[567]

The most significant creature in the series is Dumbledore’s pet Phoenix, Fawkes.[568] The Phoenix is a symbol of resurrection for the Philosophers because it dies in flames and is reborn from the ashes.[569] Harry observes this to his dismay as he is waiting alone in Dumbledore’s office. He sees

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[564] White, *Book of Beasts*, 250-251.
[565] Rowling, *Goblet*, 432.
[566] T. H. White remarks on the confusion between the basilisk and the Cockatrice, *Book of Beasts* 168-169. He also refers to Sir Thomas Browne, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (London, 1646), who believed that the Basilisk could kill with a look.
[567] Rowling, *Chamber*, 234-237.
[568] Surely named after Guy Fawkes, with the association to fire.
[569] T. H. White, *The Book of Beasts being a translation of a Latin Bestiary of the Twelfth Century* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1956).

> Standing on a golden perch behind the door was a decrepit-looking bird which resembled a half-plucked turkey… Harry thought it looked very ill… Harry was just thinking that all he needed was for Dumbledore's pet bird to die…when the bird burst into flames… [it] had become a fireball; it gave one loud shriek and next second there was nothing but a smouldering pile of ash on the floor…

When Dumbledore comes in he tells Harry that it is time for Fawkes to die and explains the process: Harry looks down and sees 'a tiny, wrinkled, new-born bird poke its head out of the ashes.'[570] In addition to the traditional belief about the phoenix, Rowling gives it some more characteristics, and Dumbledore tells Harry: 'they can carry immensely heavy loads, their tears have healing powers, and they make highly *faithful* pets.'[571] Harry has cause to appreciate all of these attributes when he is trapped in the Chamber of Secrets with Tom Riddle/Voldemort and the Basilisk: when Harry is wounded by potentially fatal Basilisk venom, Fawkes lays

> its beautiful head on the spot where the serpent's fang had pierced him… Thick pearly tears were trickling down the glossy feathers… A pearly patch of tears was shining all around the wound – except that there *was* no wound.[572]

It is no accident that Fawkes arrives just in time bearing the Sorting Hat which conceals the Sword of Gryffindor: Harry has just told Riddle that Dumbledore was the greatest wizard. His ability to carry a heavy load is manifested when the protagonists get back up the pipe by holding on to his tail feathers.'[573] Fawkes's faithfulness to Dumbledore is once more evident during the battle between the latter and Voldemort in the Ministry of Magic: Fawkes saves Dumbledore's life as he swoops to intercept a spell from Voldemort, swallows it, 'burst into flame and fell to the floor, small wrinkled and flightless.'[574]

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[570] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (London: Bloomsbury, 1998), 155.
[571] Ibid., 155. Emphasis in original.
[572] Ibid., 236-237.
[573] Ibid., 239.
[574] Rowling, *Phoenix*, 719.

Rowling gives Fawkes one additional characteristic, that of phoenix song. As the Phoenix comes to Harry's rescue in the Chamber of Secrets 'Music was coming from somewhere… It was eerie, spine-tingling, unearthly…'[575] This is the first instance of phoenix song in the series, and it recurs at times of danger or sadness. When the wands of Harry and Voldemort, each of which has at its core a tail feather from Fawkes, were joined in the graveyard first by a golden thread and then with offshoots making a golden cage which contained them both,

> And then an unearthly and beautiful sound filled the air… it was a sound Harry recognised… phoenix song… It was the sound of hope to Harry… the most beautiful and welcome thing he had ever heard in his life…he felt as though the sound was inside him… the sound he connected with Dumbledore, and it was almost as if a friend was speaking in his ear… *Don't break the connection.*[576]

In the chapter on play I explained the importance Winnicott gives to the transitional object which gives comfort and support to the small child in the absence of the mother, and in Rowling's series I see the Phoenix and its song as linking Harry to Dumbledore in a similar way. The transitional object is a reminder of the mother's presence and is a symbol that a bit of the mother is contained in the child. Rowling echoes this when she asserts that Harry feels the music to be inside him. The final time Fawkes was heard singing was after Dumbledore's death, when

> Somewhere, out in the darkness, a phoenix was singing in a way Harry had never heard before: a stricken lament of terrible beauty. And Harry felt… that the music was inside him, not without: it was his own grief turned magically to song… It seemed to ease their pain a little to listen to the sound of their mourning…[577]

In addition to learning about mythical animals, students at Hogwarts study Herbology and learn about mythical plants:

> Three times a week they went out to the greenhouses behind the castle to study Herbology, with a dumpy little witch called Professor Sprout, where they learned

[575] Ibid., 232.
[576] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000), 576.
[577] Rowling, *Prince*, 573.

> how to take care of all the strange plants and fungi and found out what they were used for.[578]

In the second novel Rowling focuses on the properties of the Mandrake, arguably the most famous of the plants used in alchemy.[579] Professor Sprout informs them that they will be repotting Mandrakes, a plant with many properties and which has several legends attached to it. Anna Pavord says of the plant: 'Mandrake is a powerful plant – hallucinogenic and widely recommended in early herbals as a painkiller. And an aphrodisiac…'[580] The Mandrake was assumed to have human characteristics, in part because of its forked roots which resembled legs and which was said to have a male or female appearance, although Culpeper, on whose herbal Rowling based her descriptions of herbs and potions,[581] asserts that 'it really resembles a carrot or a parsnip.'[582] The perceived resemblance to a human led some alchemists to hope to discover a homunculus, or miniature human, from which it was believed a foetus developed. The mandrake was reputed to scream when it was dug up, and anyone who heard the scream would die. Rowling plays with the traditions around Mandrakes as being almost human: in this first lesson Professor Sprout issues the students with earmuffs, telling them to be careful to block out all sound, because although 'our mandrakes are only seedlings [and] their cries won't kill yet… they will knock you out for several hours…' The Mandrake she pulled from the pot was

> A small, muddy and extremely ugly baby… the leaves were growing right out of his head. He had pale green mottled skin, and was clearly bawling at the top of his lungs.[583]

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[578] Rowling, *Stone*, 99.
[579] Rowling, *Chamber,* passim.
[580] Anna Pavord, 'Herbology' in *Harry Potter: A History of Magic* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 72.
[581] Ibid., 76.
[582] Nicolas Culpeper, *Culpeper's Complete Herbal: consisting of a comprehensive description of nearly all herbs with their medicinal properties and directions for compounding the medicines extracted from them* [N. Culpeper 1616-1654] (London: W. Foulsham and Co. Ltd.).
[583] Rowling, *Chamber,* 73.

Rowling continues the fantasy of Mandrakes sharing human characteristics by giving regular updates on their development: 'the moment their acne clears up they'll be ready for re-potting again…'[584] When the Mandrakes 'threw a loud and raucous party' Professor Sprout told Harry, 'The moment they start trying to move into each other's pots, we'll know they're fully mature…'[585] Rowling gives them some important characteristics, too: they can be used to cure the Petrified people. I suggest that with the emphasis on the plants and animals Rowling is echoing the alchemists who were concerned with all aspects of life, and how it could be respected: this as an aspect of transformation.

Transcendence

Despite the focus on experiments and gaining knowledge in the many scientific areas referred to above, the main goal of the alchemists was that of personal transformation to a state of godliness, and David Goddard writes of the alchemists' vision of 'the completion of the Great Work… the true Alchemy…whereby the personal consciousness and the Primordial unite as one [and] overcomes all limitation, heals all disease and brings an end to the need for death itself,'[586] The Great Work represents an ideal which can never be achieved, but which Rowling implies is worth striving for. The path to this is by changing ignorance to knowledge, and Rowling recounts the way in which this learning is acquired and used by Harry during his time at Hogwarts. Lawrence Farris writes, 'Dumbledore, their discoverer, teacher, and would-be mentor stands very

[584] Ibid., 175.
[585] Ibid., 186.
[586] David Goddard, *The Tower of Alchemy: An Advanced Guide to the Great Work* (York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser, Inc. 1999), xi.

much within the tradition of alchemical philosopher-sages' who moved around Europe.[587] Each of these mentors chose one disciple to whom he would impart his knowledge. Harry's frustration at not being told everything that Dumbledore knows is, Farris says, 'in accord with alchemical tradition in that not everything needed by the student was disclosed by the teacher… Part of Harry's apprenticeship… must include finding his way forward with incomplete knowledge, so that the path he finds may be his own.'[588] When they meet between the worlds, in answer to Harry's question 'Why did you have to make it so difficult?' Dumbledore tells him:

> 'I am afraid I counted on Miss Granger to slow you up, Harry. I was afraid that your hot head might dominate your good heart. I was scared that, if presented outright with the facts about those tempting objects, you might seize the Hallows, as I did, at the wrong time, for the wrong reasons. If you laid hands on them, I wanted you to possess them safely.'[589]

Dumbledore was correct in his thinking. When Harry begins to think about the Deathly Hallows and to realise that he is probably the possessor of the Resurrection Stone as well as the Cloak, he becomes obsessed with reuniting the three powerful objects. Hermione reminds him that 'Dumbledore left… very clear instructions: find and destroy the Horcruxes.'[590]

Farris's reference to the need to find 'his way forward with incomplete knowledge, so that the path he finds may be his own,' is relevant to anyone reflecting on the issues that run through Rowling's series and surface again and again: issues around the purpose of life, around power, around death and around love and friendship. Growing to emotional maturity involves finding one's own path slowly and often painfully: received knowledge can only point a direction, as the early alchemists knew.

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[587] Lawrence W. Farris, 'On the Transmutation of Voldemort's Love of Power into Harry Potter's Power of Love,' in *The Alchemical Harry Potter: Transfigurations of Desire, Power and Community* ed., Anne J. Mamary (Jefferson: McFarland), 143.
[588] Ibid.,
[589] Rowling, *Hallows*,577.
[590] Ibid., 351.

This applies very strongly in psychoanalysis as well. The patient may come into psychotherapy expecting to be given quick answers or solutions to their questions and may be surprised to be told that it will involve months or years. Patient and analyst have to live with not knowing the path until conscious and unconscious are united and the individual's path becomes clearer. Not knowing, lack of certainty can be disturbing but psychoanalysts today are more ready to accept this state and accepting this, rather than instructing the patient, working with them to find their own truth.[591] This process, can be a form of spiritual transformation, and Rowling sees her protagonists as undergoing a spiritual transformation as part of the learning process, especially in the final book, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. Alchemy is all about transformation: transformation of base metal into gold, transformation from ignorance to enlightenment, from incompetence to skill. The Battle of Hogwarts, a metaphor for the struggle of good against evil, light against dark, knowledge against ignorance, shows the skills that the protagonists have learned over the years at the school being put into action. Not merely fighting skills, the battle also demonstrate how the individual protagonists have been transformed in stature. Clumsy Neville, mocked by Voldemort, is the one who kills the snake, Nagini, which holds the last split-off piece of Voldemort's soul.[592] Ginny, once lured to danger by Riddle's diary, is helping an injured girl to safety. The strange other-worldly Luna inspires them all to continue at a moment when they are almost overcome with despair, saying 'We're all still here… we're still fighting. Come on now…'[593] In the Pensieve Harry learns the truth about Snape with all his conflicted feelings, and how he, too, was transformed by his enduring love for Harry's mother and ultimately did all he could for the side of good against evil. Even at the very end Harry keeps open the

[591] Among the psychotherapists addressing this is Jackie Gerrard, *The Impossibility of Knowing: Dilemmas of a Psychotherapist* (London: Karnac, 2011).
[592] Rowling, *Hallows*, 587.
[593] Ibid., 522.

possibility of Voldemort's reform and begs him to repent and transform: '… before you try to kill me I'd advise you to think about what you've done… think and try for some remorse, Riddle… it's your one last chance… I've seen what you'll be otherwise…'[594] Harry believes in the possibility of transformation and redemption for Voldemort up to the last minute.

Granger's insistence that Rowling's views are limited to Christian thinking when he states 'it's the transcendent meaning of the books, and more specifically their Christian content,'[595] is only partly true. The desire for transformation is universal and it is not necessary to have Christian belief to enjoy and identify with the books. Marguerite Krause, argues that 'Even when discussing what we usually think of as "religious" subjects, such as questions of good and evil or the nature of the soul, there is no sign that the characters in the books believe in the existence of any sort of deity.'[596] While Rowling describes the Christian festivals such as Christmas, it is in terms of presents and feasts rather than any mention of the Christian meaning. Krause continues

> There's no doubt that Harry exists in a godless world…Lack of religion is not the same as lack of morality. Harry and his friends *do* care, deeply, about the difference between right and wrong… Each individual must choose his or her own life's path…[597]

It is this view of spirituality, not tied to any specific belief, or any outside authority, which is the basis of alchemy and also part of the unconscious pleasure readers take in Rowling's series.

