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"Every human life is worth the same, and worth saving.": Ethical and Psychological Issues in the Harry Potter *Series*

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Introduction

In the world of children's literature many books have achieved great success, so as to become great classics. Among them, it is important to mention the success of the *Harry Potter* saga by the well-known English writer J.K. Rowling. The books have struck the collective imagination since their first publication, selling millions of copies and enjoying worldwide success. The number of publications and sales of the books has certainly led many to question the reasons that continue to attract such interest and success, so as to consider the social and cultural impact of the saga a real phenomenon.

The saga consists of seven books, in which the clear clash between good and evil is evident. The protagonist of the books, Harry Potter, is a young magician who finds himself forced to confront the most evil wizard: Lord Voldemort, in search for absolute power. The books narrate the vicissitudes of the protagonist together with his two faithful friends Ron and Hermione, students at Hogwarts (school of Witchcraft and Wizardry). The three are forced from year to year to face new challenges in order to defeat the villain Lord Voldemort and save the magical world. Starting from the first book, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, along with the growth of the characters, the story becomes increasingly complex and gloomy from book to book, until the final duel between good and evil in the last book of the saga: *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*.

In addition to creating an invented story and a real parallel universe, Rowling has managed to project real elements which belong to everyday life into an enchanted world. This is how newspapers report news with moving photographs, that at the head of Gringotts bank there are goblins and that the task of sending letters is entrusted to owls, which act as a real postal service (but many other correspondences and parallels between objects from the magical world and those from the real world could also be listed). I find this aspect a crucial strength in the growth of the fame of books: the writer, in fact, does not detach totally from reality, on the contrary she includes many aspects of the real world, although modifying them to adapt them to the magical world.

What is more, it is important to consider the fact that the writer has a careful attention to detail, starting from the names of the characters (carefully thought out and studied) and ending with accurate descriptions of places and characters, but it is

essential to take into account that the saga has been so successful that to believe that it is only these reasons that underlie its fame would be impossible. I rather think that, in addition to these (definitely important) details, part of the explanation of the success of *Harry Potter* is that the books, generally attributed to the fantasy genre for the presence of magical elements and creatures, contain in reality very delicate and current themes. For this reason, although the saga is considered part of children's literature, it also has a strong impact also on the adult generation.

Assuming that many are those who at least once in their lives have dreamed of attending a lesson at Hogwarts or flying on a broom to the skies of the magical world of Rowling, I believe that the books contain much more than a simple invented story (albeit magnificent). For this reason in my paper I set myself the aim of deepening and analysing in greater detail the reasons behind the success of *Harry Potter* and some of the themes mentioned above. The topic of my thesis is therefore an in-depth analysis of elements such as racism and slavery, gender issues and mental illnesses related to traumatic experiences. In order to analyse these themes in the saga, I felt it necessary to examine and compare the values of the books with those of the real world, in order to understand the similarities and the differences between what is present in the story and the socio-cultural context in which it was written.

First of all, I decided to dedicate the first chapter to a more careful explanation of the motivations that lie at the base of the fame of *Harry Potter*. I then addressed the reasons that in my opinion proved to be of considerable importance in the unstoppable growth of the success of books. I found it reasonable to consider that, precisely because it is directed at an audience of children, books contain teachings within them and are therefore useful from an educational point of view. It is also important to take into account factors which are external to the story, namely the fact that the books have received a strong boost thanks to thoughtful marketing actions, which have made the saga a best-seller. Among them, it is noteworthy to mention the release of films in cinemas. The films, probably less time-consuming than books (they certainly take much less time to watch than reading a book in full), played an important role in *Harry Potter*'s fame. To have contributed is also the strong impact of technology, through platforms dedicated to discussions on the saga, videogames and sites that allow an immersion in the fantastic universe of Rowling. Finally, I found reasons to think that it

is also worth mentioning the impact of the fan community, which made possible a real word-of-mouth and, consequently, an expansion of the success of the saga.

I chose to delve into what I consider most important in the books from the second chapter, which I dedicated to ethical and moral values, based on the theme of diversity and oppression. I therefore analysed moral values focusing on three persistent problems in the saga: racism, slavery and gender inequality. As stated above, the comparison between the characters and the events of the story with those of the real world is necessary. Thus, Rowling's racism is comparable to that of the present world, but also to that of the past. It is interesting how the writer managed to deal with such an important and delicate theme within a fantasy saga. In the books, however, racism is based on a discrimination of blood, containing strong similarities with the Nazi dictatorship. In this way, both the books' ideals and the characters who propose themselves as promoters of the doctrine of the elimination of species represent a 'caricature' of Hitler and his followers. Dealing with racism it is important to note that diversity in *Harry Potter* is not only to be seen with regard to the discourse of blood: magical creatures are subject to discrimination by wizards. Among them, the situation of the elves stands out and makes it possible to analyse the issue of slavery.

Finally, oppression and differences again become relevant for what concerns the gender discourse and the condition of women in the saga. In order to understand the role of the female figure in the saga, the similarities are to be found in the social and cultural situation of women in the Victorian period. The strong separation between the world of men and that of women stands out. It is important to analyse the behaviours of the main women in the saga, but also those of secondary characters such as the elf Winky.

I felt it made sense to make the last chapter of this work a research on the consequences of traumatic events on the characters of the saga. As stated in an interview with Ann Treneman to *The Times* in 2000[1], Rowling went firsthand through a period of living with depression. Probably for this reason, she devoted a lot of space in her books to the theme of mental pathology, making her characters victims of mental illnesses and psychic disorders and analysing in detail their inner world and their symptoms, which faithfully adhere to those currently clinically recognized. Clearly she

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[1] Treneman, Ann. (30 June 2000). "J.K. Rowling, the interview.". In *The Times* (UK).

attached great importance not only to telling the stories of the magical world, but also to describing the inner struggles and moods to which the protagonists are subjected.

Many are the disorders, traumas and complications addressed in the books, however I decided to analyse those of four characters: two of them are "linked" by the same disease, PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder). These are the protagonist of the saga, Harry Potter, and Alastor Moody, who carry a baggage of traumas and negative experiences. Chapter three also focuses on the topic of depression, since it is the one that directly concerns the writer. In fact, she managed to introduce depression in the saga with the use of a fantastic creature she invented: Dementors. I found the similarities between Dementors and depression very interesting, as the use of magical creatures allowed Rowling to give a general clinical picture about this mental illness, underlining once again her mastery of touching and dealing with delicate themes in a seemingly easy to understand and read saga. In addition, I consider it of considerable importance to include in the chapter the figure of Severus Snape, a controversial character whose true nature is revealed only in the last book of the saga, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, along with an accurate description of his past and his traumas.

Thus, with a superficial reading the audience can enjoy the story and admire the fantastic things of the magical world, while with a more careful reading the reader can identify with it, discovering the teachings inserted by the writer and even managing to 'use' the books as a source of education. I think Rowling was able to make the books understandable to everyone and made sure that with each reading new details and new themes could be discovered and analysed. Precisely for this reason, I have ventured into a work of re-reading the saga that has made me dream for many years and on which this work will focus.

Chapter 1

The Reasons Behind Success: How and Why J.K. Rowling's Saga Became a Global Phenomenon

Rowling, with the publication of the *Harry Potter* saga, changed the landscape of literature, introducing changes within different spheres. Her work had a great impact not only in the world of literary works, but also in the fields of marketing and cinema. An example of the great impact of the saga dates back to the year 2000, as

> In July 2000, the editors of the New York Times Book Review made headlines when they announced a radical restructuring of its bestseller list. In the first major change since 1984, they introduced a children's book bestseller list, to appear along with "three hardcover lists for fiction, nonfiction, and 'advice, how-to and miscellaneous' and separate lists for paperbacks in those categories" (Smith). The reason for restructuring the list was the imminent publication of Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire, book four in J. K. Rowling's wildly popular young adult series (Bolonik). At the time, the first three books of the series were occupying three spots on the "Adult" Fiction bestseller list (Staff). Authors who would usually find a newly released title in the top ten instead found themselves at #16 or #17, squeezed out of the weekly printed list by the "Harry Potter effect."[1]

The *Harry Potter* saga is considered a phenomenon that has a great influence on people of all ages, despite being classified as a story belonging to children's literature. As evidence of the belonging of the saga to children's literature since the publication of its first book it is worth mentioning that *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* "[…] received several awards, including the British Book Awards' Children's Book of the Year."[2].

Children literature is mostly thought of as a tool of education and growth, as "Early children's books were often designed to be either "toys" or instructional books such as primers or religious texts. As such, children's books are often thought of as objects to be used, rather than read […]"[3]. Because intended for a children's audience, Rowling's literary work has been the subject of many accusations. One of the most prominent accusations is that raised by conservative Christians, who believe that "[…]

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[1] R. Fitzsimmons (2012). "Testing the Tastemakers: Children's Literature, Bestseller Lists, and the "Harry Potter Effect". *Children's Literature*; Baltimore, vol. 40. p. 78.

[2] L. A. Whited (2002). "Introduction. Harry Potter: From Craze to Classic?". *Ivory Tower and Harry Potter: Perspectives on a Literary Phenomenon.* USA: University of Missouri Press. p. 6.

[3] Fitzsimmons, *op. cit.* p. 85.

the books are inappropriate for children."[4]. However, it is not only the theme of religion that has raised controversy and accusations against the saga. In fact, the books belonging to the *Harry Potter* saga are often considered difficult to understand and inefficient for a young audience, which often focuses on superficial aspects, not analysing all the facets of a text. An example of what has just been said is to be found in the first volume of the saga, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, where "[…] the desirability of immortality is questioned-clearly an issue more meaningful to adults than to children."[5]

In order to explain the controversy on the appropriate belonging of the saga to children's literature the third and fourth volumes may be of use. In the former, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, Harry "[…] is confronted with choices that average children do not have to contemplate, foremost among them the opportunity to exact revenge on the person who betrayed his parents and thereby precipitated their deaths."[6]. In the latter, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, "Rowling introduces questions of nationalism and cultural stereotyping that are universal […]"[7]:

> These themes in the third and fourth books are meaningful to adult readers, while children may be more preoccupied with Harry's use of the top-secret Marauder's Map to sneak into Hogsmeade, Hermione's use of the Time-Turner to rescue the Hippogriff Buckbeak, the details of the various tests Harry faces as Hogwarts champion, and (for teen readers) Harry's and his friends' preliminary interest in members of the opposite sex.[8]

The two questions that arise spontaneously and to which scholars like Whited, Lyubansky and Gupta (but many other names could be mentioned) are committed to find an answer are the teachings that underlie the saga, so much to make it suitable for a young audience despite the controversies raised, and the reasons that brought such success to *Harry Potter* books, so much so that to consider it a global phenomenon. To try to give an answer to these questions, it is important to take into account that the books of the saga follow the adventures of Harry Potter, a young hero who, book after book, grows up and has to confront the typical experiences of the world of teenagers: the first experiences with the female world, the first friendships, misunderstandings with professors, the approach to sport and the neglect of the rules.

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[4] L. A. Whited (2002). *Op. cit.* p. 3.
[5] *Idem*, p. 9.
[6] *Idem*, p. 8.
[7] *Ibidem*
[8] *Idem*, pp. 8-9.

Rowling accurately describes the growth of the protagonist and in this way readers grow up with him and compare their experiences with those of Harry and his friends. The audience grows along with the story: the first book focuses on the events of the protagonists still children and is therefore suitable for an audience of young people. As the story goes on, Rowling expects that the young readers of the first book have grown and that their thoughts have become more elaborate, as more elaborate is the story she tells. In fact, in the last book of the saga, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, the protagonists are now almost adults and the narrative is full of intrigues and elements understandable only by adults.

What is more, the books are easily readable fantasy genre by children. Despite being written with the presence of magical and fantastic elements, the story proposes typical vicissitudes and many elements that can be found in real life: friendships, first loves, quarrels and family squabbles, problems with professors and enmities. In this way young readers find themselves catapulted into a story that captures their attention and curiosity and at the same time relates to their world, providing teachings and advice in a hidden way.