Conclusion

I began this chapter with Rowling's interest in alchemy and expanded on the way in which it appears in her narrative. I agree with Granger's argument that the series is about

[594] Ibid., 594.
[595] Granger, *Harry Cast his Spell*, 1
[596] Marguerite Krause, 'Harry Potter and the End of Religion,' in *Mapping the World of the Sorcerer's Apprentice* ed. Mercedes Lackey (Dallas, Texas: BenBella Books, Inc), 54-67.
[597] Ibid., 65.

transcendence, but disagree that it can only be read as a Christion narrative. Despite her own Christian beliefs, Rowling has given us a narrative in which the desire for transcendence does not require a belief in a supernatural God. Here she differs from Granger's statement that 'the secular crowd does not believe that anything exists beyond what can be sensed or measured.' The struggle between good and evil is not confined to belief in any particular faith. In each of the novels Rowling shows the protagonists growing in the wisdom that will help them to defeat Voldemort and in the self-knowledge that enables them to grow in stature: the readers can grow as well through their identification with the characters. Anne Mamary writes

> At its best alchemy allows us to find the sacred in our mortal lives, to find the magic of the cosmos in ourselves. It is a practice of the very best of what it means to be human in conversation with our human communities and with the universe.[598]

It does not have to be through any particular alchemical exercises, but through play – including reading – and an awareness of an all-pervading spirituality. The free rein given by Rowling to mystical thoughts and symbolism is a major factor in the unconscious appeal of the books in contrast to the straight adventure story and therefore a major factor in their success. In the next chapter, on the topic of death, I explore the way in which the mystical and symbolic threads of the narrative, which have been there from the beginning lead to the final climax in the struggle between good and evil.

[598] Anne Mamary, *The Alchemical Harry Potter*, 4.

Chapter Six The Theme of Death: Death and its significance in the series

In an interview with Geordie Grieg Rowling said

> My books are largely about death. They open with the death of Harry's parents. There is Voldemort's obsession with conquering death and his quest for immortality at any price, the goal of anyone with magic. I so understand why Voldemort wants to conquer death. We're all frightened of it.[599]

The more I studied Rowling's series the clearer the validity of this statement became, leading me to see all the other themes and genres as leading to this topic, the focal point of the series.

Psychoanalysis and Death

Psychoanalysis in the Independent Tradition has very little say about death itself apart from the fact that is an ending of physical life, or what happens after death. As I indicated in my last chapter, psychoanalysts, at least those in the Freudian Tradition, tend to avoid commenting on anything spiritual. However, most, if not all, schools of psychoanalysis have stopped trying to analyse spirituality out of their patients – which was actually replacing one belief with another in the form of atheism. Awareness of death is, of course, very much present in consciousness as well as the unconscious, and all psychoanalysts have to help patients to deal with loss and fear according to their own technique and the patient's needs.

Object relations, which is so focused on relationship, stresses the loss as being paramount, and Winnicott often uses death as a metaphor in his work. In his paper 'Fear of Breakdown', Winnicott suggests that fear of mental breakdown, perhaps more often experienced as fear of death, is a result of undergoing a kind of psychic death at a stage of

[599] J. K. Rowling, 'There would be so much to tell her…' Interview with Geordie Grieg, *Tatler Magazine.* January 10, 2006.

development when the infant was not yet developed enough to experience it. He describes the experience as being one of a number of possible 'primitive agonies, [such as] a return to an unintegrated state, [or] falling forever.' The fear of annihilation, of 'not being,' runs through all of Winnicott's work: 'the continuity of being was interrupted by' some event which undermined the security of the facilitating environment.[600] A typical example of this failure of the environment occurs if the infant is left alone for too long, leading to separation anxiety, frequently an aspect of a pathological fear of death. [601]

Death is a leitmotif running through the Harry Potter series. In spite of this, among the many critical papers on Harry Potter few have addressed the topic of death. Kathryn James, remarking on the limited number of academic analyses of death in children's literature, writes:

> Some critics argue… that death is not a suitable topic for either children or the novels that are produced for them: it is too morbid, too painful, or too likely to induce psychological harm, they claim.[602]

Far from being unsuitable, death has always been an aspect of children's literature. Indeed, as Michael Levy and Farah Mendlesohn suggest, children may also have an interest in some stories precisely because they include topics which the adults are at pains to keep from them:

> The enthusiasm with which the tales have been received by children, however, may reflect precisely the degree to which they are *not* suitable but rather transgressive, at least in the minds of their child readers, touching on matters that adults may think are naughty or taboo.[603]

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[600] Donald Winnicott, 'Fear of Breakdown,' in *The British School of Psychoanalysis: The Independent Tradition*, ed. Gregorio Kohon (London: Free Association Books, 1986), 173-182.
[601] Donald Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, (London: Tavistock, 1971), 97.
[602] Kathryn James, *Death, Gender and Sexuality in Contemporary Adolescent Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 2.
[603] Michael Levy and Farah Mendlesohn, *Children's Fantasy Literature: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 20.

Fairy tales offer a good example of how the transgressive and the taboo are foregrounded in many popular children's texts. In fairy tales, wicked witches are pushed into ovens,[604] mothers die leaving daughters at the mercy of wicked step mothers,[605] grandmothers are eaten by wolves.[606] In the binary world of the fairy tale, where the characters are either good or bad and death removes the bad characters, these deaths do not disturb us, or apparently the characters in the story. Nor do the children who are reading or listening to these stories seem to find these deaths 'too morbid or too painful.' The good are rewarded and the bad are punished by being made to disappear, which is how small children see death: the child psychoanalyst Françoise Dolto asserts that a child begins to ask questions about death at about three years of age, but without being greatly concerned.[607] As an example, in *Hansel and Gretel* even when the witch is pushed into the oven there is no sense of either the finality or the reality of death. The children are saved from danger, which in the context is what matters to real children on a conscious level, and the witch has got what she deserves. Death may be actual, potential or symbolic, and varies according to the version: in 'Hansel and Gretel' the witch does die; death is potential in 'Jack and the Beanstalk' as Jack is always at risk of the giant waking up; death is symbolic in the story of 'Red Riding Hood' when the grandmother and Red Riding Hood herself, are miraculously restored alive when the huntsman cuts them out of the belly of the wolf. Snow White is apparently dead but comes to life when the Prince who has fallen in love with her moves her glass coffin and the piece of poisonous apple falls out of her mouth. These stories satisfy the young reader on a psychological level. Bruno Bettelheim analyses the unconscious elements of these stories from a Freudian stance, offering his view on how they resonate with children. While Bettelheim draws attention to the fact

[604] Hansel and Gretel.
[605] Cinderella.
[606] Little Red Riding Hood.
[607] Françoise Dolto, *Lorsque l'enfant paraît. Tome 1*(Paris. Éditions du Seuil, 1977), 98.

that children identify with characters often on an unconscious level, and thereby find resolution of their unconscious issues, he uses a rigid Freudian framework and dismisses other fiction for children as being 'shallow.'[608] With older children who are more aware of the significance and finality of death, Bettelheim makes the point that only by 'forming a truly satisfying bond to another' can the fear of death be overcome. He writes:

> 'And they lived happily ever after' does not for a moment fool the child that eternal life is possible. But it does indicate that which alone can take the sting out of the narrow limits of our time on this earth: forming a truly satisfying bond to another. The tales teach that when one has done this, one has reached the emotional security of existence and permanent relation available to man; and this alone can dissipate the fear of death. If one has found true adult love…one doesn't need to wish for eternal life.[609]

The child psychotherapist, Dorothy Judd, looks at a number of studies on children's attitudes to death and concludes that there is great variation among them.[610] However, whether it is an acute and inhibiting fear as in Winnicott's example, or just an anxious fear of the unknown, children have an awareness of death from an early age, and so it is only to be expected that stories about death or containing deaths – whether actual, potential or symbolic – are interesting to young readers.

Besides reaching sexual maturity at adolescence, psychoanalysts also point out that at this time there is a growing anxiety about death and consciousness of the individual's life span. James Rose writes 'The awareness that childhood is being left behind, never to return, gives rise to a sense of finitude and the possibility of death.'[611] Similarly, Eric Rayner emphasises the depression that adolescents often feel at the loss of childhood and suggests that 'the young person's great sensitivity to *death'* is linked to a

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[608] Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (London: Peregrine, 1982), 4.
[609] Ibid., 10-11.
[610] Dorothy Judd, *Give Sorrow Words: Working with a Dying Child.* (London: Free Association Books, 1989).
[611] James Rose, 'Adolescence,' in Eric Rayner, with Angela Joyce, James Rose, Mary Twyman and Christopher Clulow, *Human Development:An Introduction to the Psychodynamics of Growth, Maturity and Aging.* Fourth edition (Hove, East Sussex: Routledge, 2005), 174.

greater awareness of the end of personal time.[612] Winnicott sees adolescence as a time for dealing not only with sexuality and death but also with unconscious feelings about becoming adult and supplanting the parents. He puts this very strongly:

> It is valuable to compare adolescent ideas with those of childhood. If, in the fantasy of early growth, there is contained *death*, then at adolescence there is contained *murder*. Even when growth at the period of puberty goes ahead without major crises, one may need to deal with acute problems of management because growing up means taking the parent's place. *It really does.* In the unconscious fantasy, growing up is inherently an aggressive act.[613]

The extreme ideas contained in the two stages that Winnicott refers to are for the most part unconscious, but Rowling does bring them into the narrative. The first book starts with the death of Harry's parents and therefore a break in Harry's continuity of being, what Winnicott calls a 'phenomenal death'[614] At adolescence Winnicott refers to the fantasy as containing murder, and in *Goblet* Rowling describes the struggle between the two generations of the Crouch family, between father and son, which ends in patricide.[615] While we read it as part of the narrative I suggest that there is an unconscious resonance of guilt and anxiety about what happens, or has happened, to the parents, and a fear of some kind of punitive retaliation. The unconscious fantasy of somehow having caused death that young children feel when a parent dies, gives way to the later fantasy of pushing the parents out of the way in order to take their place. I suggest that this unconscious process may be why the topic of death, while present in literature for children of all ages, is more predominant in literature for young adults. Here death takes on new resonance and it is not only psychoanalysts who recognise the deep and significant connection between a growing awareness of sexuality and a growing awareness of death. Roberta Seelinger Trites echoing psychoanalytic thinking, writes:

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[612] Eric Rayner, *Human Development: An Introduction to the Psychodynamics of Growth, Maturity and Ageing.* Second edition (London: George Allen & Unwin,1979), 112-113. (italic in the original).
[613] Donald Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1971), 145.
[614] Winnicott, 'Breakdown,' 179.
[615] Rowling, *Goblet*, 597-599.

> Learning about death seems to be a stage in the child's process of separating from the parent more than anything else… Mortality, however, has a different purpose in adolescent literature. In this genre, protagonists come to understand that death is more than a symbolic separation from the parent… Death in adolescent literature is a threat, an experience adolescents understand as a finality.[616]

For adolescent readers, death is no longer a situation which can be reversed as in 'Sleeping Beauty' and 'Snow White'. It does not belong in the world of 'Once Upon a Time,' but becomes an important, and acknowledged, part of lived experience. That literature for young adults reflects the importance of death as a key theme is, therefore, only natural.