One of the values faced by Rowling is that of the family: Harry, after the murder of his parents, Lily and James, finds himself living with the Dursleys, his Muggle uncles. "To the reader, the Dursleys represent not only every child's dreadful kin, his or her own potential wicked stepmother, but also the child's own real parents when those parents are being "unfair". […] In this they echo readers' parents, disapproving of adolescent friends, music, or clothes."[9]. A child, reading Harry's adventures (or rather, misadventures) within his family context, can easily compare them with his personal experience and, surely, draw a lesson from them, as

> The preadolescent and adolescent children who constitute the main audience of the series are at a stage where they may question social norms and parental and social behaviors. The Dursleys present a particularly clear example of this, reinforcing the notion of parental love and support by demonstrating the opposite behaviors and their effects. In using several instances of reversals, Rowling shows her audience some ambiguities of life and, more subtly, the way things should be.[10]

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[9] A. Cockrell (2002). *Harry Potter and the Secret Password: Finding Our Way in the Magical Genre.* In L.A. Whited ed. *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter: Perspectives on a Literary Phenomenon.* USA: University of Missouri Press. p. 21.

[10] J. Lacoss (2002). "Of Magicals and Muggles: Reversals and Revulsions at Hogwarts." In L. Whited, *op. cit.,* p. 67.

Another important value which Rowling emphasizes is sport, a theme to which every young reader, or most of them, feels deeply connected, as it plays an important role in the growth of the individual. Rowling in her books describes sport as a safety valve, but above all she focuses on it as a path to cooperation and self-improvement. In fact, "[…] although Harry is forever set apart by his scar, identified as the one who defied Voldemort, his playing for Gryffindor integrates him into the community of the house, and he develops a sense of fellowship with other male Quidditch players, save for those from the Slytherin team."[11]. Quidditch has therefore represented for the protagonist a means to improve his self-esteem, but above all to integrate into the student community and forge relationships with other players. Surely readers (both the youngest and the most adult) feel deeply connected to the way of living the sport represented by the writer.

But it is not only the possibility of being able to reflect on the protagonists of the saga and on their experiences that have exponentially increased the success of the books. In fact, Rowling deals with many topics which are often considered taboo, especially in the world of children. A book belonging to children's literature usually does not include explicit scenes of death and violence, which are instead described in the Harry Potter saga. However, Rowling is able to represent these themes, which are usually left unexplored in the books aimed at a young audience, in a simple way through the use of simple terms and phrases, but especially through a story full of magic elements. In this way a young reader can feel connected to the story, but at the same time is also able to opt-out from it, understanding that it is an invented story.

Since the death of Harry's parents, Lily and James Potter, first mentioned in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, one of the most significant tragedies of the saga, the theme of death continues to resonate vividly in the story and to play a key role. There are many scenes in which the protagonists, in an intense struggle between good and evil, try to escape from it or find themselves having to succumb to it. The fact of being able to represent certain themes and issues within children's literature has made the saga a magnificent educational tool.

After this analysis the reasons behind such a success of the saga also in the adult world have remained unexplored. The saga has gained many plaudits even among

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[11] T. Doughty (2002). "Locating Harry Potter in the "Boys' Book" Market.". In L.A. Whited, *op. cit.,* p. 252.

adults, so much so that "The Harry Potter books were reissued for adult readers, in understated silver, black and orange or blue covers - and at a higher price."[12]. First, it should be taken into account that everyone likes to return children and reading books or watching movies that allow a 'return to the world of childhood' is one of the methods to be able to do this and escape from everyday life. What is more, Rowling has included in the saga many psychological facets and many aspects that affect adults as well as children. An adult audience will be able to immerse itself in the saga and grasp the smallest nuances of meaning, not stopping at a superficial reading. For instance, while a child may be fascinated by the fantastic magical world, the spells and the famous stairs that move in the castle, an adult may be more impressed by deeper topics, such as the sacrifice of Harry's parents to save their son or Snape's love for Lily, which continues even after the death of the latter.

The teachings within the saga are not limited to being useful only for a young audience, but are also essential for adults, who are able to recognize some aspects and refer them to events and situations of today's world. The characters that stud the story are people in the flesh, with real feelings and who live experiences that, despite the presence of magic and a touch of fantasy, are the same as those of reality.

Although Rowling's books are set in the United Kingdom, the writer introduces a huge vastness of non-English characters in the saga. Fleur Delacour (from France), Viktor Krum (from Bulgaria), Seamus Finnegan (from Ireland) are just some of the names of characters who do not come from England. This was definitely a plus point for the spread of the saga worldwide. In her essay concerning the Harry Potter's fandom and culture, along with a broad description of fan behaviours, R.S. Borah also focuses on this point:

> […] Rowling's books appeal to an international and multicultural audience that includes American fans of African, Asian, and Latino/a descent. All of the teachers and librarians I spoke with confirmed that young readers from across cultural, social and economic spectrums read Rowling's books, so I believe I'm correct in asserting that Harry Potter appeals to a much more divergent group of readers than one might initially assume.[13]

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[12] R. Falconer (2004). "Crossover Literature (Part II: Forms and Genres)". In P. Hunt, *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature.* Second edition, vol. 1; Abingdon [England]: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group. pp. 556-557.
[13] R. S. Borah (2002). "Apprentice Wizards Welcome: Fan Communities and the Culture of Harry Potter." In L. A. Whited, *op. cit.,* p. 348.

However, such success cannot be justified only by elements and teachings in the narrative. In fact, marketing and communication, as well as cinematography, have played an essential role in the global spread of the saga:

> You can see the movies, you can buy the movies, you can buy Legos, action figures, stickers, notebooks, a card game, a board game, puzzles, address books, calendars, Band Aids®, toothbrushes, toothpaste, t-shirts, sweatshirts, mugs, trading cards, greeting cards, Bertie Bolt's Every Flavour Beans, a Nimbus 2000 broomstick, a Harry Potter wallet, wizarding-world money, and even piña colada-flavored "Dementor's Kisses."[14]

The adaptation of the books into films was undoubtedly the first marketing step that allowed the saga to become increasingly famous and known all over the world.

The first released film, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* "which opened on Nov. 4, 2001, became a box office sensation, paving the way for one of the most successful franchises in movie history and turning then-unknown stars Daniel Radcliffe, Emma Watson and Rupert Grint into household names."[15].

Not only did the films allow a large number of people to get acquainted with the world of *Harry Potter* prior to reading the books, they were also the starting point for the production of gadgets representing the actors. The films of the saga, despite some inaccuracies, have been carefully designed, starting from the soundtrack and the music that accompany certain scenes and ending with a masterful use of special effects and scenic means. Taking these two techniques into account, it is important to mention the fact that

> Some suspenseful episodes are linked together by the somewhat portentous slow movement of the theme music, which chimes in the background as Harry is gradually drawn into Magic world from the Dursley household, and as the mystery of his heritage is gradually revealed thereafter. It comes full blast at times (say when Harry flies for the first time in the Stone film), and is occasionally played with quiet pathos (when Hagrid plays it on the flute in the Stone film). Some wondrous magical moments are connected by the crescendo of the Harry Potter theme music (as when Harry walks into Diagon Alley for the first time, or when Harry and friends enter the Hogwarts dining hall for the first time). Along with the music the visual effect of the Hogwarts environment provides a sense of continuity that is not wholly due to the descriptions in the books. The dark (always shadowy) cavernous Gothic environment of Hogwarts pervades the films and lingers in the spectators' minds. Fantastic costumes play their role too: those black academic cloaks that students and teachers are always enveloped in Hogwarts' classrooms, the vividly coloured cloaks of Quidditch players. Extraneous staged effects such as these, more than the internal logic of the narratives, it seems to me, give coherence to the fantastical audio-visual abundance of the films.

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[14] P. Nel (2005). "Is There a Text in This Advertising Campaign?: Literature, Marketing, and Harry Potter." *The Lion and the Unicorn*; Baltimore, vol. 29. No. 2. pp. 236- 267. p. 237.

[15] R. Rubin (2021). "First 'Harry Potter' Film Turns 20." *Variety*; vol. 354 no. 1. p. 18.

All the magical, fantastical, surreal happenings and effects, which draw and fill the senses immediately in the films, fall into a whole primarily because of such staged effects.[16]

The *Harry Potter*'s films have also brought advantages to the tourism industry. In fact, England and Scotland, which were already tourist destinations, have become the most popular attractions visited by all Harry Potter lovers. Every Harry Potter fan, for example, has the desire to visit at least once the Warner Bros Studios in London, where props and costumes used by the actors during the filming are exhibited and where it is possible to find out about the special effects used during the production of the movies. Many other destinations are appreciated and visited since the release of the film by Harry Potter lovers: The Harry Potter Shop at Platform 9 ¾, London Zoo's Reptile House, Millennium Bridge and Tower Bridge, the Glenfinnan Viaduct in Scotland and many others.

The actors themselves still help not to make *Harry Potter* disappear and to promote the films and the books through social networks. An example of this is Tom Felton (the villain Draco Malfoy in the movies) who has more than 11 million Instagram followers and who continues to revive the saga through lives and posts. There are also celebrities who have nothing to do with the *Harry Potter* films and who have nevertheless represented a piece of the puzzle that has led to the success of the saga. Having a great influence on a considerable number of individuals, their favourable 'propaganda' towards reading Harry Potter increased the fame of the books. Among them "Steven Spielberg, Drew Barrymore, Dave Barry, Rosie O'Donnell, and Stephen King proclaimed their fandom and helped make Harry Potter books a "must read" for trend-conscious adults."[17].

Digital platforms have exponentially helped to accelerate the success of Rowling's creation, even before the first book circulated globally. "Because the British edition came out months before the American rights were auctioned, the book's first readers were able to start building positive word of mouth over the Internet."[18]. Of course, this has occurred in many other countries and nations besides America.

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[16] S. Gupta (2003). "Movie Magic". In *Re-reading Harry Potter.* Basingstoke [England]: Palgrave Macmillan. p. 146.

[17] R. S. Borah (2002). "Apprentice Wizards Welcome: Fan Communities and the Culture of Harry Potter." In L. A. Whited, *op. cit.,* p. 346.

[18] *Idem*, p. 351.

What is more, there are many online sites in which there is a chance to find texts written by *Harry Potter* lovers or in which, through quizzes, people can be sorted into a house. Without a doubt, the favourite site of the fans is Pottermore, which "[…] acts as a content aggregator for the Harry Potter franchise as a whole, housing features and news relating to a variety of media- books, films, plays, theme parks, and so on- in addition to images and information from the original seven-book arc."[19].

The site gives the writer the opportunity to interact directly with the audience. Once logged into the site, there are three quizzes: one will reveal the membership in one of the houses (Gryffindor, Slytherin, Hufflepuff and Revenclaw), the second one will reveal the Patronus and the third one the wand, according to the personality of the individual. This gives users the feeling of being immersed in the magical world of Harry Potter. In addition, Rowling often publishes in the website additional information about her books and characters of her invention and fans can upload material and actively interact.

Another online platform worth mentioning is Wattpad, where fans from all over the world publish texts of their own invention using the characters of their favourite books and films, the so-called fanfictions. Fans and their creations are in fact essential for the spread of the saga and have contributed to the success of *Harry Potter*. Their creations have united them into a real fandom, that of the Potterheads. There are those who try their hand at drawings, those who write invented stories inside the halls of Hogwarts School, those who prefer to devote themselves to cosplays, those who edit videos and, finally, those who dedicate themselves to the analysis of the books and of characters.

In general, the creations of the fans (mainly of the younger ones) are aimed at creating a parallel universe in which they are themselves the protagonists who set in the magical world of Rowling and confront with the characters of the books. Most of their works have a sexual or romantic background. Among the many genres of fanfiction that exist, slash-type ones therefore stand out and prevail:

> Slash is therefore one of the most popular genres of Potter fanfiction. The term "slash" arose in
> Star Trek fandom in the 1970s, referring to the punctuation mark separating the characters' names
> (Kirk/ Spock). The "X/Y" model indicated that the major romantic pairing was homosexual;

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[19] C. Brummitt (2016). "Pottermore: Transmedia Storytelling and Authorship in Harry Potter." *The Midwest Quarterly;* Pittsburg vol. 58, no. 1. pp. 112-132. p. 115.

stories of heterosexual Star Trek romance were labeled "ST" or "adult ST" (Penley, NASA/TREK 102). Although later fandoms adopted the slash punctuation mark for all romantic pairings (i.e., Hermione/Ron), the term "slash" stuck, retaining its original meaning of homoerotic romance.[20]

Thus, there are many fan creations in which Harry Potter is engaged to his bitter enemy Draco Malfoy: something that absolutely detaches from the real story created by Rowling, but which at the same time helps to maintain interest in the saga. In addition, the creators of slash fanfiction received an additional cue for their works at the time when "[…] Rowling, during an appearance at Carnegie Hall, announced that Hogwarts headmaster Albus Dumbledore was gay […]"[21]. Fans around the world responded to her statement with a huge number of texts and drawings representing "[…] the relationship between Dumbledore and his boyhood friend-turned-enemy Gellert Grindelwald […]"[22]. What has just been said is a great way to strengthen the relationships between fans of the saga and to unite the fandom.

Another reason why the saga spread is its use in classes at school. The books of Rowling are in fact used both for the teaching of English literature and for the teaching of English language and grammar, thanks to the masterful use of language of Rowling. The circulation and the use of books in schools has been a help to make them more known to a wide audience of students, but "Fanlike reading may start in a classroom- and some teachers may be able to exploit it to suit their academic goals- but fan activity usually goes beyond an educational setting."[23].

Last but not least, it is important to mention that after the seven books belonging to the saga, Rowling has kept the magic of *Harry Potter* alive, continuing to make readers dream with the updated publication of the novel *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, where the main protagonists are the fantastic animals that reside in the magical world. 2016 was also an important year for the fans of the saga, with the release of *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, a play written by Jack Thorne, who based on Rowling's story. *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* is considered the sequel to the

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[20] C. Tosenberger (2008). "Homosexuality at the Online Hogwarts: Harry Potter Slash Fanfiction." *Children's Literature*; Baltimore; vol. 36. pp. 185-207. p. 186.
[21] C. Tosenberger (2008). "'Oh my God, the Fanfiction!' Dumbledore's Outing and the Online Harry Potter Fandom." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*; Baltimore, vol. 33(2). pp. 200-206. p. 200.
[22] *Ibidem*.
[23] R. S. Borah (2002). "Apprentice Wizards Welcome: Fan Communities and the Culture of Harry Potter." In L. A. Whited *op. cit.,* p. 357.

saga, where the adventures of the young children of the protagonists of the previous books are narrated.

After the analysis of the reasons that led the saga to such success, it is interesting to consider in detail the ethical and moral values on which Rowling focused, comparing them to today's society and on which the next chapters will focus.

Chapter 2

Ethical Issues and Moral Universe: Addressing Diversity

The fame of Rowling's books has led to countless works and studies on them. On the basis of these studies and of a more in-depth analysis of Rowling's saga one can note moral values and ethical issues that, after a superficial first reading, may remain unexplored. Among them can be counted racism, gender issues and slavery, which are basically the same problems that have plagued the human being for a very long time and that continue to coexist in contemporary society.

These problems are dealt with by the author within the magical world she created, but the books contain an innumerable set of analogies with the real world, that is, that of the reader.

2.1. *Racism and Slavery*

The most recurring problem in the saga is that of racism, which is represented by the writer explicitly. Racism denotes the supremacy of one race over another, which is subject to discrimination and lack of rights. "While the idea of different human races is already present in Antiquity, the concept of racism develops in the context of the Enlightenment in Europe."[1].

Racism in the saga is of two types, or rather it is exercised by the same group of executioners against two different types of victims. The first set of victims are the creatures that inhabit the magical world, seen as being of lesser importance than wizards. The second group of victims are Muggles and Half-Bloods, who undergo real campaigns aimed at their elimination.

It is necessary to give a definition of the terms Pure-blood, Half-blood and Muggle. In order to do this, it is appropriate to appeal directly to Rowling's definition:

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[1] C. Kullmann (2017). "Of Muggles and Men: Identifying Racism in the Harry Potter Series." In M. Gymnich ed. *'Harry - Yer a Wizard': Exploring J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter Universe.* Baden-Baden, Germany: Tectum Verlag. pp. 133-143, p. 134.

> The term 'pure-blood' refers to a family or individual without Muggle (non-magic) blood. The concept is generally associated with Salazar Slytherin, one of the four founders of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, whose aversion to teaching anybody of Muggle parentage eventually led to a breach with his three fellow founders, and his resignation from the school.[2]

What remains unexplored is the term Half-Blood, which is nothing more than a word to describe a Wizard with at least one Muggle ancestor within their family tree.

Half-Blood and Muggles are seen as inferior races, not worthy of living and exercising any power in the magical world. Although many Half-Blood wizards have a keen intelligence (the clearest example of this in the saga is Hermione, one of the best female students at Hogwarts School), this does not stop the persecutions and hatred towards them exercised by Pure-Blood wizards. Lily, Harry's mother, is also remembered (years after her death), as one of the most skilled students at Hogwarts. Instead of appreciating Half-Blood wizards' qualities, after the death of Salazar "[…]the pure-blood doctrine began to gain followers."[3]. The strongest supporter of this doctrine, after the founder Salazar Slytherin, is Voldemort, the embodiment of evil in the saga. Voldemort, with his host of followers (also supporters of this racial cleansing) began real campaigns of persecution and elimination of all kinds of Half-Blood wizards and of Muggles.

Each reader is able to notice the similarities between Voldemort's policy and that of the most ruthless dictator in history: Adolf Hitler. Nazi ideas are therefore inserted in support of the ideology of every Pure-Blood wizard. Voldemort is the representation of Hitler in the magical world, the Death Eaters are the embodiment of Hitler's followers, and Half-Bloods and Muggles represent those who are not worthy of living because they do not comply with the canons imposed by the madness of a single man.

It is not only Nazi ideologies that are at the basis of Voldemort's thought and actions, in fact, as stated by Kullmann: "His ideology shares characteristics with two historical instances of state-induced racism: Third Reich Germany's antisemitism and the Apartheid regime in South Africa."[4]. Taking into account both of these regimes, four pillars emerge: "xenophobia, ethnocentricity, endogamy, and pure-blood mysticism

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[2] J. K. Rowling (Aug 10th 2015). "Pure-Blood." Originally published on Pottermore.
[https://www.wizardingworld.com/writing-by-jk-rowling/pure-blood].
[3] *Ibidem*.
[4] C. Kullmann (2017). "Of Muggles and Men: Identifying Racism in the Harry Potter Series." cit., p. 135.

(cf. Geiss 27-28). All four criteria can be found in Voldemort's racist supremacist ideology."[5].

Among the most dedicated followers of this policy is the Malfoy family, which

> With that healthy degree of self-preservation that has characterised most of their actions over the centuries, once the Statute of Secrecy had passed into law the Malfoys ceased fraternising with Muggles, however well-born, and accepted that further opposition and protests could only distance them from the new heart of power: the newly created Ministry of Magic. They performed an abrupt volte-face, and became as vocally supportive of the Statute as any of those who had championed it from the beginning, hastening to deny that they had ever been on speaking (or marrying) terms with Muggles.[6]

In the books we follow the events and violence perpetrated by Lucius Malfoy, a Death Eater who unscrupulously helps Voldemort in cleaning the species. His son Draco Malfoy grows up with the same ideal as his father from the first years of life, so much so that he develops an arrogant behaviour and he feels superior to any person who does not have pureblood like his or does not possess the same riches. This is clear from the very first book, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, in which Draco states, during a conversation with the protagonist, that he will "soon find out some wizarding families are much better than others"[7] clearly referring to the origins of blood and to the wealth possessed.

Even in the second book of the saga, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, the issue of racism is outlined very clearly. The plot of the book is based on the opening of the Chamber of Secrets by the heir of Salazar Slytherin, right the one who years ago had begun the thought of racial cleansing in the magical world. "Once the Chamber has been opened, the first message on the wall reads "Enemies of the heir, beware""[8]. It is clear, knowing the ideologies of Salazar Slytherin, that the enemies of the heir are all those with some 'defect' of blood: Half-Bloods and Muggles.

Based on what I stated above about the Malfoy family, it is not difficult to understand why Harry, together with his friends Ron and Hermione, develops the theory that the heir of Salazar who opened the room is the young Draco, strong supporter of the

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[5] *Ibidem*.

[6] J. K. Rowling (Aug 10th 2015). "The Malfoy family." Originally published on Pottermore. [https://www.wizardingworld.com/writing-by-jk-rowling/the-malfoy-family].

[7] J. K. Rowling (2020). *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone.* London: Bloomsbury Children's Books. MinaLima Edition, p. 127.

[8] C. Kullmann (2017). "Of Muggles and Men: Identifying Racism in the Harry Potter Series." *op.cit.* p. 137.

supremacy of Pure-Blood wizards. This idea is also reinforced by Draco himself, who does not hide his hatred towards Muggles and Half-Bloods, referring to them by the name Mudbloods without restraint and lashing out several times at Hermione (born of Muggle parents). This is why the three protagonists engage in actions in order to unmask Draco, who will eventually prove innocent. The heir is none other than Voldemort, whose purpose is to eliminate any trace of not-pure blood. Therefore, from the second book the beginning of Voldemort's doctrine can be marked.

In *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* the theme of racism becomes quite problematic, or rather, complex. Complexity comes from two factors. The first factor is that "More dimensions of prejudice are added in. Another strain of blood, another magical race, is inserted in the picture – the giants, from whom it appears both Hagrid and the Beauxbatonians' Head-mistress Madame Maxime have partly descended."[9].

> Ron's assertion that the giants are vicious is, of course, undercut by the fact that Hagrid's wizard father and a giantess had had an affectionate relationship. The Aurors, who protect the established and apparently benign (at least to Muggles)order from the fascist Dark Side, have apparently done some exterminating of their own. The unscrupulous journalist Rita Skeeter's story gives an interpretation of the background of the giants (Chamber 381–2), mainly claiming that the giants were killers by nature and had joined the Dark Side. It is however indicated that Hagrid's father and Dumbledore had a different view of giants (Chamber 395–6). Yet other magical races seem to lurk in the background. There are the enticing Bulgarian Veelas, for instance, and it turns out that the Beauxbatonian Fleur Delacour was part Veela.[10]

But the complexity in this book regarding the problem of racism is powered by the presence of new characters from different countries than that of the protagonists. The book focuses on an event which takes place in the magical world: the Triwizard Tournament. The aim of this Tournament is to complete some challenges and the participants are students from three different schools: Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry (that of the protagonists), Beauxbatons Academy of Magic (a French school for wizards) and Durmstrang Institute (located in North Europe).

Characters such as Fleur Delacour and her sister Gabrielle, Viktor Krum and Igor Karkaroff are then introduced. Precisely the presence of these new characters creates difficulties in understanding racism in the saga. In fact, none of them is subject to bias or racial behaviour on the part of the protagonists, as could happen in real everyday life. Very often a person who comes from another country is seen as an outsider and, just as

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[9] S. Gupta (2003). "Blood". *Re-reading Harry Potter*. Basingstoke [England]: Palgrave Macmillan. p. 103.
[10] *Ibidem*.

often, is subject to discrimination. In the narrative, however, the origin from different parts of the world is not a reason for racism: the only type of racism among wizards is based on a matter of blood.

The end of the book marks an important turning point in the story: Voldemort manages to come back to life in a physical body.

> After the Dark Lord's return at the end of Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire, the situation for Muggle-borns deteriorates increasingly. Although the protagonists are still protected at Hogwarts from the worsening political environment until the end of their sixth term, Voldemort's mounting power in the wizarding world eventually leads to the invasion of Hogwarts and the murder of Albus Dumbledore. Deprived of a sphere of safety and conscious of their moral obligation, Harry, Ron, and Hermione decide not to return for their final year in Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows and face the world outside school. Here, they experience an increasingly hostile environment for those who do not comply with Voldemort's ideology. This alarming political development reaches its climax with the fall of the Ministry of Magic.[11]

What has just been mentioned represents the entry of the magical world into a real totalitarian regime headed by Voldemort, with the sole purpose of exterminating Half-Bloods and Muggles.