An aspect of maturing lies in discovering one's own identity, interests, affiliations, likes and dislikes: it is a process of becoming. As the structure of the whole series of seven books in Rowling's series concerns different aspects of becoming, especially in the metaphors of alchemy and quest, it is inevitable that the series will end with the topic of death, the final becoming. Recognising this focus on becoming oneself, Kathryn James argues that the theme of death has 'an especially powerful appeal to teen audiences in particular.'[617] She writes:

> Given that attention is predominantly focused on personal identity, the individual psyche, subjective development, and social- and self-awareness, it is a literature of *becoming*, so representations of death (the end of life) can have especial relevance.[618]

It is a new awareness of time and its limits as well as the inevitability of death. Since fantasy is a way of dealing with anxiety, past or future, fantasies of what happens after death have become more prevalent in the twenty-first century. Sophie Masson's paper 'Mapping the undiscovered country: a brief introduction to contemporary afterlife fiction for young adults' would seem to support this theory. She writes:

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[616] Roberta Seelinger Trites, *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature* (Iowa City: Iowa University Press, 2000), 118.
[617] Kathryn James, *Death*, 3
[618] Ibid., 2. As the structure of the whole series of seven books concerns different aspects of 'becoming,' i

> These narratives, where the main characters die at the beginning of the story and find themselves in an alien world, the world beyond death, have developed into a fertile ground for imaginative and intellectual challenge and discovery, as a means both to depict the ultimate culture shock and a challenging exploration of otherness and alienation.[619]

The books that she references are all published in the twenty-first century apart from Astrid Lindgren's *The Brothers Lionheart.* The prevalence in teenage literature of novels set in an afterlife and told by a dead narrator occurring at the stage where the readers are becoming more aware of their own mortality, may be an unconscious effort to throw light on the unknown, to render it more familiar and therefore less frightening. It is likely that the fact that the topic has proliferated in the first decades of the twenty-first century is due to the loosening of religious authority thus leading to a greater freedom to explore unorthodox ideas about the afterlife, ideas which might have been taboo and which appeal to the growing teen market.

Critical papers on death in Harry Potter:

Despite Rowling's assertion that her books are 'all about death' and the fact that the theme of death underlies all the novels, there has been relatively little focus on the topic by critics. Bearing in mind Rowling's assertion that everybody is afraid of death, it may be that scholars also have been reluctant to reflect on the significance of the theme of death running through the series. Where the topic is addressed it tends to be obliquely, looking at theories about death and grief rather than confronting the topic of death within the texts. In their book published in 2020 Rubén Jarazo-Álvarez and Pilar Alderete-Diez

[619] Sophie Masson, 'Mapping the undiscovered country: a brief introduction to contemporary afterlife fiction for young adults,' in *The Looking Glass: New Perspectives on Children's Literature* Vol 20, No 1 (2017). Among the books she references are Choo, *The Ghost Bride*, 2013; Lindgren, *The Brothers Lionheart*, 1973; Lounsbury, *Afterworld*, 2014; Soto, *The Afterlife*, 2003; Whitcomb, *A Certain Slant of Light*, 2005.

address this gap in critical literature on Harry Potter and children's literature generally, noting the fact that in the last two decades death is no longer a taboo. They write:

> The most extensive section in this volume is dedicated to the topic of death and the treatment of death and grief in the Harry Potter series. In the last few decades, attention has been drawn to the previously taboo topic of death, especially in children's literature… Although death is a universal event, continuously repeated throughout the Harry Potter series, it had been relegated to the margins of children's and young adult literatures to protect and shield children from facing it. But there is no denying that death is a topic that inspires reflection, questioning and analysis, especially at a very young age.[620]

Among the critics who address the topic, Deborah Taub and Heather Servaty-Seib in their chapter 'Is Harry Potter Harmful to Children?' express their concern that in the series most of the deaths occur as a result of violence, which, they write, 'is likely to continue to perpetuate the mistaken notion that death is some kind of abnormality of our existence: an evil force. In reality death is the inevitable end for all living beings.'[621] By contrast Peter Ciaccio in his chapter 'Harry Potter and Christian Theology' sees Rowling's treatment of death in a more positive light, concluding that she 'brings a healthy message: one cannot remove death from life, but one should live taking death into serious consideration.'[622] Despite his call for 'serious consideration' of death, Ciaccio does not give space to the close analysis of death as it is represented within Rowling's series.

Among the approaches to Rowling's treatment of death are differing ways of understanding Christian allegory. Christina Hitchcock refers to 'a certain corner of Harry Potter scholarship which eagerly argues that J. K. Rowling's view of death is derived, at its core, from Christianity and its expression in Western culture… it is common to see Rowling as a new C.S. Lewis and to read her books in much the same figurative way in

[620] Rubén Jarazo-Álvarez and Pilar Alderete-Diez, eds, *Cultural Politics in Harry Potter: Life, Death and the Politics of Fear* (New York: Routledg, 2020), 53.
[621] Deborah J. Taub and Heather L. Servaty-Seib, 'Is Harry Potter Harmful to Children?' in *Critical Perspectives on Harry Potter*, ed. Elizabeth E. Heilman. Second Edition (New York: Routledge, 2009), 23.
[622] Peter Ciaccio, 'Harry Potter and Christian Theology,' in ibid., 40.

which the *Chronicles of Narnia* have so long been read,' that is, with death as the next great adventure.'[623] Hitchcock asserts that:

> The view of death ubiquitous in both Western culture and these books is not the view of death traditionally embraced by Christian theology. Historic Christianity has always included at its centre an understanding of immortality which is corporeal and earthly. As such, it resists acceptance of bodily death. Rowling manages to hint at this corporeal understanding of death and its attendant resistance to easy acceptance of death, but she, like much of Western culture, is unable to find a place for such a view in the already established categories provided by psychological science and anthropological dualism.[624]

Hitchcock appears to regret that Rowling in her story does not embrace 'the biblical solution' by killing Harry. In her desire to restrict Rowling's ideas to a rigid theological framework she concludes: 'Rowling, for all her apparent confidence in the fitness of death, is in the end unwilling to look behind the curtain and confront its finality.'[625] Hitchcock regrets the fact that Rowling did not embrace Hitchcock's particular understanding of historical theology, which seems to suggest that the earthly body lies in the grave and is eventually resurrected. It is not within the scope of this thesis to discuss this theological doctrine in detail, but to observe Hitchcock's wish to restrict Rowling to a particular Christian belief. Nor do I wish to restrict Rowling's ideas within a rigid psychoanalytic framework which denies the existence of anything beyond what can be observed, as summarised by psychoanalyst Sophie de Mijolla-Mellor.[626] In fact I suggest that it is the fluidity of Rowling's thought on death and an after-life that makes the books appeal not just to both adults and children but also to those not brought up in Christian belief. Certainly, Christianity has been an integral part of Western culture for more than a thousand years, and Rowling has obviously been influenced by it, as she has by the classics, by myths and legends and by fairy tales. In Harry Potter Rowling opens a space

[623] Christina Hitchcock, 'The Last Enemy: Harry Potter and Western Anxiety about Death,' in ibid., 71.
[624] Ibid., 72.
[625] Ibid., 82.
[626] Sophie de Mijolla-Mellor, Death and Psychoanalysis https://nosubject.com/Death_and_Psychoanalysis

for the reader to confront death and to explore these confrontations according to their own beliefs, religious or not. As in alchemy, or in psychoanalysis, each one has to follow his or her own truth and path. In the conversation between Harry and Dumbledore Rowling does not make the situation explicit but keeps to the ambiguities: at King's Cross when Harry asks if it is all happening inside his head or if it is real, Dumbledore tells him 'Of course it is happening inside your head, Harry, but why on earth should that mean it is not real?' Rowling gives the question to her readers, as always, like Harry, they have to think it through for themselves.

Death in the novels.

Rowling's comment that we are all afraid of death is reflected in how she approaches it through the series. I do not intend to analyse whether Rowling makes death central as a means of coming to terms with her own anxieties or to analyse readers' reactions, but rather to do as I would in a psychoanalytic session which is to comment on what I observe. It is my contention that throughout the series Rowling is teaching her protagonists, and through them her readers, to reflect on the topic in an ever more meaningful way. The first death in the series, the death of Harry's parents, is referred to early in the first novel in a conversation between Professor McGonagall and Albus Dumbledore.[627] While this particular death is seen as a tragedy for those who loved James and Lily, and especially for the baby Harry, it is also an occasion of rejoicing for the wizard world as a whole since the killing curse backfired and apparently killed Voldemort, while Harry escapes death with apparently nothing more than a lightening shaped scar on his forehead.[628] It is a death which has surprisingly resulted in a victory.

[627] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997), 15.
[628] Ibid., 13-15.

By dying in an effort to save Harry's life, Harry's parents inadvertently enabled others in the wizard world to live freely, a sacrifice which is repeated in the final novel when Harry offers his life to save others.[629] While in the first novel readers may observe the distress of McGonagall and Hagrid, we do not yet know them, and the emphasis in these first pages is on telling the backstory. The most significant question is how Harry escaped when nobody else ever had: towards the end of the novel Dumbledore explains that his mother's love gave Harry a powerful protection.[630] Equally significant, although we are not told about it till later, is the fact that in the attack Voldemort put a part of his soul into Harry, thus not only making him a Horcrux, but forging a link between them which grows stronger through the series.[631]

The death of parents is powerfully significant from both the literary and the psychoanalytical points of view. Maria Nikolajeva writes:

> The removal of parents is the premise of children's literature. The absence of parental authority allows the space that the fictive child needs for development and maturity, in order to test (and taste) his independence and to discover the world without adult protection.[632]

Echoing the psychoanalytical aspect, M. Katherine Grimes remarks that the loss of parents makes for both sympathy and envy of the independence it offers.[633] It means that the parents can continue to be idealised as perfect, and the substitute parents, in this case the Dursleys, can be vilified, enabling protagonists and readers to position themselves in the primitive binary position. The death of his parents also means that Harry Potter's story begins with a breakdown, a psychic trauma. Winnicott in his paper 'Fear of

[629] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 564-565.
[630] Rowling, *Stone*, 216.
[631] Rowling, *Hallows*, 568.
[632] Maria Nikolajeva, 'Harry Potter and the Secrets of Children's Literature' in *Critical Perspectives on Harry Potter*, ed. Elizabeth E. Heilman (New York: Routledge, 2009), 230.
[633] M. Katherine Grimes, 'Fairy Tale Prince, Real Boy and Archetypical Hero' in *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter: Perspectives on a Literary Phenomenon*, ed. Lana A. Whited (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002), 101.

breakdown,' describes the lasting effect that such a trauma can leave when it occurs before the ego is mature enough to experience it. He writes:

> The breakdown has already happened, near the beginning of the individual's life. The patient needs to 'remember' this but it is not possible to remember something that has not yet happened, and this thing of the past has not happened yet because the patient was not there for it to happen to. The only way to 'remember' in this case is for the patient to experience this past thing for the first time in the present… This past and future thing then becomes a matter of the here and now, and becomes experienced by the patient for the first time. This is the equivalent of remembering…[634]

When the series begins Harry has no recollection of what happened and accepts the story he has been told by the Dursleys, that he had got his scar in the car crash in which his parents had been killed. This psychic trauma resurfaces with gradually increasing intensity whenever the Dementors are present. The first appearance of the Dementor on the train to Hogwarts is the trigger for Harry's memory to return in the here and now. On this occasion, Harry hears screaming, but faints before he realises who it is.[635] When the Dementors appear for the second time it is during a Quidditch match. This time Harry hears words as well as screaming:

> *'Not Harry, not Harry, please not Harry!'*
> *'Stand aside, you silly girl…stand aside, now…'*
> *'Not Harry, please no, kill me instead—'*

Just as he loses consciousness, Harry realises he is hearing the last moments of his mother's life as she tries to save him, and Voldemort laughing.[636] On a later occasion, when Professor Lupin is teaching Harry how to produce a Patronus, Harry hears his father's voice for the first time. Harry feels very torn: he cannot remember his parents' voices and wants to hear them again in which case he will be unable to produce a Patronus.[637] As the series progresses Harry becomes gradually more fused with

[634] Winnicott, 'Fear of Breakdown,' 179.
[635] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (London: Bloomsbury, 1999), 66.
[636] Ibid., 134.
[637] Ibid., 180.

Voldemort, experiencing the latter's thoughts and memories and this forgotten memory returns with a powerfully graphic description in the final book: in Godric's Hollow, the village where Harry had lived with his parents, Harry's mind fuses with Voldemort's memory and watches through Voldemort's eyes the killing of his parents.[638] The theme of death and the theme of the link between Harry and Voldemort have both been growing stronger through the series and this is where they come together most strongly. In this last novel Rowling brings the readers back to the original death, but while on the previous telling the deaths of Lily and James Potter are described as past events, concerned with people we did not yet know, and we were given few details, this time it is vivid, immediate and happening to people we care deeply about.[639] To repeat Winnicott's words 'it has become a matter of the here and now' and 'is the equivalent of remembering.' Now that it is close up we become more aware of it as the inciting incident of the series, the moment when Voldemort marked Harry as his challenger, killed his parents and Harry's long journey to avenge them begins.

Rowling keeps the theme of death present right from the beginning of the series, although in the early novels it is not a central issue. In addition to the deaths of Lily and James, three deaths happen in the first novel, although these are not 'here and now': when the Stone has been destroyed the Flamels will die, but, as Dumbledore explains, this is a natural death and appropriate because of their great age. Rowling, through Dumbledore, makes it clear that death is not something to be feared but 'the next great adventure.'[640] Here, I suggest, Rowling is deliberately echoing the words of Peter Pan 'death would be an awfully big adventure.' Rowling is making a link between the boy who never grows up and the Flamels who never grow old. Professor Quirrell, whose body and soul Voldemort

[638] Rowling, *Hallows,* 280-282.
[639] Ibid.,
[640] Rowling, *Stone,* 215.

has been using, is left to die, but although Harry expresses curiosity about him, Rowling does not present it as a death to be regretted, describing Quirrell as 'full of hatred, greed and ambition.'[641] Like the witch in 'Hansel and Gretel,' his fate is deserved. Hitchcock sees a tension in the idea that Dumbledore views death as being 'a good and gentle thing for the Flamels and yet cruel and unmerciful for Quirrell.'[642] In a note she suggests that while it can be seen as a matter of timing, the Flamels are old and Quirrell is young, but 'If, as Dumbledore insists, death is the next great adventure, then timing is irrelevant. If death is the next great adventure, then how can the fact that Voldemort leaves Quirrell to die be considered unmerciful?'[643] I posit that this is a specious argument: death may be a 'great adventure' for all, but Quirrell has been used and destroyed by Voldemort, which results in his death being too early and also an unnatural death, which is contrary to Dumbledore's and Rowling's ethical position.

Death comes closer in the second novel. In the narrative arc concerning the Basilisk, a monstrous serpent that haunts Hogwarts, Rowling uses a literary device by which characters are temporarily suspended between life and death. This same device is used in fairy tales as I discussed earlier: Sleeping Beauty sleeps for one hundred years, Snow White lies in her glass coffin for a long time. As in these Fairy Tales, the finality of death is deferred and there is the promise – or at least the expectation – of a miraculous restoration to life. In Rowling's text those who have seen the Basilisk are Petrified, rather than killed outright, because they never see the monster directly: Mrs Norris, the cat, sees it reflected in water, Colin Creevy sees it through his camera lens, Hermione in a mirror and Justin Finch-Fletchly through the ghost Nearly Headless Nick. Death here is symbolic rather than actual. Crucially these are victims that both readers as well as other

[641] Ibid., 216.
[642] Hitchcock, 'Last Enemy,' 72.
[643] Ibid., 83.

characters know and care about, but are given reassurance that the situation can and will be reversed. when the mandrakes have reached maturity and can be made into a potion to revive those petrified.[644] This book also contains the threat of potential death: Ginny is lured by the ghost of Tom Riddle, later Voldemort, to 'the Chamber of Secrets' knowing that Harry will come to rescue her. He tells Harry 'I knew you would go to any lengths to solve the mystery – particularly if one of your best friends was attacked.'[645] When Harry arrives Ginny is on the point of death, and Harry, too, soon finds himself facing death after being bitten by the Basilisk.[646] However, thanks to the intervention of the Phoenix, Fawkes, death is once again averted. It is significant that it is the Phoenix, which rises from the ashes of its funeral pyre, and is a symbol of death and resurrection, which comes to the rescue here. Apart from the fact that she intends Ginny to play a major part in the rest of the series, it seems that Rowling considers her readers, whose age is likely to be twelve or under, too young to be faced with tragedy. Later in the series she has Dumbledore tell Harry that: 'It seemed to me that twelve was, after all, hardly better than eleven to receive such information.'[647] It is, therefore, appropriate that this early instalment in the series contains potential and symbolic deaths but no actual deaths are presented to the young reader.

Although no one dies in the third book, nevertheless Rowling makes the topic of death central once more. Not only does Harry re-experience the trauma of the attack which killed his parents, but he also learns about the details of the attack when, in the Three Broomsticks and hidden by his invisibility cloak, he overhears a conversation between Professors McGonagall and Flitwick, Cornelius Fudge the Minister for Magic, Madam Rosmerta, owner of the inn, and Hagrid. From this he learns that Sirius Black,

[644] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (London: Bloomsbury, 1998), 186.
[645] Ibid., 231.
[646] Ibid., 236.
[647] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (London: Bloomsbury, 2003), 739.

recently escaped from the wizard prison, Azkaban, was the one who had betrayed his parents to Voldemort.[648] When Harry finds himself face to face with Sirius in the Shrieking Shack he is quite prepared to kill him to avenge his parents' death. With the arrival of Lupin, however, he learns the truth that it was Peter Pettigrew, an Animagus who has been living as Ron's rat, who had betrayed them. This, turns out to be a crucial episode in the series as Harry moves from trying to kill Sirius to preventing Sirius and Lupin from killing Pettigrew but telling the latter: 'I'm not doing this for you. I'm doing it because I don't reckon my dad would've wanted his best friends to become killers—just for you.'[649] While there is a major emotional and psychological shift in Harry from being ready to kill to preventing a murder from taking place, Rowling does not describe his thought processes which are surely more complex than she suggests. Her failure to enlarge on such significant thought processes is an unusual omission. Nevertheless, it is a profound shift in that from now on through the series Harry will have a reputation for trying to avoid killing wherever possible, even if it puts his life in danger. Rowling continues with the theme of preventing death and harm: Harry succeeds in producing a Patronus which saves Hermione and Sirius from the Dementors;[650] with the help of Hermione's Time-Turner, Harry and Hermione go back in time to save Buckbeak, the Hippogriff, from execution and set it and Sirius on the path to freedom.[651] Once the initial desire to kill Sirius has passed, Rowling implies that Harry realises the finality of killing, that there is no return from becoming a murderer, and he does not wish to cross that line himself, or for his father's friends to do so. Rowling stresses the significance of crossing that line when she makes Dumbledore talk calmly to Draco Malfoy, who has come to kill him, not wishing Malfoy to damage his own soul by committing murder, and buying time

[648] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (London: Bloomsbury, 1999), 150-156.
[649] Ibid., 275.
[650] Ibid., 281-282.
[651] Ibid., 302-303.

until Snape arrives to do the deed.[652] This had been agreed between them some time before when Dumbledore told Snape '"*You* must kill me… That boy's soul is not yet so damaged…I would not have it ripped apart on my account."'[653]

So, although death is a prominent theme early in the series, the reader and the child characters never witness any actual deaths. Each of the deaths presented is symbolic or potential but the characters are always rescued and restored to life. As a result these first three novels have a quality of lightness about them, a lightness that Rachel Falconer welcomes: '[Rowling's] skill in producing a buoyant, effervescent narrative reflects, in part, the influences of a postmodern society that… values playfulness, flexibility and spontaneous creativity.'[654] Although Rowling introduces the topic of death in each book, and Harry has to fight for his life in the first two and for his soul against the Dementors in the third, it is not a dominant feature and there is a reassuring resolution at the end of each novel. I suggest that these reassuring and life-affirming resolutions reflect the relative youth and inexperience of the intended readers at this stage of the series. In these years before adolescence, the young reader should be allowed to hold on to optimism.

The atmosphere of the series changes dramatically in the fourth novel. *The Goblet of Fire* is very much longer than the first three books and introduces the darkness which will be a growing part of the series from now on. It marks a clear shift from children's stories to at least Young Adult literature. This is emphasised by the fact that for the first time the novel does not begin with Harry's life with the Dursleys but with an indication of Voldemort's growing strength, as, ensconced in 'The Riddle House,' he terrorises an old man before killing him.[655] Rowling also makes clear early in the book the resurgence of

[652] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (London: Bloomsbury,2005), 546-556.
[653] Rowling, *Hallows*, 548.
[654] Rachel Falconer, *The Crossover Novel: Contemporary Children's Fiction and Its Adult Readership* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2009), 46.
[655] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000), 18-19.

Voldemort's followers, the Death Eaters, as they abuse Muggles at the Quidditch World Cup, and set off the Dark Mark, Voldemort's sign, 'a colossal skull, composed of what looked like emerald stars, with a serpent protruding from its mouth like a tongue.'[656] Falconer also notes this shift in tone, suggesting that the opening scene is 'straight out of the horror genre.'[657] Rowling opens this book with the killing of the old man, and ends it with the protagonists grieving the death of Cedric. Actual deaths, presented before the reader in detail and witnessed by child characters, are a crucial part of the shift in tone within this book.

Cedric's death is the most important in creating this shift in tone because he is a child. While Maria Nikolajeva suggests Cedric is insignificant, asking: 'Who is Cedric to Harry other than rival?'[658] I argue that Harry has an ambivalent relationship with Cedric and that, despite the fact that he and Harry are rivals, Rowling has made her readers like and admire him. We first meet Cedric in *Prisoner of Azkaban,* where he is Captain and Seeker on the Hufflepuff Quidditch team. When a group of Dementors invade the pitch and Harry faints and falls off his broom, resulting in a win for Hufflepuff, Cedric 'tried to call it off. Wanted a rematch. But they won fair and square…'[659] Rowling thus sets up rivalry between them from the first encounter, but also makes clear Cedric's desire to be fair. The two meet early in the next book on the way to the Quidditch World Cup. Amos, Cedric's father, boasts about Cedric having beaten Harry at Quidditch the previous year. Despite Cedric explaining that it was an accident, Harry had fallen off his broom, Amos insists: 'Yes but *you* didn't fall off, did you?... One falls off his broom, the other stays on, you don't need to be a genius to tell which one's the better flier!'[660] In this case Cedric's

[656] Ibid., 115.
[657] Falconer, *The Crossover Novel,* 63.
[658] Nikolajeva, 'Secrets of Children's Literature' 237.
[659] Rowling, *Azkaban* 135.
[660] Rowling, *Goblet*, 68.

father pushes the rivalry to Cedric's embarrassment. The two continue to be rivals but Rowling shows them both as honourable and trying to play fair and as a result we come to like and respect Cedric. Both are competing in the Triwizard Tournament and both invite Cho Chang to the Yule Ball. But they also help each other: Harry warns Cedric about the dragons in the first task,[661] and in return Cedric hints that Harry might be able to work out the clue to the second task if he takes the golden egg, the clue to the task, and has a bath, even telling him how to gain access to the Prefects' bathroom.[662] Finally, as they reach the end of the third task, Cedric, who is nearest to the Cup, says Harry deserves to take it as he has twice saved Cedric's life during the test. Harry suggests that they both take it, which leads to disaster and the death of Cedric.[663]

Grimes accepts Bettelheim's dictum that 'those predecessors of the hero who die in fairy stories are nothing but the hero's earlier immature incarnations'[664] and writes:

> Harry… outlives Cedric Diggory, a boy wizard very much like himself who is strong and brave, but not quite strong and brave enough. Cedric is a foil to Harry and the dead boy's failure makes Harry's success even more remarkable.[665]

I argue that with this first death of a character we have come to know and like, Rowling is presenting a far more subtle situation. There is no failure on Cedric's part: in Quidditch and in the Triwizard tests both boys are equal. Voldemort wants Harry alive, to him Cedric is a 'spare' of no use and can therefore be disposed of quickly, unlike the Muggle, Frank Byrne[666] and Charity Burbage,[667] whom he tortures before killing as he intends to

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[661] Ibid., 298.
[662] Ibid., 375.
[663] Ibid., 551.
[664] Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Peregrine Books, 1978), 181. Bettelheim here argues that 'death of the unsuccessful – such as those who tried to get to Sleeping Beauty before the time was ripe, and perished in the thorns – symbolises that this person was not mature enough to master the demanding task which he foolishly (prematurely) undertook…Those predecessors of the hero who die in fairy stories are nothing but the hero's earlier immature incarnations.'
[665] Grimes, 'Fairy Tale Prince, Real Boy, and Archetypal Hero,' 98.
[666] Rowling, *Goblet* 18-19.
[667] Rowling, *Hallows*, 17-18.

do with Harry.[668] As well as foregrounding his sadistic desires, killing Cedric in this way demonstrates very clearly Voldemort's ruthlessness and his lack of scruples about killing anyone who might get in his way, like Cedric, or the deaths of those he has used, for example Quirrell[669] or Bertha Jorkins.[670] For both readers and characters something fundamental has changed: a basic trust that the universe is benign has been shattered. For Harry especially Rowling shows Cedric's death as a key element in Harry's maturation: the first experience of seeing the reality of death is always a liminal moment from which there is no going back.