The similarities with Hitler's regime are stronger than ever: just as it happened years ago during his dictatorship, wizards in the books are educated according to Voldemort's regime and anyone who decides to oppose it is killed or brutally tortured. What is more, Voldemort's takeover of the Ministry of Magic represents an essential moment for his power: every citizen of the magical world is subject to checks to verify his origins and the purity of his blood. At the same time, the subjects taught at Hogwarts are decided by Voldemort, as well as the people who are entrusted with the task of teaching them. His power is fuelled by all his followers who are loyal to him (as Nazi-ideas followers were to Hitler) and help him to put his ideas into action.

Just like Hitler, Voldemort manages to capture followers with a policy of terror and thanks to his rhetorical and persuasive skills (he often uses, however, evil spells and tortures in order to persuade people and to get what he wants). In this climate of fear, anyone opposed to this ideology refused to express their opinion, fearing repercussions.

What is more, other similarities with Hitler's regime are the fact that:

> Just as the Jews in Germany, "'Muggle-borns are being rounded up'" (Hallows 169), which is legitimised by the Ministry's new motto: 'Magic is Might'. 2 The Muggle-born Registration Commission requests Muggle-born wizards and witches to prove their wizard descent as to avoid

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[11] C. Kullmann (2017). "Of Muggles and Men: Identifying Racism in the Harry Potter Series." *op. cit.,* p. 138.

prosecution for allegedly obtaining magical power by force or theft. Similar genealogy measures were undertaken by the Nazis; in order to become a full-fledged member of society, one had to prove 'Aryan' ancestry by certificate. The sub-divisions of Blood Status categories – pure-blood, half-blood, Muggle-born – also closely resemble the categorisation of blood lineage that was introduced by the Nuremberg Laws.[12]

Surely, Voldemort's past can partially justify his crazy ideas. In *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, in fact, details are revealed about the past life of Voldemort, raised in a Muggle environment in an orphanage. In this environment he always felt different, knowing that he could do things that other children were not able to do and, therefore, developing a superiority complex. His prejudices continue to be developed during his studies at Hogwarts, where he is assigned from the Sorting Hat to the House of Slytherin, where prejudices towards others and purity of blood are often discussed.

There is no evidence of reverse discrimination, that is, discrimination on the part of Muggles against wizards. This is mainly given by the fact that most of humans are not allowed to know about the existence of wizards. Despite this fact, the Dursleys (Harry's Muggle family) are aware of magic and adopt behaviours towards the young wizard that evoke racial elements and fear of diversity.

But racial prejudice does not stop at blood discrimination. In fact, as already stated above, the creatures that inhabit the magical world together with wizards are also victims of racism: Rowling does not hesitate to define from the first books the abysmal differences that differentiate them from wizards.

> Rowling creates many different sentient races in the course of her Harry Potter novels. Such races can be grouped by how each interacts with the wizarding race. Some races, in traditional high fantasy fashion, are purely evil. Wizards interact with races associated with the Dark Arts only as enemies. Giants form a subgroup of this type, racial others hunted to the point of extinction by Aurors or other wizards. A second group are racial others that may be at odds with, or dangers to, wizards in some circumstances, but that in others work for them: for example, in Book 1, the troll that invades the school is bad, but in Book 3, the trolls who guard the Fat Lady's portrait serve wizarding interests. Leprechauns and veelas seem to be in similar circumstances, at least as witnessed by their actions during the World Cup match at the opening of Book 4. A third group consists of those races that choose to separate themselves entirely from the world of the wizards, such as the Centaurs, who deem teaching wizards to be treason against their race.[13]

Racism against these creatures also originates from a superiority complex inherent in every wizard. As in Kipling's *The White Man's Burden*, wizards feel the burden of

[12] C. Kullmann (2017). "Of Muggles and Men: Identifying Racism in the Harry Potter Series." *op. cit.,* p. 139.

[13] J. C. Horne (2010). "Harry and the Other: Answering the Race Question in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter*". *The Lion and the Unicorn;* Baltimore, vol. 34, no. 1. pp. 76-104, p. 80.

civilizing the inferiors and they justify, like Kipling's whites, the fact that they can do so because they are wizards and, therefore, superiors.

Important is the condition of the elves, used only to the role of slaves. "With the introduction of Dobby, and therefore house-elves in general, from Chamber onwards the concept and practicalities of servitude are introduced into Magic world in a manner that is clearly resonant with our world, if not Muggle world."[14]. Along with the problem of racism, the books deal with another problem on which the reader can meditate: slavery.

Slavery is a very sensitive topic in the real world and inserted by Rowling in her books probably to sensitize the reader through a seemingly light reading and is described using the elves' situation. Elves "are presented as being genuinely happy about their situation [...]"[15] and "[...] they feel it is a matter of pride to serve well without complaint and to work hard."[16].

> A preliminary observation about house-elves like Dobby: there is no evidence that house-elves constitute another magical race like giants or Veelas. If the comparison with human races in our world is to be maintained, what marks humanity across races is the ability to procreate with each other.1 Despite apparent physical differences the fact that wizards and Muggles, wizards and giants, wizards and Veelas can have intercourse with each other and have progeny marks them as all members of one species. House-elves are magical, but there is no evidence that they can procreate with wizards; it is likely that house-elves simply belong to a different magical species. The only thing that delineates house-elves as a magical group apart from their distinctive appearance and verbal ticks (that habit of speaking of themselves in the third person), is their absolute servitude.[17]

The first factor that is outlined by Rowling to highlight the differences between elves and wizards is their physical appearance. The fact that they are so different justifies the prejudices and ideas of wizards towards them.

Elves live in a condition of absolute submission to wizards and do not seem to rebel against their fate. Dobby himself states that elves cannot set themselves free, but they must be set free and who can do this is precisely a wizard. This is the confirmation of their lower position. The condition of submission is also evidenced by a fundamental detail: although Dobby is set free and does not belong to the Malfoy's family anymore,

[14] S. Gupta (2003). "Servants and Slaves." *Re-reading Harry Potter*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 111-120, p. 112.

[15] R. T. Kellner (2010), "J.K. Rowling's Ambivalence Towards Feminism: House Elves - Women in Disguise - in the "Harry Potter" Books". *The Midwest Quarterly;* Pittsburg vol. 51, no. 4. pp. 367-385. p. 369.

[16] *Ibidem.*

[17] S. Gupta (2003). *op. cit.* p. 112.

and although he is happy with his new status of free elf, he often repeats to Harry that he would do anything for him, as if to emphasize his perpetual condition as a slave.

Dobby easily manages to capture the sympathy of the protagonists of the books and, accordingly, that of the reader. In this way, the audience becomes more sensitive to Dobby's life and to the condition of slavery. However, Rowling decides to introduce in the story an unpleasant elf, so that she can highlight the importance of the concept of the liberation of slaves as such and not only because one of them manages to turn out to be nice. Thus, Kreacher's (the Black's family elf) presence in the saga turns out to be essential in slavery's discourse:

> Hermione is the only one who defends Kreacher to the other wizards. Despite his aspersions on her "Mudblood" lineage, she protests that Kreacher "isn't in his right mind" and that not only she, but also Dumbledore, "says we should be kind to Kreacher" (5.108, 76). Harry, like the Weasleys, finds Kreacher hard to like. Over the course of the last three novels, however, Harry must learn the lesson that Hermione and Dumbledore teach: he must learn to be as kind to the decrepit house-elf as he is to Dobby.[18]

The reader learns along with Harry, understanding that such a condition is not acceptable and, above all, that to defeat prejudices it is important to adopt a kind behaviour with others. However, Rowling proposes two different behaviours in order to deal with the problem of slavery. Being kind to the elves, which is the behaviour adopted by Harry, sometimes turns out not to be enough. The writer proposes a more effective alternative through the character of Hermione, who tries to change the situation actively and through concrete actions. Hermione, in support of her ideology, founds the Society for the Promotion of Elvish Welfare, a society that aims to help the elves and give them the rights that have always been lacking. "Hermione 'recruits' Ron and Harry to her society, ignoring Ron's protests, his claims that house elves like to work."[19]. Ron's idea that elves like to work is exactly that of many others, totally uninterested to their suffering.

Despite the commitment of the young girl, her institution will turn out to be a failure due to the indifference of other wizards and students, not particularly concerned about the condition of elves. This is certainly an analogy with today's world: very often

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[18] J. C. Horne (2010). "Harry and the Other: Answering the Race Question in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter*". cit., p. 82.

[19] R. T. Kellner (2010), "J.K. Rowling's Ambivalence Towards Feminism: House Elves - Women in Disguise - in the "Harry Potter" Books." cit*.,* p. 378.

people are sorry for some events, but they do not often act in order to improve the situation and bring concrete changes.

The analysis of Kreacher' character becomes complex due to the fact that the author explains in detail the elf's hatred against Half-Bloods and Muggles. This hatred comes from the family Kreacher finds himself serving and their ideologies. For this reason the elf, instead of trying to change his situation, provides a further example of the severity of the slavery to which the elves are subjected: he accepts the principles of the Blacks as if they were the absolute reality. In this way, not only his physical body is reduced to the state of slavery, but also his mentality: he becomes a mere object.

What has just been said provides a general picture on slavery through the analysis of the condition of the elves. Returning to the more general problem of racism towards creatures inhabiting the magical world, it is important to mention goblins. "First introduced in Book 1, but not featured in any meaningful way until Book 7, the goblin Griphook returns to play a vital role in the retrieval of one of the hidden horcruxes."[20].

Goblins represent a very different group than the elves. In the first place, they do not recognize the race of wizards as superior. Secondly, they have control of the Gringotts Bank. These two factors demonstrate the fact that they are not used as slaves and that their condition (although wizards feel superior to them) is not of exploitation. However, both because of their physical differences with wizards and because of the superiority complex typical of any wizard (or almost) goblins have never been considered equal to them. In fact, wizards do not see them favourably, they rather prefer to keep away from these creatures.

Another example of racism and prejudice towards goblins is evidenced by the fact that "Not only have the wizards excluded goblins from their meetings; they have also denied them the privilege of carrying a wand by "Clause three of the Code of Wand Use""[21]. Goblins tried, unlike the elves, to rebel against these shortcomings of rights.

Rowling proposes two different scenarios: the oppressed who accept their condition in silence and the oppressed who instead try to turn their situation around. These scenarios are also reflected in everyday life. Rowling gives several lessons to her audience of readers. First of all, it is clear her condemnation of all kind of

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[20] J. C. Horne (2010). *Op. cit.*, p. 88.
[21] *Idem*, p. 90.

discrimination and racism: at the end of the saga good prevails over evil with the death of Voldemort and the fall of his totalitarian regime. Dobby's release is an example of her condemnation of slavery. Hermione's actions reflect what the writer considers the behaviour to be followed in order to eliminate diversity of treatment between different races and, therefore, an attempt at rebellion and help to those who are less fortunate. Finally, Goblins' "riots" are a clear example of what Rowling wants every oppressed to do: try to change their condition.

2.2. *Questions of Gender*

The analysis of the presence of women in the saga must be addressed by taking into account the female characters of the story. Surely the most debated character is that of Hermione (the most central female in the narrative), but characters like the elf Winky, Merope (Tom Marvolo Riddle's-later known as Lord Voldemort- mother), Molly Weasley and Professor McGonagall should not be forget.

Rowling describes women through obvious references to the Victorian period. In order to better understand the similarities between Rowling's women and Victorian women, it is important to give a brief description of female condition in Queen Victoria's period of reign.

> At the beginning of the Victorian period, middle-class women were shut out of most remunerative employments and institutions of higher education, could not vote, and had few legal rights. […] In effect, the law of coverture regarded the husband and wife as "one person": the husband. This meant that upon a marriage a husband had full control of his wife's personal property and any earnings she acquired during the marriage; he had absolute authority over their home and children; and he could legally use physical force to discipline the members of his family.[22]

Queen Victoria herself represented the model that every woman had to follow within the family: she was the perfect wife and, despite the fact that she was the most powerful woman on Earth, she embodied the idea of the good wife who obeyed the husband, which is the position of middle-class women.