With this death also Rowling introduces a new kind of 'ghost'. In *Philosopher's Stone* Rowling has already introduced the Hogwarts ghosts as the new students are waiting to be assigned to their houses. The ghosts belong to the various houses and are friendly caricatures although their first appearance is a shock:

> [Harry] gasped. So did the people around him. About twenty ghosts had just streamed through the back wall. Pearly-white and slightly transparent, they glided across the room talking to each other and hardly glancing at the first- years… 'I say, what are you all doing here?' A ghost wearing a ruff and tights had suddenly noticed the first-years… 'New students,' said the Fat Friar, smiling around at them. 'Waiting to be sorted, I suppose?... Hope to see you in Hufflepuff… My old house, you know.'[671]

Throughout the series Rowling continues to present them as members of the Hogwarts community, sometimes funny and sometimes sad, benign but ineffectual and concerned with their own affairs. Harry, distraught at the death of Sirius, corners the Gryffindor ghost, Nearly Headless Nick, to ask about death, hoping for reassurance that Sirius will return as a ghost. The answer he is given is bleak:

> 'Wizards can leave an imprint of themselves upon the earth, to walk palely where their living selves once trod,' said Nick miserably. 'But very few wizards choose that path… [Sirius Black] will not come back… He will have … gone on…I was

[668] Rowling, *Goblet*, 70, 573-574.
[669] Rowling, *Stone*, 216.
[670] Rowling, *Goblet*, 569.
[671] Rowling, *Stone*, 86-87.

> afraid of death… I chose to remain behind… I know nothing of the secrets of death, Harry, for I chose my feeble imitation of life instead.'[672]

Since death is inevitable for everything that lives, even if, as Rowling suggests 'we are all afraid of it,' here she appears to suggest that Nick and the other Hogwarts ghosts chose to remain on earth as pale shadows of themselves rather than to 'go on' as Muggles must, and the majority of wizards accept they must do. In contrast, the figures which appear from the end of Voldemort's wand have indeed died, and, in fact, appear more alive than the Hogwarts ghosts. These ghosts seem solid: all of them speak words of encouragement to Harry and his mother tells him that they will give him moments to reach the Portkey which will return him to Hogwarts while Cedric asks him to bring his body back.[673] Dumbledore later explains that while no spell can bring back the dead the connection between the wands produced an echo of those who had been killed by Voldemort's wand.[674] Ghosts appear again in the final book, at the climax of the series: when Harry goes alone to face death at the hands of Voldemort, he is able to open the Golden Snitch bequeathed to him by Dumbledore and use the Resurrection Stone hidden within it. As his parents, James and Lily, together with Sirius and Lupin appear they 'Were neither ghost nor truly flesh… Less substantial than living bodies, but much more than ghosts…'[675] These spirits have powers of their own: passing by the Dementors they act like Patronuses for Harry keeping him safe from their chill and fear. As they go deeper into the Forest and closer to the moment when Harry will face his own death 'The dead who walked beside him through the Forest were much more real to him now than the living back at the castle: Ron, Hermione, Ginny and all the others were the ones who felt like ghosts as he stumbled and slipped towards the end of his life, towards Voldemort…'

[672] Rowling, *Phoenix*, 758-759.
[673] Rowling, *Goblet*, 579.
[674] Ibid., 605.
[675] Rowling, *Hallows* 560.

[676] Rowling implies here that while death is not reversible neither is it final. Her description of the companionship of his dead parents and friends, and then, after his own death, meeting Dumbledore in a space between the two worlds suggest that Rowling offers her readers a belief in the existence of a soul which survives death. These ghosts, or souls, of those who have died seem more solid than the Hogwarts ghosts, who, as Nearly Headless Nick has told Harry, have avoided the experience. Also, unlike the Hogwarts ghosts they only appear when Harry's life is threatened in the graveyard or about to be taken from him in the forest. Rowling's implication that life continues after death offers a different form of resolution in this last book. It offers a measure of reassurance that all will ultimately be well.

Death in the later novels

Cedric's is the first actual death of a character that we know, and each of the following books in the series reaches a climax with the death of increasingly significant characters: Sirius in *Order of the Phoenix,* Dumbledore in *Half-Blood Prince,* and finally Harry himself in *Deathly Hallows.* Rowling shows how each death brings a different resolution and also a new twist in the narrative, and, as Anne Sangil points out, the suffering, both physical and mental, that Harry undergoes as a result of each death forms an important part of his emotional development.[677] But, as so often in life, the deaths of the little creatures also have a profound effect and Rowling uses the deaths of non-human characters to highlight the untimeliness and injustice of death, particularly in the final novel. At the beginning of *Deathly Hallows* Hedwig is killed as Harry's group of allies set out to bring him from Privet Drive to the Burrow.[678] As Hagrid asks about her 'The

[676] Ibid., 560-562.
[677] Anne Frances N. Sangil, 'King's Cross: Power of Pain and Suffering' in *Cultural Politics*. 108-121.
[678] Rowling, *Hallows,* 52.

realisation crashed over [Harry]… The owl had been his companion, his one great link with the magical world whenever he had been forced to return to the Dursleys.'[679] Dobby's death, too, affects Harry deeply, and the description of his death and burial is one of the most moving passages in the series. Determined to dig Dobby's grave 'properly…Not by magic… [Harry] dug with a kind of fury, relishing the manual work… for every drop of his sweat and every blister felt like a gift to the elf who had saved their lives.'[680]

Dobby's untimely death, like Cedric's death, comes as a shock to Harry and to Rowling's readers. Jessica Seymour, reflecting on the death of the innocent bystander, writes: 'What set Rowling's use of the innocent bystander apart – at least initially – is that it was unexpected in the fictional universe she had created…'[681] As mentioned above, in fairy tales the deaths are of the villains, and are not regretted or mourned. In Rowling's series there is more subtlety, but the deaths up to now can be accepted and rationalised: the deaths of Harry's parents and his own extraordinary survival are an essential part of the background structure. The suggestion is that the Flamels will die peacefully and it is appropriate at their age. Rowling does not describe the manner of Quirrell's death but does not offer any sympathy and so we are encouraged to see this death as justifiable. The murder of Frank Bryce, while horrible in some senses, does not impact the reader deeply because he is not someone we know. By contrast the deaths of characters we know and like, like Cedric, Hedwig, Dobby, Sirius, Dumbledore, makes death seem random, unnecessary and undeserved and not expected in the fantasy world that Rowling has created.

[679] Ibid., 61.
[680] Ibid., 387.
[681] Jessica Seymour, 'When Spares are Spared' in *Cultural Politics*, 125

However, death in the real world is often random, unnecessary, undeserved and unexpected and at some level we recognise this and acknowledge that the novels' presentation of death is increasingly realistic. As Seymour writes:

> The 'wrong place at the wrong time' concept in these novels means that anyone can be an innocent bystander at any time. That is true in fiction as well as in reality, although it is difficult to imagine that we could be innocent bystanders in the event of a terror attack or something similar…But we could be.[682]

I disagree with Seymour here: on the contrary I think there is an awareness, conscious or not, that we could indeed find ourselves caught up on the edge of violence and it is the unconscious recognition of this fact which is partly responsible for the shock of Cedric's death: we are jolted from the apparent safety of Rowling's fictional world into the real world. If we examine Cedric's death in detail, the psychological aspects of the scene – and its twin impact on Harry and the reader – becomes clear.

Cedric's death is the first death that we witness and it is sudden and violent though it is not described in especially graphic detail as Harry, through whom the action is focalised, shuts his eyes at the crucial moment

> Without warning, Harry's scar exploded with pain. It was agony such as he had never felt in all his life…From far away, above his head, he heard a high, cold voice say, '*Kill the spare.'*
> A swishing noise and a second voice, which screeched the words to the night: '*Avada Kedavra!'*
> A blast of green light blazed through Harry's eyelids, and he heard something heavy fall to the ground beside him… terrified of what he was about to see, he opened his stinging eyes.
> Cedric was lying spread-eagled on the ground beside him. He was dead.[683]

Seymour parallels my own view that Rowling shows the pain of this death has a profound effect on Harry's emotional and psychological state, producing symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder. The symptoms are described as being

[682] Ibid., 125.
[683] Ibid., 553.

> Firstly, an intrusive re-experiencing of events as if being there again (flashbacks), and recurrent dreams of the event. Secondly, avoidance of anything associated with the trauma in order to numb the memory as well as feelings of estrangement and irritability. Thirdly, subjects are easily startled and prone to insomnia and anger.'[684]

These symptoms are in evidence in *Order of the Phoenix* from the beginning. When Dudley mocks Harry for moaning and talking in his sleep: '"Don't kill Cedric… Come and help me, Dad! Mum, come and help me! He's killed Cedric…"' Harry is furious, realising that Dudley must have heard him shouting in his sleep the previous night as he was dreaming of being back in the graveyard.[685] In chapter two I address the way in which Rowling shows Harry as being angry from beginning to end of *Order of the Phoenix*, and I argue that this anger is a result of loss: starting from Cedric's death and his own trauma which spoils all the pleasure of his achievements in the Triwizard tournament, loss of safety when the Dementors arrive in Little Whinging, loss of trust in the authorities at the Ministry, loss of the idealised image of his father and finally the loss of Sirius. I address the effects of these losses separately, but the combined impact on Harry can be compared to a death; the young light- hearted Harry has gone.

While the anger of post traumatic stress lies just under the surface of Harry's mind following Cedric's death, Rowling also draws attention to the guilt that he experiences at this death and also following the death of Sirius. With Cedric it is not only because it was he, Harry, who had suggested that they take the Cup together, but also because any death, particularly a violent death, is likely to result in survivor's guilt in those who are spared. Rowling makes this clear as she describes Harry's attitude towards the money which he has won in the Tournament: when Mrs Weasley suggests he should think of what he is going to buy he replies: 'I don't want that gold… You have it. Anyone can have it. I

[684] *The Edinburgh International Encyclopaedia of Psychoanalysis,* ed. Ross M. Skelton (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 372.
[685] Rowling, *Phoenix,* 19.

shouldn't have won it. It should've been Cedric's.'[686] The guilt he feels when Sirius dies is more complex. Harry has been tricked into going to the Ministry of Magic in order to save Sirius who, he is made to believe, is being tortured prior to being killed by Voldemort. Sirius, learning that Harry is in the Ministry, goes there to save him. In the resulting battle between the Death Eaters and Harry and his friends, the Members of the Order of the Phoenix come to the rescue and in the battle Sirius is killed.[687] On this occasion Rowling describes the subsequent de-briefing with Dumbledore as a painful experience for both: Harry has to recognise that by assuming Snape, who is a Member of the Order of the Phoenix, could not be trusted to act, and rushing to the Ministry himself he bears some responsibility for Sirius being there at all.[688] But Dumbledore, too, admits responsibility: 'It is time,' he said, 'for me to tell you what I should have told you five years ago, Harry.'[689] Through Dumbledore's explanation Rowling makes the bones of the prophecy clear to her readers as well as to Harry: that he is 'the one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord…and the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not…and either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives…'[690] Through this prophecy, Harry's life becomes indelibly connected to death.

With both of these deaths, and with the deadly prophecy Harry faces, Rowling introduces a shift in the narrative and in the material. The storylines move from children's adventure narratives to more complex young adult material. It can no longer be assumed that those in authority are wise and trustworthy and Rowling introduces a series of incidents through which the reader is encouraged to think sceptically and even cynically

[686] Rowling, *Goblet,* 619.
[687] Rowling, *Phoenix,* 710.
[688] Ibid., 732.
[689] Ibid., 735.
[690] Ibid., 741.

about power and those who wield it. For example, the appropriately named Cornelius Fudge, the Minister for Magic, has made up his mind that Dumbledore is wrong to believe that Voldemort has returned. When Dumbledore tells him: 'You are blinded by love of the office you hold… If your determination to shut your eyes will carry you as far as this… we have reached a parting of the ways. You must act as you see fit. And I – I shall act as I see fit.'[691] Fudge enters a classic state of denial, where unwelcome facts are refused and those who believe them are accused of lying. The Ministry as a whole too, adopts this form of defence and from now on Rowling shows the Ministry working against Dumbledore. In *Phoenix*, when Harry joins them in Grimmauld Place, Hermione and the Weasleys tell him that the Ministry is spreading the idea that Dumbledore is just stirring up trouble and Harry is attention-seeking and deluded. The serious wizard newspaper, the *Daily Prophet*, has been taken over by Ministry propaganda.[692] The authorities who should be trusted to take charge of the situation refuse to see a problem and it is left to the children and the members of the Order of the Phoenix to take control. When Harry assumes that people are being informed about Voldemort's return, and '[looks] around at Mr Weasley, Sirius, Bill, Mundungus, and Tonks… they all smiled humourlessly.'[693] As Sirius is thought to be a mass-murderer, Lupin is something of an outcast as a werewolf, Tonks and Mr Weasley need to keep their jobs at the Ministry in order to know what is happening, all of them have to be discreet. The increase in suspicion, paranoia, and distrust of authority figures presented in the latter half of the series plays an important role in Harry's growing maturity and his growing independence. As he comes to distrust the established authorities in his world – his teachers, the media, the government – he learns to become more self-reliant and to trust his own judgement.