What has just been maintained represents the starting point of the analysis of female characters of Rowling's saga. The character of Merope, the mother of the well-known Lord Voldemort, is the representation of the typical Victorian woman. Her story

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[22] J. Black, L. Conolly, K. Flint, I. Grundy, D. Lepan (2012). "The Politics of Gender." *The Broadview Anthology of British Literature: The Victorian Era: Volume 5.* Canada: Broadview Pr. p. 42.

and her past are told in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, where Rowling introduces details about the woman's private life. Merope is the typical abused woman who lives in a family of men who consider her inferior and less important and for this reason they feel free to mistreat her.

"When the reader first meets Merope, she is fiddling around with pots and pans. This image of a woman taking care of domestic tasks may remind the reader of the gender relations in the Victorian Age [...]"[23], when the role of men was that to work and to earn money for the family, while that of women was to take care of the house and of the family. Precisely because she is introduced to the reader while she is taking care of the house, the only role of the woman is immediately understood. Just as in the Victorian era, when the family was the core of society with the woman being forced to do household chores while the man was working, Merope considers her family very important and strives to best fulfil her role as a domestic servant.

The woman is represented as inferior to the men in her family, incapable of rebelling against her condition, succubus of the injustices that are reserved for her. She is powerless from a physical point of view, represented as "[...] the weakest member of her family. It is very interesting that the weakest member of the Gaunt family happens to be the only female family member, which says a lot about this family's gendered power relations."[24]. But it is not only her physical helplessness that delineates her as inferior: it is mainly her mental impotence and her behaviours that make her completely submissive. Like Victorian women, she "appears to be 'voiceless', remaining silent, while the men are talking."[25]. Once again the impotence of the female gender in front of abusive men is highlighted. Just like Queen Victoria, who "[...]was a firm believer in separate spheres of influence and authority for men and women[...]"[26], Merope strongly believes in the superiority of the male gender and she does so simply by not speaking, not acting and not defending herself.

Another analogy with Queen Victoria is the fact that, when Albert dies in 1861, Victoria starts a mourning which never ends, wearing black clothes for the rest of her life, as if she had lost interest in her power. Likewise, Merope loses interest in her

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[23] S. Renzel (2017). "Double, Double Toil and (Gender) Trouble: The Gaunt Family." In M. Gymnich ed. *'Harry - yer a wizard': Exploring J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter Universe.* cit., p. 87.
[24] *Ibidem*.
[25] *Ibidem*.
[26] J. Black; L. Conolly; K. Flint; I. Grundy; D. Lepan (2012). "Victorian Domesticity." In *op. cit..,*p. 52.

power and the innumerable physical and mental abuses to which she is subjected make her magical powers (the most important thing a person can possess in Rowling's saga) weaker and weaker. What is more, "Choosing to name her son after two men who seriously hurt her indicates once more that Merope has internalised the role of the victim. She was unable to move on, remaining emotionally dependent on both her father and her husband. In Victorian Britain, women were even expected to strongly depend on the men in their lives."[27]. But Merope is not the only woman who cannot overcome the situation of separation from her executioner: even Winky, the female elf, finds it difficult to no longer have to depend on men, since throughout her life she has been accustomed to a condition of complete submission to the male gender.

"Winky, unlike Dobby, the male house elf, cannot, or more exactly, does not think for herself."[28]. In fact, according to the typical behaviour attributed to women, after her release by Master Crouch Snr, she falls into a strong depression due to the thought of not being able to best perform her role as a slave (partially due to being an elf, but largely dependent also on being a female elf). No longer attached to her Master she, just like Merope, feels helpless and useless. Convinced of the inevitable supremacy of men over her and believing that he condition represents normality, Winky does not accept her new 'independent' position, wanting to work in Hogwarts' kitchens without receiving any salary in return and venting her frustration by drinking.

After considering two female characters who take for granted that the oppression of women is the norm and who therefore do not react to change their position, it is important to recognize that the writer does not attribute to all the women in her saga the same condition. In order to understand what has just been stated, it is necessary to take as an example Hermione, the most important female character of Rowling's books. Hermione, unlike the two characters just faced, represents the typical independent and strong woman. Her strength lies not only in her mastery with magic, which certainly makes her a very powerful witch, but also in her keen intelligence and mental capacity. It is precisely her keen intelligence that makes her not only capable of thinking, but also of acting. An example of this is the aforementioned institution in favour of the elves (S.P.E.W.). In fact, Hermione decides to continue acting concretely despite not

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[27] S. Renzel (2017). "Double, Double Toil and (Gender) Trouble: The Gaunt Family." cit., p. 91.
[28] R. T. Kellner (2010), "J.K. Rowling's Ambivalence Towards Feminism: House Elves - Women in Disguise - in the "Harry Potter" Books". cit. p. 376.

receiving the support of the two men who accompany her on her journey in the saga: Harry and Ron. This confirms the fact that Hermione does not need anyone: her status as a woman does not affect her actions and her ability to think. On the contrary, it is others who often need her (especially Ron and Harry, who place extreme trust in her). In fact, "Rowling seems to have successfully, thus far, developed an emerging adolescent who appears armed to withstand the most dangerous gender-related pitfall and not retreat into silence, intimidated by the masculine world."[29]

It is important that Hermione is discriminated against for two different reasons in order to highlight her strength. Firstly, the witch is a half-blood, being born from Muggle parents. This point is fundamental because, despite being often subject to prejudices for this reason, she does not surrender to the humiliations suffered and, on the contrary, she reacts and continues to be totally independent. The other discriminating reason against the girl is precisely that of being a woman. This, however, does not prove to be limiting for her, who is one of the most skilled witches in the saga.

> Feminist theory takes as givens the premises that society is patriarchal and that women do not occupy a position of political, economic or social equality, creating difficulties and barriers for both genders. Feminism advocates for the rights and interests of women unfettered or undeterred by the patriarchal structure. Feminist theory provides various frameworks from which to examine, explain, and understand how gender affects all aspects of life, primarily focusing on females as the more disadvantaged gender, but also analyzing how the patriarchal structure negatively affects males. The end purpose of understanding and applying the feminists' point of view is to eliminate inequality for women and improve the lot of everyone.[30]

Taking as a starting point society as patriarchal, with prominent places occupied by men, a new female character of the saga can be introduced. Rowling inserts Minerva McGonagall in the books in order to subvert this ideology and prove that women can occupy important positions in society. Minerva is not only a professor at Hogwarts (like many other female characters), but she is head of the prestigious house of Gryffindor. The Professor does her job very well and proves to be a strong and authoritarian woman.

Ethical and moral values in *Harry Potter* are introduced by the writer in order to sensitize the reader and to teach the audience about themes present in reality. Being the saga oriented to a very wide audience of readers, including children, the introduction of

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[29] E. T. Dresang (2002). "Hermione Granger and the Heritage of Gender." In L.A. Whited ed. *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter: Perspectives on a Literary Phenomenon.* USA: University of Missouri Press. p. 229.
[30] E. T. Dresang (2002). "Hermione Granger and the Heritage of Gender." cit. p. 216.

certain themes is intended to suggest a model of behaviour that is right to follow and, at the same time, a wrong one to avoid. In this way, wizards and witches become the representation of men and women, their behaviours become models to be avoided or followed and their actions to be supported or condemned. The separation between good and evil, between what is right and what is wrong becomes clear.

The writer condemns discrimination in all its forms, even if her position is sometimes unclear. If children reading the *Harry Potter* books can simply notice a wrong behaviour or a bad character, also relying on their own personal experience, an adult can notice further details and analyse at best the inconsistencies between what Rowling wants to propose and how she does it. An example may be the fact that Rowling describes in detail the wrong treatments reserved for women (treatments that should be eliminated) and wants to propose an ideal model of society in which women are not subject to any type of discrimination. By doing this, however, she contradicts herself and does nothing but demonstrate that prejudices are inherent in every person. The proof of this lies in the fact that no woman in the saga is represented as important individually, but is always represented alongside some men or is described by a male character: women are not attributed a voice of their own. In this way Merope is introduced and described in the books by Dumbledore, Hermione is probably so important because she is flanked by the protagonist of the saga, Professor McGonagall occupies a role of authority only thanks to Dumbledore and, generally, all women are connected to some man. Similarly, by condemning slavery, she often makes it an ironic and unimportant topic, ridiculing Hermione's society and the strange behaviours of elves, but also portraying characters completely uninterested in the problem. Despite these inconsistencies, surely Rowling did not intend to prove that prejudices and discrimination are correct behaviours, rather she wanted to give proof that everyone, in one way or another, is executioner in some way.

Taking into account the success of the saga, the introduction of delicate and current themes such as those just addressed has certainly positively contributed to make the books more appealing to a larger audience.

Chapter 3

Traumas

As already analysed in the previous chapters, Rowling's saga is not a simple fairy tale and a light reading: there are many important themes in which the reader can come across while reading. The writer does not just describe simple situations, but delves into the inner world of individual characters, their traumas and their disabilities. The story of the saga, after all, is a story of war, fighting and deaths. Precisely because of this, it is difficult for the characters to live a simple life, without developing physical or mental infirmities. What is more, "With Rowling's reputation for meticulous research, it is not surprising she has accurately depicted recognizable examples of these disorders, according to official diagnostic criteria."[1].

A theme which is omnipresent in the saga is that of psychological trauma, which "[…] is the "unspeakable" discourse of our time (Stroińska, Cecchetto, & Szymanski, 2014). It is an intense personal or collective suffering resulting from a single or repeated event which represents a real or metaphorical threat to life or livelihood."[2]. There are many characters in the saga who have suffered trauma. Among them one should mention Lord Voldemort for his troubled family history and for his childhood in an orphanage; Neville Longbottom, whose parents went crazy after being tortured by Death Eaters; Albus Dumbledore, also orphan and carrier of an indelible trauma; Alastor Moody, who sacrificed his body during a war in the magical world; Hermione Granger, who had to erase the memories of her from the minds of her parents and who, as a Muggle-born, has always suffered significant discrimination; the Wesleays, who suffered the mourning of Fred.

With a careful reading of Rowling's books it is possible to notice that not only the main characters, but also the secondary characters of the saga, have a personal story and traumas, so much so that "Rowling's novels could be categorized as literature

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[1] Louise M. Freeman (2015). "Harry Potter and the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual: Muggle Disorders in the Wizarding World.". *Study and Scrutiny: Research on Young Adult Literature 1*; no. 1: 156. Pp. 156-214, p. 161. [https://journals.shareok.org/studyandscrutiny/article/view/121].
[2] M'Balia Thomas. (2018). "Trauma, Harry Potter, and the Demented World of Academia.". *Journal of Educational Thought*. 51. Canada: University of Calgary. pp. 184-203, p. 185.

of   historical trauma (Caminero-Santangelo, 2009)."[3]. Anyway, analysing each character of the saga and his inner world would be impossible here, but it is interesting to focus on some of the traumas suffered by the characters in order to see different ways to cope with it.

3.1. *Trauma and PTSD: Harry Potter and Alastor Moody*

The protagonist of the saga, Harry Potter, is probably the most disturbed character of all. He is not only physically injured, carrying a scar that will never fade, but he is above all mentally injured. The trauma and abuse to which he has always been subjected since the years of his childhood, in fact, have negatively affected his entire existence. Another factor that has contributed negatively to Harry's psyche is the diversity for which he has always been distinguished, both in the Muggle world and in the magical one. Harry's diversity is the starting point in the development of his trauma. His diversity is twofold: he is considered different from both his adoptive uncles and the wizards who populate the magical world.

> While the majority of the stories occur at Hogwarts, the events that take place in the Muggle home of the Dursleys are significant to Harry's sense of ambiguity and lack of belonging. In both worlds, Harry is a stigmatised outcast and as he begins to find some acceptance in the Hogwarts world, he starts to realize he will never be accepted in the Muggle world.[4]

The first essential trauma to which Harry is subjected is obviously the death of his parents, Lily and James Potter. The protagonist does not have a normal growth, with parents who look after him and take care of him. Instead, he grows up in an abusive environment: the task of caring for Harry is entrusted to his uncles, who do not accept him and treat him as an inferior being because of his magical powers.