[691] Rowling, *Goblet*, 615.
[692] Rowling, *Phoenix*, 71.
[693] Ibid., 89.

Psychoanalysis and critics of children's literature have opposing views of the impact of this kind of development on children and on child characters. Winnicott, writing about adolescence, stresses the importance of immaturity which he says 'is a precious part of the adolescent scene. Society needs to be shaken by … those who are not responsible. If the adults abdicate, the adolescent becomes prematurely, and by false process, adult.'[694] While Winnicott sees the need for the adult to step in and take control, Maria Nikolajeva reads the situation differently. She writes:

> Here is the essence of adult normativity in a nutshell: the child hero can be as brave, clever and strong as he pleases, but in the end, an adult will take over. In some incredible way, [these] books manage to solve the dilemma: both to empower the child and to protect him from the dangers of adulthood, to try against common sense, to hold the child within the innocence of childhood, since it is part of the adults' power strategy.[695]

While Winnicott sees adult failures as robbing the child of their potential to grow at a natural pace, Nikolajeva sees adult intervention as robbing the child of their potential power. I argue that in Rowling's series as the adults are increasingly becoming the enemy, the child characters become more resourceful, more resilient, and more mighty. For example, as a result of Cedric's death, in *Order of the Phoenix* the children have to take increasing control over their own learning and development, most notably in teaching themselves Defence against the Dark Arts.[696] By taking responsibility for themselves and in absenting themselves from the increasingly hapless adult figures, these children take control over their own growth and empower themselves.

Thresholds

Rowling's account of Sirius's death contains symbolic elements. She describes a room in the Department of Mysteries in the middle of which there is an archway 'ancient,

[694] D. W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London: Tavistock, 1971), 146.
[695]Nikolajeva, Secrets of Children's Literature,' 235.
[696] Rowling, *Phoenix,* 303-311.

cracked and crumbling… [which] was hung with a tattered black curtain or veil which, despite the complete stillness of the cold surrounding air, was fluttering very slightly as though it had just been touched.'[697] 'Cold' and 'still' conjure the idea of death, and Harry and Luna can hear faint whispering from the other side, or, as Luna suggests, 'in there'. As well as Harry and Luna, Ginny and Neville also are fascinated by the veil, but Hermione, whose fear is expressed in anger, and Ron, who is not over imaginative, drag them away. [698] Later, when Sirius is killed, the symbolism – and the uneasy fascination – of the veil becomes clear:

> Harry saw the look of mingled fear and surprise on his god-father's wasted, once handsome face as he fell through the ancient doorway and disappeared behind the veil, which fluttered for a moment as though in a high wind, then fell back into place.

The moment of passing through the 'veil' between life and death is so brief that Harry cannot believe it has happened, that Sirius cannot be reached and brought back.[699] Rowling's symbolism includes both the liminal moment between life and death and also the biblical symbolism of the veil which runs through Old and New testaments: in the Old testament the veil is a purely visual barrier between parts of the temple, representing the divide between this life and the next.[700] The symbolism is there when the veil of the temple splits at the moment of Jesus's death.[701] Here the splitting of the veil is seen by many as the division between the two worlds being temporarily lifted: I argue that in Rowling's narrative the symbolism of the veil parallels that division, to make clear that Sirius has gone, no longer in this world.

The battle in the Department of Mysteries marks another turning point both in the narrative and in Harry's psychological development. In the narrative, this is the first

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[697] Ibid., 682.
[698] Ibid., 683.
[699] Ibid., 711.
[700] 2 Chronicles 3:14. (King James Bible, 1611).
[701] Matthew 27:51. (King James Bible).

occasion the Death Eaters and Voldemort himself appear without disguise, and Fudge who arrives to see Voldemort duelling with Dumbledore, is forced to accept that he has, in fact returned. Again, Rowling shows that the death has consequences: in the next novel at the meeting between the two Ministers, Fudge informs the Muggle Prime Minister that 'We're at war…He Who Must Not Be Named has now been joined by those of his followers who broke out of Azkaban…'[702] Dumbledore is back as Headmaster and Hogwarts is almost back to normal. With the death of Sirius, Rowling makes Harry confront the finality of death more fully. He has lost not only his mother and father but also in Dumbledore's words, 'the closest thing to a parent [he] has ever known.'[703]

The manner of Dumbledore's death at the hands of Severus Snape also comes as a shock. Despite his great frailty resulting from the journey to the cave and drinking the poisonous water, seeing the Dark Mark hanging over Hogwarts had seemed to revive him temporarily: 'he was bent low over his broom, his eyes fixed upon the Mark, his long silver hair and beard flying behind him in the night air… as they flew over the dark, twisting lane… Harry heard Dumbledore muttering in some strange language… [he] was undoing the enchantments he himself had set around the castle, so that they could enter at speed.'[704] Once in the tower, although weak, Dumbledore makes it clear to Harry that Snape is the person he needs, so it is all the more shocking when, in response to Dumbledore's plea 'Severus…please…,' Snape utters the fatal curse, *'Avada Kedavra!'*[705] Despite our suspicions of Snape throughout the series, and the 'Unbreakable Vow' that Snape made with Narcissa earlier in the book,[706] the idea that he would, in fact, kill Dumbledore, who has reiterated over and over that he trusts Snape, is unexpected.

[702] Rowling, *Prince*, 17.
[703] Rowling, *Phoenix,* 726.
[704] Ibid., 544.
[705] Ibid., 556.
[706] Ibid., 40.

Cedric's death left Harry suffering from post traumatic stress, Sirius's death left him angry and guilty, and with Dumbledore's death everything changes.

> Harry saw very clearly…how people who cared about him had stood in front of him one by one, his mother, his father, his godfather, and finally Dumbledore, all determined to protect him; but now that was over. He could not let anyone else stand between him and Voldemort…the last and greatest of his protectors had died and he was more alone than he had ever been before.[707]

The murder of his father figure pushes Harry into the role of the adult. Nikolajeva's comment quoted above does not hold true: there is no adult to take over, Harry must become the adult. From the psychoanalytic point of view this is too sudden and too soon. While symbolically it means taking the father's place, and Winnicott sees it as a symbol, ideally it is a transition that should happen in its own time, not drastically and abruptly.

Rowling shows that Dumbledore's death has consequences not only for Harry but for the whole community. At the end of the novel, she depicts the Hogwarts community as grieving and, to some extent in disbelief. Hogwarts, until now a secure bastion, has been invaded by Death Eaters and in the resulting battle Bill Weasley has been badly injured, his face almost unrecognisable having been bitten by the werewolf, Fenrir Greyback.[708] Staff and students gather in the hospital wing trying to piece together the events leading up to Dumbledore's death.[709] In this space, where death has been deferred and thwarted before in the series, the hierarchical divide between teachers and students is dissolved.

This death is the first in the series to consider what happens to the body after death and Rowling introduces the emotions that occur in the days after the death up to and including the funeral. As is likely to be the case for many of Rowling's readers,

> Harry had never attended a funeral before… he did not know what to expect and was a little worried about what he might see, about how he would feel. He wondered whether Dumbledore's death would be more real to him once the

[707] Ibid., 601.
[708] Ibid., 572.
[709] Ibid., 571.

> funeral was over. Though he had moments when the horrible fact of it threatened to overwhelm him there were blank stretches of numbness where… he still found it difficult to believe that Dumbledore had really gone.[710]

Rowling recounts the funeral in detail and movingly, gathering together not only wizards but other creatures; the merpeople who sing their lament, the centaurs who shoot their arrows into the air as their tribute. The style of her writing changes for this episode as she adopts an epic style appropriate for the death of a hero. But, as in the real world, Rowling allows moments of humour: 'Grawp patted Hagrid hard on the head, so that his chair legs sank into the ground. Harry had a wonderful momentary urge to laugh.'[711] The oration seemed to have little to do with Dumbledore and Harry found himself remembering 'Dumbledore's idea of a few words: "nitwit", "oddment", "blubber" and "tweak"' and again found himself grinning. There is a finality as Rowling describes Dumbledore's body and the table on which it lies being caught up in flames and becoming a white marble tomb.[712] However, while the funeral marks the end of Dumbledore's physical presence, Rowling suggests that something of his spirit remains. When after the funeral Scrimgeour, the Minister for Magic, asks Harry for information, Harry replies using Dumbledore's own words 'He will only be gone from the school when none here are loyal to him.'[713]

Rowling has consistently imbued Hogwarts with the personality of its Headmaster and now Dumbledore's death brings about the end of Hogwarts as it has been.

> 'I can't bear the thought that we might never come back,' [Hermione] said softly. 'How can Hogwarts close?' 'I'm not coming back even if it does reopen,' said Harry. Ron gaped at him, but Hermione said sadly, 'I knew you were going to say that…'[714]

[710] Ibid., 595.
[711] Ibid., 600.
[712] Ibid., 597-602.
[713] Ibid., 604.
[714] Ibid., 606.

I suggest that Ron's reaction of being taken aback, reflects that of many of Rowling's readers: Hermione, more prescient, realises that this is the end of childhood and that their quest lies out in the wider world. Although the school does reopen, Rowling brings her readers back only briefly: death, and the acceptance of death, is therefore presented as a vital step in the characters' increasing maturity.

Harry and Voldemort: Life and Death

Rowling's series is based on the struggle between Harry, 'The Boy who Lived,' and Voldemort, whose name means 'Flight from Death.' It is also a struggle between good and evil, between light and dark and between freedom and slavery.

Psychoanalytically it can be seen as the personal struggle between the creative desire for life and the death instinct which aims to destroy. Like most psychoanalytic readings the series can be seen on several levels: as a school story with rivalry between the houses, Gryffindor and Slytherin, and especially between Harry and Draco Malfoy, merging into the adult war between the Order of the Phoenix, led by Dumbledore, and the Death Eaters, led by Voldemort, but it can also be read as Voldemort being the dark side of Harry, as the link between them grows gradually closer. Rowling hints at this link when Harry, in a waking dream, becomes Voldemort's snake and attacks Mr Weasley.[715] When he tells Dumbledore what happened,

> Dumbledore now swooped down upon one of the fragile silver instruments… and tapped it gently with the tip of his wand…Tiny puffs of pale green smoke issued from the miniscule silver tube at the top… After a few seconds, the tiny puffs became a steady stream of smoke that thickened and coiled in the air… a serpent's head grew out of the end of it, opening its mouth wide… 'Naturally, naturally' murmured Dumbledore… 'But in essence divided?'…The smoke serpent…split itself instantly into two snakes, both coiling and undulating in the dark air.[716]

[715] Rowling, *Phoenix*, 409.
[716] Ibid., 415-416.

This suggests that while Dumbledore acknowledges that Harry had, indeed, fused with the snake as it attacked, nevertheless he and Voldemort are essentially very different wizards. Some vestiges of Voldemort still linger, however, as Harry touches the Portkey and stands very close to Dumbledore 'unbidden, unwanted, but terrifyingly strong, there rose within Harry a hatred so powerful he felt…he would like nothing better than to strike…to sink his fangs into the man before him…'[717] This identification is always painful for Harry, symbolised by his scar burning whenever he is close to Voldemort in his thoughts.

Rowling marks the difference between Harry and Voldemort most clearly in their attitudes to death. Voldemort's unresolved fear of death has led him to the most extreme measures in order to avoid it. He tells the assembled Death Eaters:

> 'You all know that on the night I lost my powers and my body, I tried to kill [Harry Potter]. His mother died in the attempt to save him… My curse was deflected by the woman's foolish sacrifice, and it rebounded upon me… I was ripped from my body, I was less than spirit, less than the meanest ghost… but still I was alive… I who have gone further than anybody along the path that leads to immortality. You know my goal – to conquer death.'[718]

However, he does not tell them how he has gone along the path leading to immortality, or the nature of that path. Rowling does not clarify this until much later in the series when she puts forward the idea of Horcruxes, whereby a soul can be torn apart and hidden in an object. Harry has retrieved a memory from Slughorn reluctantly explaining to the student, Tom Riddle, how a Horcrux can be used:

> 'Well you split your soul, you see…and hide part of it in an object outside the body. Then, even if one's body is attacked or destroyed, one cannot die, for part of the soul remains earthbound and undamaged…'

and that this Dark Magic can only be achieved by killing someone. Riddle wonders if it might be even more effective to split one's soul into multiple parts, '"for instance, isn't

[717] Ibid., 419.
[718] Rowling, *Goblet*, 566.

seven the most magically powerful number.'"[719] Assuming that Voldemort has indeed made six Horcruxes, the seventh part of his soul remaining in his body, the others all have to be found and destroyed.