Harry's uncles Vernon and Petunia even lie to the boy about the true cause of his parents' death, attributing it to a car accident, in order to maximally separate him from everything related to the magical world. However, J.K. Rowling states that

> Their lies to Harry on the subject of how his parents had died were based largely on their own fears. A Dark wizard as powerful as Lord Voldemort frightened them too much to contemplate, and like every subject they found disturbing or distasteful, they pushed it to the back of their minds

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[3] M'Balia Thomas. (2018). *op. cit.*, p. 191.
[4] S. J. Brown (2011). "The Stigma of Being Harry Potter." In Baxter, L. and Brăescu, P. eds. *Fear within Melting Boundaries.* Oxford [United Kingdom]: Inter-Disciplinary Press. pp. 99-108, p. 102.

and maintained the 'died-in-a-car-crash' story so consistently that they almost managed to persuade themselves it was true.[5]

The boy's magical powers have always been a source of discomfort and hatred on the part of his uncles. The origin of this hatred is based on the prejudices that the uncles developed due to the diversity of the boy. Harry never had the opportunity to make himself known to his uncles, but he was always considered different and, for this reason, not worthy of the attention and love that a son, even if adopted, should receive.

It is precisely in this environment that Harry becomes a victim of a hostile family. This factor will be of great importance in Harry's adolescence, during which the boy will continue to seek a father figure and that affection never received in childhood. The traumas suffered because of his uncles are not only felt during his adolescence, but have effects throughout the life and existence of the protagonist. This type of trauma is considered in psychology an insidious trauma: "Insidious trauma does not come in form of a sudden event, but evolves slowly, over time. The best practical examples of this kind of trauma are abusive relationships, parental abuse during childhood and bullying, for instance in school."[6].

Once he enters school, Harry can initially consider himself happy for having freed himself from the Dursleys, but even at Hogwarts the protagonist's experiences are traumatic and sometimes violent. First of all, his diversity is definitely evident even in the magical world. In fact, the young wizard is catapulted into a world where everyone knows his name and what happened to him and his parents Lily and James. As a survivor of the deadly anathema hurled at him by the world's most powerful wizard, Lord Voldemort, he is considered different by all the other magicians. This will prove traumatizing, as Harry will be, during the course of the entire saga, unable to live his life as a normal boy and continue his studies without having any other thoughts. To remember this event are not only the looks and behaviours of the people around him, but also a tangible element: a scar in the forehead. This scar "makes him instantly recognizable to members of the magical community. It is a visible reminder that Harry has been, in a most intimate way, touched by evil, but it is also a reminder that Harry

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[5] J. K. Rowling (Aug 10th 2015). "Vernon & Petunia Dursley." Originally published on Pottermore. [https://www.wizardingworld.com/writing-by-jk-rowling/vernon-and-petunia-dursley].
[6] A. Mahler (2017). "Haunted by Voldemort or Suffering from PTSD: Analysing Harry Potter's Psychological Struggles in Adulthood in Harry Potter and the Cursed Child." In Gymnich, M. ed. *'Harry - yer a wizard': Exploring J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter Universe.* cit., pp. 183-192, p. 186.

was, as an infant, somehow able to survive an attack by one of the most powerful wizards ever known."[7]. The day Harry survived, in fact, his mother interposed between him and Voldemort, making sure that the only wound suffered by Harry was precisely that scar. "Because Harry possesses a recognizable deformity (scar) and the wizarding community reads it as the outward expression of some intangible quality that protected him from Voldemort, Harry's body meets the definition of a stigmatized body."[8].

In terms of grades, Harry is an average student, not very different from his classmates, but to highlight his diversity there is an additional element that characterizes him: the ability of speaking Parseltongue, which is not typical of every magician and is instead attributed to evil wizards. This is exactly why "The Hogwarts community reads this special language ability as further reason to stigmatise Harry, to mistrust and be suspicious of who he is."[9].

The absence of a parental figure in Harry's childhood, as mentioned above, is relevant and is a theme which continues to resonate during the adolescence of the young wizard. In fact, he tries to find in some of the adult characters who accompany him on his journey someone to replace Lily and James. As Molly Weasley, the mother of his best friend Ron, is immediately available to the boy and "[…] is arguably more famous for her jumpers than for her jinxes."[10], which is something usually attributed to a housewife and a mother, she turns out to be, since the first meeting with Harry, a possible maternal figure. Surely Molly does not replace Lily in Harry's life, but she is able to make him feel loved for the first time as a son. In fact, "She soon adopts Harry as another son, giving him hugs at every meeting, expresses concern that he doesn't get enough to eat (Chamber of Secrets 34-35; Order of the Phoenix 61), cleaning him up (Chamber 56; Phoenix 123) or worrying that he is too young for what he must do (Phoenix 87-91)."[11].

Harry also finds father figures: he is initially particularly attached to Hagrid, who is always kind and willing to help him. Subsequently, he often relies on Albus Dumbledore, the headmaster of Hogwarts, who is a source of wisdom and who could

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[7] H. A. Haas (2011). "The Wisdom of Wizards-and Muggles and Squibs: Proverb Use in the World of *Harry Potter*". *Journal of American Folklore*. US; vol. 124, no. 492. Pp. 29-54, p. 33.
[8] S. J. Brown (2011). *op. cit.,* p. 101.
[9] *Idem*, p. 103.
[10] S. Renzel (2017). "Double, Double Toil and (Gender) Trouble: The Gaunt Family." cit., p. 85.
[11] E. Fife (2006). "Wise Warriors in Tolkien, Lewis, and Rowling". *Mythlore*. USA; vol. 25, no. 95. pp. 147-162, p. 158.

represent that father Harry never had. But the character Harry is most attached to and identifies as a father is Sirius Black, who had a strong bond with his parents in the past. In fact,

> In the third book, Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban, Harry finds not a godmother but a godfather in Sirius Black, who has been imprisoned in Azkaban for a grisly murder he convinces Harry he did not commit. Hardly anyone else trusts Sirius, except Albus Dumbledore, the headmaster of the school, who, as Kipling says elsewhere, "can see farther into a millstone than most." And even the powerful Dumbledore cannot circumvent the verdict of the wizards' court that has condemned him. Black is sentenced to destruction at the hands of the Dementors and escapes only with Harry's help. Harry does indeed find a father, but one who is himself an outcast and fugitive.[12]

For this reason, the fact of having found a male figure of reference, but not being able to really live with him, is for Harry a source of suffering and pain: once again the only parental figure he has is taken away from him. Important in the development of trauma in the boy is the fact that even Sirius is killed in the book *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix.* Therefore, Harry once again suffers the loss of a parent.

Fueling the birth of a trauma within the boy are not only the abuses in his childhood and the absence of his parents, but also the deaths that he is forced to see. In fact, many of the characters to whom Harry is attached will end up, over the course of the saga, dying. All these bereavements have a negative effect on the psyche of the boy, who can hardly process so many unpleasant events. Although Harry manages to grow kind, good and apparently 'normal', the losses suffered have a considerable impact within him, although initially partially concealed. It is interesting to mention the presence of Thestrals, which are magical horses that are manifested only to those who have had experiences of mourning and death.

> Being able to see Thestrals is a sign that the beholder has witnessed death, and gained an emotional understanding of what death means. It is unsurprising that it took a long time for their significance to be properly understood, because the precise moment when such knowledge dawns varies greatly from person to person. Harry Potter was unable to see Thestrals for years after his mother was killed in front of him, because he was barely out of babyhood when the murder happened, and he had been unable to comprehend his own loss. Even after the death of Cedric Diggory, weeks elapsed before the full import of death's finality was borne upon him. Only at this point did the Thestrals that pull the carriages from Hogsmeade Station to Hogwarts castle become visible to him. [13]

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[12] A. Cockrell (2002). "Harry Potter and the Secret Password: Finding Our Way in the Magical Genre.". In L. A. Whited, ed. *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter: Perspectives on a Literary Phenomenon.* cit., pp. 15-26, p. 24.
[13] J.K. Rowling (Aug 10th 2015). "Thestrals". Originally published on Pottermore. [https://www.wizardingworld.com/writing-by-jk-rowling/thestrals].

Here the concept of insidious trauma becomes relevant again: Harry develops this trauma in an almost hidden way, but all that happened to him is unconsciously processed in his psyche over time, until he develops what, clinically speaking, is called PTSD: post-traumatic stress disorder. The presence of this mental disorder in the boy is evident throughout the saga, but it is particularly clear in *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, where the characters have grown up. Here, "It is argued that Harry is not possessed by Lord Voldemort once again, but rather suffers from PTSD caused by abuse during childhood and near-death experiences in his teenage years."[14]. To give a brief description of this disorder it is necessary to appeal to the scientific article "Sleep, a Governor of Morbidity in PTSD: A Systematic Review of Biological Markers in PTSD-Related Sleep Disturbances.", where the given definition is: "Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a debilitating condition which may develop following exposure to, witnessing, or learning about, a traumatic event such as; actual or threatened death, actual or threatened serious injury, or actual or threatened sexual violence."[15].

Harry has all the prerequisites for developing such a disorder: he has experienced first-hand abuse in childhood, witnessed the death of the people closest to him and has experienced many of the negative experiences that happen in wartime, including risking death (once again it is necessary to point out that the *Harry Potter* saga has all the characteristics to be a war story). Precisely because the birth of PTSD in the protagonist is linked with war experiences (although the war in question belongs to the magical world), it is important to emphasize that PTSD has a strong link with the two biggest wars that have characterized history in the real world: First World War and Second World War, but especially with the First World War. In fact, this traumatic disorder was connected to the soldiers' pathological reaction post war. Much of the literature and poetics of the time has to do with this disorder, as it was mainly written by authors who participated in the war. In fact, after the war "[…] shell shock", which was another way to refer to PTSD and which also Rowling uses in the saga, "had become a subject of tremendous interest among civilians and combatants alike, and an inescapable scourge

[14] A. Mahler (2017). *op. cit.* p. 184.
[15] D.G. Maguire, M.W. Ruddock, M.E. Milanak, T. Moore, D. Cobice, & C. Armour (2020). "Sleep, a Governor of Morbidity in PTSD: A Systematic Review of Biological Markers in PTSD-Related Sleep Disturbances". *Nature and Science of Sleep,* vol. 12. pp. 545-562. p. 545. [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7402856/pdf/nss-12-545.pdf].

for medical authorities, who were deeply divided about its meaning, legitimacy, causes and treatment."[16].

Symptoms of the disorder include guilt, difficulty repressing thoughts and memories of what happened, hypervigilance, but "Difficulty sleeping is considered one of the most commonly experienced symptoms of PTSD,5,10,11 Two distinct sleep disruptions exist, insomnia (persistent difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep) and nightmares."[17]. It is precisely the nightmares that actively manifest and disturb the protagonist's sleep throughout the saga. Although Harry's dreams are often caused by Lord Voldemort, who is able to penetrate his mind, Harry is often, during the course of the story, the victim of real nightmares created by his mind and concerning the deaths he suffered. This also happens during his adulthood: in the play *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*[18] there is an "intrusive re-experiencing of traumatic events in the form of Harry's nightmares. There are three nightmares in the course of the play, all of which have Harry waking up with an anxiety attack. Three common threads can be identified: his age, his aunt Petunia, and Voldemort's voice at the end of each dream."[19]. The presence in his nightmares of his aunt and of Voldemort represents exactly the above mentioned and never overcome traumas of Harry: childhood abuses and the deaths of his loved ones.

However, Harry is not the only character in the saga to be affected by this disorder: Alastor Moody is also a victim of this mental illness, as "The *DSM-IV* lists 17 possible criteria for PTSD; Moody displays at least eight, including the two essential ones (Table 3). Those are 1) past experience with events that involved or threatened death or serious injury and 2) a response to the event of intense fear, helplessness or horror (American Psychiatric Association, 2000)."[20].

Moody, professor at Hogwarts, has a strong trauma behind him and this is also evident in his teaching method and in his approach with students:

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[16] S. Cole (2013). "Siegfried Sassoon". In *The Cambridge Companion to the Poetry of the First World War, Cambridge*, ed. S. Das, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. pp. 94-104, p. 96.

[17] D.G. Maguire, M.W. Ruddock, M.E. Milanak, T. Moore, D. Cobice, & C. Armour (2020). *op. cit.* p. 546.

[18] J.K. Rowling (2016). *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child: Parts One and Two.* Special rehearsal ed. London: Little Brown.

[19] A. Mahler (2017). *op. cit.,* p. 188.

[20] Louise M. Freeman (2015). *op. cit.,* p. 181.