Rowling describes both Voldemort and Harry as having close encounters with death and the scenarios which she offers are very different. Voldemort, who was 'ripped from my body…less than the merest ghost …' has an elaborate and sinister ritual to restore him to his body. Wormtail immerses what remains of Voldemort in a huge cauldron set on the grave of Tom Riddle, his father, and calls on dust from the father's body in its grave: '*Bone of the father, unknowingly given, you will renew your son!'* The hand of Wormtail is also thrown into the cauldron, '*Flesh -- of the servant --- willingly given – you will – revive – your master.'* Finally, taking blood from Harry, '*Blood of the enemy… forcibly taken…you will…resurrect your foe.'* [Harry] 'saw, with an icy surge of terror, the dark outline of a man, tall and skeletally thin, rising slowly from inside the cauldron.'[720] This episode occurs in darkness, in a graveyard, and is followed by the arrival of hooded and masked men: the Death Eaters. Rowling also allows us to see what Voldemort's part-soul might be like: as Wormtail set down his burden by the cauldron Harry saw 'the shape of a crouched human child [but] hairless and scaly-looking, a dark, raw, reddish black … and its face…was flat and snake-like, with gleaming red eyes.'[721] The creature Harry sees at 'King's Cross' is similar and has: 'the form of a small, naked child, its skin raw and rough…unwanted, stuffed out of sight, struggling for breath.' [722] A split soul, Rowling suggests, is ugly, unwanted and beyond help.

Harry's experience in that liminal space between lives, after Voldemort has apparently killed him, is very different from Voldemort's. This space is light: Rowling

[719] Rowling, *Prince*, 464-465.
[720] Rowling, *Goblet*, 556-557.
[721] Ibid., 556.
[722] Rowling, *Hallows*, 566.

uses words such as 'bright mist,' robes which are 'soft clean and warm,' 'a great, domed glass roof glittered high above him in sunlight.' Alderete-Diez points out that this scene in King's Cross follows the pattern of a near-death experience as described in sociological research.[723] As such it is a liminal space, a threshold, a place of not knowing:

> He was not perfectly sure that he was there himself…it came to him that he must exist, must be more than disembodied thought, because he was lying, definitely lying, on some surface… He wondered whether, as he could feel, he would be able to see. In opening them, he discovered that he had eyes.[724]

It is a place of wellness: Harry does not need his glasses, and Dumbledore, when he appears, is 'spritely and upright…and his hands were both whole and white and undamaged… Happiness seemed to radiate from Dumbledore like light, like fire: Harry had never seen the man so utterly, so palpably content.'[725] As is described in the majority of near-death experiences, the person is given a choice, to go on or to go back: for Dumbledore, who is definitely dead,[726] there is no going back, but Harry, who is not dead, does have a choice. He is told by Dumbledore

> 'If you choose to return, there is a chance that he may be finished for good.'… Harry nodded and sighed. Leaving this place would not be nearly as hard as walking into the forest had been, but it was warm and light and peaceful here, and he knew that he was heading back to pain and the fear of more loss…[727]

It is never possible to stay for long in a liminal space: such spaces are temporary and transformational and in this case a respite. It also appears that Rowling is offering a reassurance to Harry and to her readers that death is not the end but she does not elaborate: when Harry asks him where one would go from there, Dumbledore just says 'On.'[728]

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[723] Alderete-Diez, 'Death and How to Deal with it' in *Cultural Politics* 151.
[724] Rowling, *Hallows.* 565.
[725] Ibid., 566-567.
[726] Ibid., 567.
[727] Ibid., 579.
[728] Ibid., 578.

Reflections on Death in the Series

Anne Frances Sangil writes that 'All fictional heroes…offer the reader a range of journeys that explores the reader's own humanity.'[729] The journeys undertaken by Harry in the series are largely concerned with death in its various forms and how Rowling shows Harry responding to the different situations and threats. Voldemort's efforts to avoid dying have involved bringing about the deaths of others in order to prevent his own, and have resulted in pitiable and unattractive part-souls, and the death of his body when the last of the Horcruxes is destroyed. Rowling lays great emphasis on protecting life wherever possible, even to the point of sacrifice: Harry's mother died to save him; Harry offers his life to Voldemort to save his friends; Dumbledore uses the last of his strength to prevent Harry from being killed and Draco Malfoy from becoming a killer. These sacrifices or attempted sacrifices are presented as an acceptance of death whereas the Horcruxes are revealed as entirely self-serving, and ultimately, ineffective ways to cheat death.

Rowling says her books are all about death. I suggest that the books might rather be described as coming to terms with death, as Alderete-Diez writes:

> The abundance of deaths in the books challenges the readers to engage, along with Harry, in a process of understanding or coming to terms with what it means to die, what it means to those who are left alive and what it means to survive death… [Rowling's] portrayal of a huge variety of deaths and the conversations between Harry and other characters about death help readers who engage with Harry's reflections to move towards a mature understanding of death.[730]

This engagement with and foregrounding of the meaning of death and its different aspects is, I suggest part of the unconscious appeal of the series. Above all, death involves loss of a relationship, and so Object Relations theory, which focuses so much on relationship, is

[729] Sangil, 'Transformative Power,' 108.
[730] Alderete-Diez, 'Deaths,' 159.

often concerned with helping people to come towards a 'mature understanding' of death, and the fear of death. [731]

In my chapter on alchemy, I wrote that at the end of each novel Dumbledore uses Harry's experience to explain the deeper meaning as a way of bringing him along the alchemical path of knowledge. Most of these lessons are about different aspects of death. In *Philosopher's Stone* Harry is dismayed to realise that, now that the Stone has been destroyed, Nicholas and Perenelle will die, and Dumbldore tells Harry:

> To one as young as you, I'm sure it seems incredible, but to Nicholas and Perenelle, it really is like going to bed after a very, *very* long day. After all, to the well organised mind, death is but the next great adventure.[732]

In this way, Rowling gradually and gently introduces the theme of death, and the deaths of the Flamels, as two of the few timely deaths in the series, offers a sense that death is deeply connected to life and that acceptance of this knowledge is a key part in Harry's education and his eventual transformation. There is a connection between his acceptance of the Flamels' death in the first novel and the moment in the forest at the end of the final novel when he accepts, and fully embraces, his own impending death.[733] Under the page-turning adventures of the series runs the serious theme of being-towards-death, the recognition of living in a body which will die. Rowling's readers, even the younger readers, are aware of this, at least on an unconscious level, and as the series continues the deaths become more central to the narrative. At the same time the spiritual growth suggested by the alchemists and by Casement increases novel by novel.

In the third novel, Harry is confused when he thinks that he saw his father conjuring the Patronus which chased away the Dementors from Sirius, Hermione and

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[731] Winnicott's paper 'Fear of Breakdown' which he also recognises as 'Fear of Death,' and which he describes as a break in the continuity of living: this he calls a 'phenomenal death' for example, when the infant is left alone for so long that it experiences a break in living. In *The British School of Psychoanalysis: The Independent Tradition*, ed. Gregorio Kohon (London: Free Association Books, 1986), 179.
[732] Rowling, *Stone*, 215.
[733] Rowling, *Hallows*, 561.

himself. Since he knows his father is dead and feeling stupid but puzzled, he confides in Dumbledore who says:

> 'You think the dead we have loved ever truly leave us? You think that we don't recall them more clearly than ever in times of great trouble? Your father is alive in you, Harry, and shows himself most plainly when you have need of him. How else could you produce that *particular* Patronus?[734]

In this second discussion on death, Rowling, through Dumbledore, is suggesting that relationships survive beyond death. Significantly, she does not try to pin the idea to any particular belief or concrete ideas but offers it to her readers to take or leave, and to make of it what they will – in fact, it is very similar to how a psychoanalyst might offer an intervention, leaving it to the patient to take it or not, and to interpret it in whatever way they wish – but nevertheless introduces the idea that life continues, a theme which continues to its culmination in the final volume. Rowling is also pointing forward to the two occasions when Harry will have most need of his parents and they appear: in the graveyard when Cedric is killed, and in the forest when he goes towards his own death.[735] In putting forward these suggestions Rowling is addressing the fear of death which she says we all have, to which I would add, at least we all have unconsciously. As death grows closer through the series so does Rowling/Dumbledore's reassurance that it is a part of life not to be feared. I suggest that her matter-of-fact way of addressing the enormity of the topic is a large part of the unconscious response to the narrative.

For both children and adults, reading about death is one way of trying to come to terms with it, as I suggested at the beginning of this chapter, perhaps to seek reassurance. Rowling mediates the theme of death through Dumbledore's teaching. From the beginning of the series he makes clear to Harry and the readers that death is a normal part of life when it occurs at the right time, for example for the Flamels who have lived a long

[734] Rowling, *Azkaban*,312.
[735] Rowling, *Goblet*, 579; *Hallows*, 561.

life. To Voldemort, whose desire to 'conquer' death by which he really means to escape it, Dumbledore says 'your failure to understand that there are things much worse than death has always been your greatest weakness –'[736] In telling Harry that 'love as powerful as your mother's for you leaves its own mark…to have been loved so deeply…will give us some protection for ever,'[737] Rowling echoes the psychoanalytic thinking referred to above, that growing up in a loving family and being capable of loving relationships provides a sense of security that counteracts some of the fear of death.

[736] Rowling, *Phoenix,* 718.
[737] Rowling, *Stone,* 216.

Conclusion

In researching the unconscious dimension of the phenomenal popularity of Rowling's series I found that what makes her narrative unique is that her books are, as she says, 'largely about death.' She presents death as part of life, and not as something which can or should be avoided. [738] From the first novel when Dumbledore tells Harry: 'to the well-organised mind, death is but the next great adventure, [739] to the final novel when Dumbledore and Harry meet at Kings Cross,[740] Harry has to face some form in every book, and in the third he also has to fight the Dementors for his soul and for the souls of Sirius and Hermione.[741] Significantly, although Rowling is a Christian believer, and despite the many Christian symbols in the series to which John Granger refers, no specific belief is put forward in the novels. Nevertheless there is a spiritual thread which runs through from beginning to end and I assert that the unconscious response to this thread is a large part of the appeal of the series. It is this focus on spiritual matters that sets Rowling apart from other authors and shows that she is doing more than merely replicating mythic narrative structures. This spiritual quality is rarely expressed so openly in contemporary fiction, and, I suggest is not something readers are either expecting or actively seeking in literature, but respond to the spiritual when they find it, although the response is most likely unconscious. Karen Armstrong states 'We are meaning seeking creatures… and from the very beginning we invented stories that enabled us to place our lives in a larger setting, that revealed an underlying pattern, and gave us a sense that, against all the depressing and chaotic evidence to the contrary, life had meaning and

[738] In her portrayal of Voldemort, Rowling shows him becoming less and less human as he pursues his efforts to avoid death. Physically he changes from being a handsome young man to looking more and more snakelike.
[739] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997), 215.
[740] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997), 565-579.
[741] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (London: Bloomsbury, 1999) 280-282.

value.'[742] Holding on to such a belief is not always easy, and in *Hallows* Rowling depicts Harry struggling to carry out the task that Dumbledore had given him, and questioning his belief in Dumbledore's wisdom and integrity.

During the decade when Rowling was writing the series, death was not yet a popular topic in children's fiction, apart from specific areas such as children's horror fiction. Certainly, death has always played a part in children's literature, but most often as a side issue rather than the central focus. Rowling's narrative is not concerned with the physical details of what happens to the body as it ceases to function and more on the relationship between body and soul, with the soul being of central concern: what happens when the soul is split? Where does the soul go after death? The idea that your soul can be sucked out by a Dementor but you could continue to exist, are questions that Rowling addresses in the course of her series, ending with the liminal space where Dumbledore and Harry meet between worlds. The popularity of the series suggests an unconscious response to a theme of concern to readers who, at least unconsciously, know themselves to be 'being towards death.'