"Moody's" approach is most noted in his treatment of students as equals and co-conspirators to fight the good fight. However, this also comes with its own pedagogical baggage: trauma. His constant insistence that students "have got to know" about the depths of human cruelty through this powerful dark magic has significant emotional and mental effects on both Neville and Harry since their parents were subjected to Crucio and Avada Kedavra. The justification of exposing students to trauma is problematic, especially when applied to the real issues tackled in composition classrooms, like oppression and various acts of epistemic violence.[21]

To understand the motivations for the onset of PTSD in Moody it is important once again to analyse the traumas suffered by him and to do so it is necessary to turn to his past. As a member of the Order of the Phoenix, he fought many times on the side of the good. However, during the First Wizarding War, although he managed to survive, he suffered irretrievable injuries losing an eye and a leg. Moody is therefore mentally injured, but also physically, forced to live with his disability for the rest of his life.

It is noteworthy that in the manifestation of the symptoms of the same ailment in Harry and Alastor there are differences. While in Harry the most obvious symptoms are a strong sense of guilt, sleep disorders and inability to forget past traumatic events, in Alastor a strong sense of paranoia, constant fear and hypervigilance prevail. Hypervigilance is not only represented through Moody's behaviours and personal traits, which are certainly very evident, but it is also symbolized by Rowling in a metaphorical way: after losing his eye Moody entrusts his vision to a prosthesis from which he never detaches and which helps him to see everything that surrounds him. This aspect is of great relevance, as for patients suffering from PTSD vision and eyes play a fundamental role. This is highlighted by the fact that "eye closure can be threatening for PTSD patients due to the disrupted scanning of the environment and the anticipation of intrusive images."[22].

At the root of his constant fear and attention to his surroundings, in addition to the traumas suffered during the First Wizarding War, are also other aspects. First of all, it is important to take into account that Alastor Moody worked as Auror. "[…] Aurors are the only armed force as they have been trained in the Dark Arts and, more specifically,

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[21] Rachelle A.C. Joplin (2020). "Composition Pedagogy as Defense Against the Dark Arts." In Rovan, M.P. and Wehler, M. eds. *Lessons from Hogwarts: Essays on the Pedagogy of Harry Potter.* Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company. pp. 77-91, p. 85.

[22] I. Fragkaki, J. Stins, K. Roelofs, R.A. Jongedijk & M.A. Hagenaars (2016). "Tonic immobility differentiates stress responses in PTSD". *Brain and Behavior,* vol. 6, no. 11. Pp. 1-17, p. 4. [https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/brb3.546].

in how to combat them."[23]. This means he served as a protector, hired by the Ministry of Magic in order to fight against the dark arts and evil. His is certainly a remarkably valiant job, but at the same time it gave him a large number of enemies among the followers of Lord Voldemort. Because of this, he constantly fears repercussions and he is frightened that someone will take revenge. In addition to this, his phobias increase after Lord Voldemort's rebirth. This is true for two reasons: the first is that the supporters of the Dark Arts, followers of Lord Voldemort, after his return feel more motivated to perform acts of revenge; the second is that Lord Voldemort's return causes indelible memories of past fights to be reborn in Alastor. Exemplifying this last aspect, as Alastor has always "showed an exaggerated startle reflex and over-reactivity to stimuli that resemble the original trauma, such as loud noises."[24], in the same way seeing the return of Voldemort, who is the one who caused much of his suffering, represents for him a very strong stimulus and, consequently, very exaggerated reactions.

Another relevant aspect affecting Alastor's trauma is his abduction by Barty Crouch Jr. in the book *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. Barty, strong supporter of Voldemort, in order to help his leader in his mission to kill Harry Potter, has to take the guise of a professor of the school, choosing precisely Alastor Moody. To do so, he kidnaps and traps the latter. This adds to the tormented experiences of the professor, who is "[…]constantly afraid for his life, expecting a foreshortened future."[25].

Despite his troubled life and the traumas suffered in the field of war, Moody decides to 'enlist' also in the second Order of the Phoenix, fighting many battles of the Second Wizarding War. This will do nothing but highlight his marked lack of trust in other people (so as not to reveal any details of his private life), but also his constant sense of fear. It is no surprise that others belonging to the Order, but also Hogwarts' students in general know "[…] Mad-Eye Moody's mantra—"Constant vigilance!"", which "[…] is later repeated by his students to one another (e.g., Rowling [2000] 2002:407; 2007:95), but it seems clear that the students associate this phrase with Moody specifically, and not with folk wisdom."[26].

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[23] M. Ciba (2017). "Conspiracy, Persecution and Terror: Harry Potter in a Post-9/11 World.". In Gymnich, M. ed. cit. pp. 121-132, p. 128.
[24] Louise M. Freeman (2015). *op. cit.* p. 182.
[25] *Ibidem*.
[26] H.A. Haas (2011). *op. cit.* p. 36.

After being put in charge of the Order after the death of Albus Dumbledore, Alastor's experience during the Second Wizarding War is destined to end during the Battle of the Seven Potters, in which, despite all the precautions adopted, he is killed, being remembered by the writer herself as the "toughest Auror of them all, and a man who was very much more than his significant disabilities."[27]. After his death, it is impossible for his allies to find his body in order to be able to give him a worthy burial. However, a part of him will be found (even if Harry manages to remove it from the hands of professor Umbridge only after some time) and it is his eye, once again to highlight that this little detail inserted by Rowling is not at all random.

3.2. *Trauma in the Antihero (or Hero?): Severus Snape*

After analysing the inner world of two of the protagonists of the saga, which is somewhat turbulent, analysing that of Harry's antagonist is even more difficult. Severus Snape, one of the most debated characters in the entire saga, is professor at Hogwarts and head of Slytherin house. Throughout the saga the professor appears as evil, heartless and insensitive. His disdain for Harry is strong, but he does not particularly bond with other students either. From the first book, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, the reader is almost driven to feel hostility towards Severus, and is led to think that it is Snape who wants to steal the stone. Only at the end of the book is it discovered that his goal was to save the stone and Harry.

It is important to note how this character plays a somewhat ambiguous role throughout the saga, so much so that the reader becomes aware of where Snape's loyalty really lies and consequently manages to empathize with him not before the last book, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, just when his past is revealed. "Each of Snape's actions, however terrible they may have seemed from the beginning of the first book, are transformed in meaning by the scenes from his childhood that Harry sees in the pensieve after his death."[28]. However bad his actions may have seemed during the

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[27] J.K. Rowling (Aug 10th 2015). "Illness and Disability.". Originally published on Pottermore. [https://www.wizardingworld.com/writing-by-jk-rowling/illness-and-disability].
[28] P. Appelbaum (2008). "The Great Snape Debate.". *JAAACS: Journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies*. USA: Arcadia University, vol. 4. pp. 1-24, p. 9.

saga, Severus always acted in the name of the love he felt for Lily, Harry's mother, he always hid his true identity only for her, and in the end he will die for her.

Again, as with the characters dealt with previously, in order to understand Snape's trauma, it is necessary to refer to his past, which is described by the writer at the moment mentioned above in the Pensieve, which is "is enchanted to recreate memories so that they become re-liveable, taking every detail stored in the subconscious and recreating it faithfully, so that either the owner, or (and herein lies the danger) a second party, is able to enter the memories and move around within them."[29]. It is important first of all to take into account that he is the victim, just like Harry, of a hostile and degrading family environment: his childhood, due to repeated quarrels and clashes between his parents, is sad and lonely. The only person with whom Severus befriends is his neighbour, Lily. However, Snape does not hide the annoyance and disgust towards the latter's sister, due to her lack of magical powers. In fact, born to a Muggle father, he develops during his adolescence (perhaps due to the abuse suffered in the family by his dad) a strong hatred for Muggles and Half-Bloods, so much so that he often offends them. Once at Hogwarts, things start to plummet again and for Snape the school environment is the basis for the formation of new traumas. First of all, he undergoes repeated humiliation and is bullied by James Potter several times. A parenthesis must be opened: among the various influential traumas in adolescence, bullying significantly exacerbates the sufferings and insecurities of the individual: "Being blamed for the bullies' inappropriate and irrational behavior can add to the distress experienced by the targets. Over time, targets subjected to continual abuse can change emotionally and physically so that they do become frail and insecure […]"[30].

Traumatic most of all and source of greater suffering for Snape is the detachment from his only friend: Lily. This estrangement has several concatenating causes. First of all, while Severus is sorted into the Slytherin house, Lily is sorted into the Gryffindor house, i.e. the two enemy houses by exception. But what leads to the final break between the two is Lily's contempt for those with whom Snape has befriended, but mainly Snape's use of the appellation Mudblood towards her. However, Snape's love

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[29] J.K. Rowling (Aug 10th 2015). "Pensieve.". Originally published on Pottermore. [https://www.wizardingworld.com/writing-by-jk-rowling/pensieve].
[30] K. Liepe-Levinson & M.H. Levinson (2005). "A General Semantics Approach to School-Age Bullying: a Review of General Semantics". *et Cetera;* Concord, vol. 62, no. 1. pp. 4-16, p. 7.

will not break even after Lily's marriage to his archenemy, James. Also traumatizing is the experience of Lily's death due to Lord Voldemort. This will lead Severus to convert to the good and put his full trust in Albus Dumbledore.

All of the above provides a clear picture of the past and of the development of traumatic experiences in Severus Snape's character: a turbulent family experience, bullying at school and unrequited love. In summary, "[…] Snape is truly the one who has most suffered the loneliness of a life lived without love."[31]. Despite the fact that he has always lived without love, he acts and mobilizes for love, his actions are driven by love. Although Harry never gains his full sympathy, as he is a constant reminder of James (and therefore of his experience of being bullied) and the crowning of Lily's love with another man, Snape always acts in his behalf, saving him whenever his life is in danger: "While Snape looks suspicious to Harry from the start, he is watching over him and protecting him as early as a quidditch match in the first year."[32]. Severus Snape has always based his life on a secret to protect the only thing left of Lily: his son Harry, and finally, just for her, he sacrificed his life.

3.3. *Dementors: a Representation of Depression*

Dementors are notable and interesting characters in the saga. First of all, "Unlike hippogriffs, centaurs, werewolves and other magical creatures that have a long mythological tradition, dementors are Rowling's own creation."[33]. What is more, they are very important, given the psychological meaning that is attributed to them. Dementors represent one of the most insidious and worrying global diseases of the century: depression. The symptoms caused by their proximity, in fact, are very similar to those of depression: "In *The Prisoner of Azkaban*, we meet the Dementors, hideously telepathic creatures able to suck a victim's sanity away by draining him of all hope and happy memory, leaving only despair."[34]. In addition, the writer herself confirmed the

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[31] T. Pugh (2021). "Sobbing over Severus Snape? Sentimentalism and Emotional Ethics in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* Novels." *The Lion and the Unicorn*; vol. 45, no. 1. pp. 46-61, p. 56.
[32] P. Appelbaum (2008). *op. cit.*, p. 18.
[33] Louise M. Freeman (2015). *op. cit.*, p. 161.
[34] A. Cockrell (2002). "Harry Potter and the Secret Password: Finding Our Way in the Magical Genre.". cit., p. 24.

relationship between these magical creatures and depression, from which she suffered, in a 2000 Interview with *The Times*.[35]

Depressive symptoms can be many and can be different from patient to patient, but some of them are "[…] poor sleep and appetite, decreased concentration, apathy, withdrawal, decreased motivation, or loss of interest."[36]. Regarding Dementors, it is important to take into account two of these symptoms: apathy and decreased concentration. This is because, when they come into contact with a human being, they suck every happy memory of him, creating in the person a strong sense of emptiness and apathy. At the same time, for a person attacked by a Dementor, it is difficult to find the necessary concentration in order to defend himself. However, just like the similarities regarding the symptoms caused by Dementors and depression, the two also have strong similarities from the point of view of remedies. In fact, there are two remedies that can cure the psychological wounds caused by these creatures: one is chocolate, the other is a specific spell, "Expecto Patronum"[37]. As stated by the writer herself "Chocolate is the perfect antidote for anyone who has been overcome in the presence of Dementors, which suck hope and happiness out of their surroundings."[38]. It is well known that chocolate, in addition to being certainly very appetizing and pleasant to the taste, has not indifferent beneficial properties, as it "[…]is energy-rich and has a high content of fat (saturated and to a lesser extent mono-unsaturated fat) and sugar. It also contains minerals (potassium, phosphorus, magnesium, and zinc), flavonols, biogenic amines (tyramine and phenylethylamine), methylxanthines (caffeine and theobromine), and cannabinoid-like fatty acids."[39]. Due to the presence of these substances, it is clear why "Chocolate consumption, dark chocolate in particular, has been consistently associated with better physical health."[40]. Exactly as in the real world, Rowling decides to attribute the same 'anti-depressant' role to this food also in the

[35] A. Treneman (30 June 2000). "J.K. Rowling, the Interview.". *The Times* (UK).
[36] S. Labott (2018). "Depression". *Health Psychology Consultation in the Inpatient Medical Setting*. American Psychological Association. pp. 151-164, p. 151.
[37] J. K. Rowling (Sep 22 2016). "Patronus Charm". Originally published on Pottermore. [https://www.wizardingworld.com/writing-by-jk-rowling/patronus-charm].
[38] J. K. Rowling (Aug 10 2015). "Dementors and Chocolate". Originally published on Pottermore. [https://www.wizardingworld.com/writing-by-jk-rowling/dementors-and-chocolate].
[39] T. Balboa-Castillo, E. López-García, L.M. León-Muñoz, R.F. Pérez-Tasigchana, J.R. Banegas, F. Rodríguez-Artalejo & P. Guallar-Castillón (2015). "Chocolate and Health-Related Quality of Life: A Prospective Study". *PLoS One,* San Francisco; vol. 10, no. 4. pp. 1-11, p. 2.
[40] *Ibidem*.

magical world. It is for this reason that Professor Lupin, after Harry's first encounter with a Dementor, decides to offer him chocolate to lift his mood.