The centrality of death in the series is to some extent obscured by the fact that the novels have an exciting narrative, have likeable characters, are funny, and that they draw upon many different genres. Anne Hiebert Alton sees this as a main reason for the popularity of the series, writing:

> I argue that one of the major reasons for its appeal lies in Rowling's treatment of genre, particularly in relation to her incorporation of a vast number of genres in the books… including mystery… detective fiction, the school story… fantasy, adventure and quest… Rowling has fused these genres into a larger mosaic which enhances readers' generic expectations and the ways in which the series conveys literary meaning.[743]

[742] Karen Armstrong, *A Short History of Myth* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2005), 4. Armstrong is talking about religious myths, Christianity among others, but for many readers Rowling's narrative has become a myth.
[743] Anne Hiebert Alton, 'Playing the Genre Game' in *Critical Perspectives on Harry Potter* ed., Elizabeth E. Heilman, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 199.

Alton continues: 'Because of heir conscious or unconscious awareness of the various genres fused in the books, readers gain the delight of recognition as they read something that feels familiar in form…[744] In this study I have looked at how the series can be read through several of these genres, fantasy, the quest and the school story, and addressed the way in which other genres, such as detective fiction and mystery, contribute. Like Alton, I see the unconscious recognition is not confined to recognising genres, but is even more about identifying with the characters as we see them through the various lenses: solving mysteries, learning, sometimes through their mistakes, making friends, and coping with challenges such as disappointment and disillusionment.

When I started to research the appeal of the Harry Potter novels to both children and adults in order to determine if there is an unconscious aspect to the popularity of the series, I began with Rustin and Rustin's writing about the series. Their approach was similar to mine, based on current thinking about children's development and the challenges involved. Their aim was 'to demonstrate how the grasp by these authors of children's feelings and behaviour has some parallels with the more generalized understanding obtained from child psychoanalysis.' [745] Like them I draw upon psychoanalysis, particularly Object Relations, in order to look at how Rowling's protagonists cope with the various challenges of growing up, and especially issues of love and loss. [746] Loss is a constant part of life: we lose the safety and the comfort of the womb at birth; each new stage of development means the loss of the previous stage; leaving the paranoid-schizoid position with its binary view of life and people to move to the depressive position means the recognition that nothing and no one can be perfect, and nor

[744] Ibid., 221.
[745] Margaret Rustin and Michael Rustin, *Narratives of Love and Loss: Studies in Modern Children's Fiction* revised edition (London: Karnac, 2001), 14.
[746] Ibid., 264.

can anybody be totally bad.[747] An important concept in psychoanalysis based on Object Relations is that of transference, which I described in the Introduction. In psychoanalytic treatment this refers to the way in which the patient transfers onto the analyst thoughts and feelings which are then explored. This is not confined to psychoanalysis: in everyday life feelings from past relationships, often with authority figures, are transferred onto current relationships, and in Chapter Three I have addressed the pain it causes Harry to accept the negative aspects of his father and Sirius as they bully Snape while they were all at Hogwarts, and his disappointment with Dumbledore for seeming to ignore him. But there is a somewhat different form of transference, described by Howard Bacal as

> A creative individual may need to experience a connection with a selfobject while engaging in demanding creative tasks. The nature of this selfobject 'transference' is perhaps most commonly an idealisation, but it also takes the form of a mirroring or twinship selfobject experience.[748]

I suggest that it is this kind of transference towards particular characters among the protagonists which many children and young adults experience when engaged in the 'demanding creative task' of growing up.[749] The process of transference and feeling the need for a twin-like figure with whom to identify is likely to be a mixture of conscious and unconscious. As Harry is the hero, he is likely to be the 'selfobject' for most readers

[747] In the struggle between good and evil, a central theme in Rowling's series, there is a return to the binary position polarised between good and evil. It is a partial return: while the less and less human Voldemort represents total evil with no redeeming features, the 'good' and human characters, Dumbledore, Harry's father James, Sirius and Harry himself are shown as being flawed.

[748] Howard Bacal, in *The Edinburgh International Encyclopedia of Psychoanalysis* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 465. These selfobjects with whom there is identification may be real people, fictional characters or imaginary friends.

[749] Marking the twentieth anniversary of the publication of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, the *Sunday Times* interviewed six young adults who talk about how important the series was to them as young readers. Their accounts are various: 'I had no safe place except with a book,' writes Lizzie Gladwyn, who identified with Harry in lacking a home. For Daniel Cayser the hero as Neville Longbottom who helped him to cope with bullying. Sophie Reid found the themes of loss and grief helpful and a support during her mother's terminal illness. Alex Lake, 'The Harry Potter books saved my life' in *Sunday Times Magazine*, June 25, 2017.

who will identify not only with the challenges and questions, but also the joys and relationships, through his eyes.

Rachel Falconer, reflecting on the crossover appeal of the series, writes that among the characteristics of crossover fiction she sees 'a sense of lightness and conversely of mortal limit…'[750] Arguing in favour of lightness she writes: 'A sense of lightness is one of the first impressions an early Harry Potter novel is likely to make on its older readers… the ease with which a reader can switch between simple and complex levels of interpretation is … a sign of narrative lightness.' [751] In the novels there is a lot of movement: switching between simple and complex levels, switching between the consensual world and the wizard world, as well as Apparating and using Portkeys. The strongest metaphor for lightness is surely being able to fly as we see when Harry 'in a rush of fierce joy… found something he could do without being taught – this was easy, this was *wonderful*…[752] The complexity and darkness grows with the fourth novel, and although the playfulness remains, the awareness of death comes ever closer.

My thesis reflects Rowling's pattern of her novels: I move from play, a chapter which to use Falconer's distinction, addresses topics which are light hearted but not lightweight. Play, through which, in Winnicott's view, everything of value develops, is an appropriate place to begin. In the subsequent chapters I explore the several genres to which Alton refers, in particular the school story and fantasy genres. The spatial dynamics of these established genres help to situate fictional characters and readers in a 'third space' where they can meet, and the narrative patterns of these genres help to structure the narratives and provide eaders with recognisable motifs and images that help them to understand the stories on an unconscious level. As I discussed, the genre of the

[750] Rachel Falconer, *The Crossover Novel: Contemporary Children's Fiction and Its Adult Readership* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 8.
[751] Ibid., 50.
[752] Rowling, *Stone* 111.

quest is symbolic of the journey through life with the various challenges we meet on the way. Likewise, alchemy provides both a metaphor for learning and also a potent metaphor for transformation so that, like Harry, we can move on to an acceptance of death as being part of life. As the series becomes progressively darker, this thesis moves from lightness to darkness, and my final chapter opens new ways of understanding the significance of death in Rowling's work. Looking at the journey of psychoanalysis as a parallel to Harry's journey through the narrative, in both journeys there is painful stage of exploring the depths and potentially feeling hopeless, before acceptance of death leads back to light, although not the more carefree lightness of the first books.

While there has always been a link between literature and psychoanalysis – Freud's analysis of Hamlet is an early example[753] -- this link has developed over recent decades with the publication of several books by psychoanalysts.[754] In my Introduction I referred to several psychoanalysts who value the link between the two disciplines: Jeremy Holmes who draws attention to the fact that literature can deepen a therapist's understanding,[755] Ignês Sodré, also a psychoanalyst, who in her book *Imaginary Existences* addresses a range of literature from Shakespeare's *Othello* to *Madame Bovary* and argues that seeing the characters through a psychoanalytic lens makes her 'true false characters' clearer. [756] Thomas Ogden, poet and psychoanalyst, compares a Robert Frost poem with an analytic session, noting especially the impact of the language on the listener.[757] These writings by psychoanalysts are all concerned with adult literature, and the writers are all in the tradition of Klein and Bion and so with Object Relations at their

[753] Sigmund Freud ,*The Interpretation of Dreams* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1954), 264-266.
[754][754] I am referring to books from psychoanalysts of the Independent Tradition. Jungians and Lacanians may also be linking the two disciplines.
[755] Jeremy Holmes, *The Therapeutic Imagination: Using literature to deepen psychodynamic understanding and enhance empathy* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), ix.
[756] Ignês Sodré, *Imaginary Existences: A psychoanalytic exploration of phantasy, fiction, dreams and daydreams* (London: Routledge, 2015).
[757] Thomas H. Ogden, '" The Music of What Happens" in Poetry and Psychoanalysis' in *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 80 (5) 979-994.

base, putting relationships as central. This study is the first to address children's literature from that basis.

Those writing psychoanalytically on children's literature are literary critics rather than psychoanalysts, and most write from a Lacanian or Freudian perspective. As I said in the Introduction, Roberta Seelinger Trites posits that 'Lacanian theory, with its focus on the cognitive and emotional development, lends itself naturally to the study of children's literature.' [758] This has remained the dominant theory for psychoanalytic criticism of children's literature, and is the basis for recent critics Karen Coats and David Rudd as well as earlier papers by Rollin and West.[759] Trites's reference to the Lacanian 'focus on the relationship between cognitive and emotional development' is a reminder of the difference between hat approach and approaches based on the work of Klein where the focus is on relationship. In reviewing the literature, which is proliferating in the twenty-first century, it has been interesting to note the trends: psychoanalysts focusing on adult literature, and literary critics on children's literature. This thesis speaks to a gap in the knowledge by offering a psychoanalytic reading of Harry Potter, a series that through its enormous economic success and cultural reach, is among the most significant works in contemporary children's literature.

This thesis breaks new ground being in essence an interdisciplinary study, drawing from two distinct but closely related disciplines and examining the ways in which they can be yoked together to produce new meaning in the study of children's literature, and especially fantasy literature, and also how it can be applied to

[758] Roberta Seelinger Trites, 'Psychoanalytic Approaches to Children's Literature: Landmarks, Signposts, Maps' in *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* Jan 2000.
[759] Karen Coats, *Looking Glasses and Neverlands: Lacan, Desire and Subjectivity in Children's Literature* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2004); *The Bloomsbury Introduction to Children's and Young Adult Literature* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018). David Rudd, *Reading the Child in Children's Literature: An Heretical Approach* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); ed., The Routledge Companion to Children's Literature (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010). Lucy Rollin and Mark I. West *Psychoanalytic Responses to Children's Literature* (Jefferson: McFarland, 1999).

psychoanalysis. In children's literature classes or discussions reflecting on the transferences, both positive and negative, to the characters in the books and thinking about why they like or dislike them, could form the basis of a discussion on reader response. It could lead to a discussion on why the characters behave as they do and the way in which the author presents the character. It is important for a child reader to feel that their idea counts, and so it is both interesting and important to see papers written by young people included in a book which also has a paper by John Granger: their papers are seen to be equally valuable.[760] While these papers are about the Harry Potter series, similar work could be done on any other popular book or series. As Karen Coats points out, there will always be a new block-buster or a new trend, observing that 'the true nature of fantasy [is] its continuing ability to speak to young readers about the things that transcend time in storied metaphors and metaphoric stories that remain absolutely timely.'[761]

Familiarity with children's literature would be useful in any training in psychoanalysis or psychoanalytic psychotherapy, and I introduced and taught such a module during the Trinity College training in psychoanalytic psychotherapy. The module ranged from fairy tales to Harry Potter, which meant that there was significant focus on fantasy, but it did also include other novels such as *Carrie's War* by Nina Bawden (1973), and the module as a basis for discussion not only on developmental issues or topics which emerge in the consulting room, but also the day to day issues which are part of life. While all novels are to some degree fantasy in the sense that they are a product of the imagination, fantasy as I explore it in this thesis involves a suspension of disbelief and

[760] In *The Alchemical Harry Potter: Essays on Transfiguration in J. K. Rowling's Novels* ed. Anne J. Mamary (Jefferson: McFarland, 2021) there are two chapters by school age children and two by final year college students: Sophia Imafuji, age 8, 'Why I read Harry Potter Books Again and Again;' Ella Victoria Greer, age 13, 'My Harry Potter Journey;' Isaac Willis, 'Re-reading Harry Potter, Re-Creating Ourselves: Harry Potter as Resurrection Stone;' Sean Paulsgrove, 'Tapping on Just Another Brick on the Wall.'
[761] Coats, *Introduction,* 361.Rollin

an acceptance of infinite possibilities. Even when a story is not factual, an exploration of the underlying themes and associations will prove to be useful. The conscious appeal and response to the series is evident in the huge number of texts that continue to be published on the Harry Potter series: in this study I have addressed the unconscious appeal and demonstrated its complementary significance.

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