In addition to chocolate, another is the remedy used after the attack of a Dementor. This is, as seen earlier, the spell Expecto Patronum. The term is the "Latin for "I expect or await a patron or guardian""[41]. Precisely according to this definition it is not difficult to understand the functioning of this spell: the one who is attacked, when he casts it, is defended and helped by a protector, who takes different forms (usually animal forms) according to the person who uses it. In this way, every wizard has his own Patronus, which is closely connected with something emotionally important and significant of the person. In order to evoke the Patronus, it is necessary to focus on a happy memory or on the thought of someone to whom the person is particularly attached. This is why "The form of a Patronus may change during the course of a witch or wizard's life. Instances have been known of the form of the Patronus transforming due to bereavement, falling in love or profound shifts in a person's character."[42]. However, being the Dementors particularly linked to depression and therefore, as already analysed earlier, they lead the victim to have a poor level of concentration, it is difficult to focus on a happy memory during an attack and to make use of the spell. Precisely for this reason "Expecto Patronus" is categorized among the most difficult spells to produce. The Patronus, being associated with the inner world of the person and with someone related to the latter, can be the representation in the magical world of someone important for the depression sufferer in the real world: the friends and people surrounding him during his illness, including the psychologist.

It is interesting that Harry is more vulnerable and fragile in the face of a Dementor's attack than his friends. This is another demonstration of the deep connection between Dementors and depression: as "One predisposing factor for depression repeatedly identified in the literature is the experience of aversive life events in childhood."[43] and, for this reason, Harry is more predisposed to developing a depressive disorder, in the same way he is more predisposed to be subject to greater trauma than others in the vicinity of a Dementor.

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[41] M'Balia Thomas. (2018). "Trauma, Harry Potter, and the Demented World of Academia." cit., p. 194.
[42] J.K. Rowling (Sep 22 2016). "Patronus Charm.". cit.
[43] S.K. Dominguez, J.M.A.M. Suzy & C.W. Lee (2021). "Trauma-focused Treatments for Depression. A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis". *PLoS One*; vol. 16, no. 7. pp. 1-16, p. 2.

To conclude, the writer inserts in her books various current themes and issues, including psychological disorders, trauma and mental health, making the reader aware of the implications of such diseases, symptoms and possible remedies and cures. With regard to physical problems, in her world Rowling places emphasis and importance on diseases that differ greatly from those of the real world:

> I decided that, broadly speaking, wizards would have the power to correct or override 'mundane' nature, but not 'magical' nature. Therefore, a wizard could catch anything a Muggle might catch, but he could cure all of it; he would also comfortably survive a scorpion sting that might kill a Muggle, whereas he might die if bitten by a Venomous Tentacula. Similarly, bones broken in non-magical accidents such as falls or fist fights can be mended by magic, but the consequences of curses or backfiring magic could be serious, permanent or life-threatening. This is the reason that Gilderoy Lockhart, victim of his own mangled Memory Charm, has permanent amnesia, why the poor Longbottoms remain permanently damaged by magical torture, and why Mad-Eye Moody had to resort to a wooden leg and a magical eye when the originals were irreparably damaged in a wizards' battle; Luna Lovegood's mother, Pandora, died when one of her own experimental spells went wrong, and Bill Weasley is irreversibly scarred after his meeting with Fenrir Greyback.[44]

On the other hand, with respect to mental illnesses, the writer is very close to those of the real world, attributing to her characters the same complications that real-life people suffer, outside of her fantasy universe.

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[44] J. K. Rowling (Aug 10 2015). "Illness and Disability.". cit.

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Il mondo della letteratura per bambini è ampio e molti sono i libri ad aver raggiunto un tale successo da essere considerati dei best seller. Tra di essi, si distinguono i sette libri appartenenti alla saga di *Harry Potter* della scrittrice inglese J.K. Rowling. I libri hanno avuto un impatto considerevole sulla letteratura, ma non è da dimenticare che il loro successo ha avuto delle conseguenze positive anche nel marketing e nel mondo della cinematografia. Proprio a causa del successo planetario raggiunto dalla saga, sono sicuramente molti i motivi che hanno contribuito ad attrarre tanto interesse nei suoi confronti, tanto da considerarla un vero e proprio fenomeno culturale e sociale.

La vicenda narrata dalla scrittrice è sicuramente molto interessante: un giovane mago, Harry Potter, si trova a confrontarsi con il mago più cattivo di tutti i tempi, il temibile Lord Voldemort, che è alla ricerca del potere assoluto. È così che il protagonista si trova ad affrontare duri combattimenti al fine di far prevalere il bene nel mondo magico. Ad accompagnarlo sono i suoi due fedeli amici Ron ed Hermione, che lo aiutano a superare le sfide che gli si pongono davanti e che rappresentano fedelmente l'ideale dell'amicizia. Tuttavia, sebbene la storia sia interessante e in grado di catturare il lettore grazie alla presenza di elementi magici e di una maestria nella scrittura senza precedenti, i motivi culturali alla base del successo della saga sono stati la motivazione principale di tale successo. La scrittrice, infatti, inserisce nei libri temi delicati e importanti che, durante un lavoro di rilettura della saga, possono essere colti e analizzati. Proprio per questo motivo, la tesi si concentra proprio sull'analisi di tali tematiche, al fine di comprendere come la Rowling sia riuscita ad inserire argomenti delicati e difficili da affrontare all'interno di una saga fantasy.

Il primo capitolo di questo lavoro è un'analisi delle ragioni che hanno spinto la saga a diventare così famosa e riconosciuta globalmente, tanto da attirare ancora oggi, dopo anni dalla sua prima pubblicazione, l'interesse di un grande numero di lettori. Innanzitutto, essendo attribuita alla letteratura per bambini, è importante considerare il fatto che la saga deve poter essere utilizzata come strumento di educazione ed istruzione. È degno di nota sottolineare ancora una volta che, nel successo della saga, è fondamentale la presenza di elementi e creature magiche, che rendono i libri di facile

lettura e comprensione per il pubblico di bambini. Tuttavia, è proprio la sua destinazione per un pubblico così giovane ad aver sollevato innumerevoli accuse, sia da parte di conservatori cristiani, sia da parte di coloro che ritengono che la lettura dei libri sia di difficile comprensione a causa della presenza di temi troppo difficili per essere affrontati dalla generazione più giovane. Lo scopo di numerosi studiosi è quindi quello di scoprire gli insegnamenti presenti nella saga e, dunque, le ragioni per le quali i bambini possono utilizzare i libri come fonte di insegnamento. È importante innanzitutto tenere in considerazione che il protagonista della saga, nel corso della sua avventura, cresce assieme al lettore. In questo modo, la Rowling descrive la crescita di Harry, che si trova ad affrontare le tipiche esperienze del mondo adolescenziale, tra primi amori, scontri con i professori e amicizie. Il lettore si può quindi identificare con lui dal momento in cui tante tra le esperienze narrate dalla scrittrice sono quelle che caratterizzano il mondo di tutti i giorni.

Per quanto riguarda gli insegnamenti in *Harry Potter*, uno dei valori principali è quello della famiglia, che sin dal primo libro è rappresentato prevalentemente grazie all'esperienza di Harry come figlio adottivo dei suoi zii Dursley e Petunia. È anche importante il valore attribuito dalla scrittrice allo sport, che nella saga è rappresentato tramite il mondo del Quidditch. Sicuramente il lettore (soprattutto il più giovane) si sente fortemente connesso a quest'ultimo aspetto, dal momento in cui lo sport ha un valore importante nella vita della persona. La Rowling decide di introdurre nei libri anche tematiche e valori più delicati, come per esempio il tema della morte. Tuttavia, la sua abilità nell'introdurre tali temi affiancandoli alla presenza di animali fantastici, elementi magici ed una scrittura semplice e chiara, permette al lettore più giovane di comprenderli senza troppe difficoltà. È proprio qui che torna il concetto di libro come strumento di istruzione: riuscire a rendere la saga un concentrato di argomenti importanti, ma mantenerlo una lettura semplice e facilmente affrontabile da un pubblico in età non matura, è fondamentale per la sua categorizzazione all'interno della letteratura per bambini.

Nonostante quanto appena detto, i libri hanno ricevuto grande interesse anche nella generazione degli adulti. Questo è dovuto non solo dal fatto che il genere fantasy raccoglie attenzioni e consensi negli adulti, permettendo loro di tornare bambini, ma anche dal fatto che alcune tematiche possono essere comprese pienamente solo da un

pubblico maturo, che riesce a cogliere ulteriori insegnamenti dalla lettura della saga. È così che ulteriori argomenti da analizzare vengono alla luce: l'importanza attribuita dalla scrittrice al tema del sacrificio, a quello dell'amore e a quello della morte.

La presenza di fattori interni alla storia, tuttavia, non è stata la sola ragione che ha portato i libri ad ottenere tanto interesse. Infatti, è importante la grande spinta ricevuta da azioni di marketing e comunicazione. La prima azione di marketing degna di citazione è stata il rilascio dei film nelle sale cinematografiche mondiali. Questo ha consentito un aumento della fama della storia di *Harry Potter,* grazie al fatto che in molti sono venuti a conoscenza della saga senza ancora aver letto i libri, ma anche perché molti sono stati gli oggetti creati e venduti dopo l'uscita dei film. Per quanto riguarda i fattori esterni ai libri, è importante il fatto che *Harry Potter* abbia apportato dei benefici anche all'industria del turismo, grazie all'incredibile afflusso degli amanti del magico mondo della Rowling in località turistiche come l'Inghilterra e la Scozia (che erano comunque già località visitate). Anche gli attori si sono dimostrati di notevole importanza nel passaparola della saga: molti sono coloro che, dopo aver recitato nei film di *Harry Potter*, hanno contribuito a mantenere la magia del mondo della Rowling viva, grazie a piattaforme digitali e social, tramite le quali possono comunicare con i fan. Sono proprio le piattaforme digitali a rappresentare un'ulteriore spinta nel successo dei libri: tramite siti web dedicati a discussioni riguardanti la saga, giochi e fan page, i fan di tutto il mondo hanno la possibilità di collegarsi con una realtà virtuale ed immergersi nell'universo della Rowling. In aggiunta, i fan grazie alle loro creazioni hanno contribuito al successo dei libri con testi, disegni e video di loro invenzione, che hanno come protagonisti proprio i maghetti di *Harry Potter*. Tra i lavori dei fan spiccano le fan fiction, la cui fama è alimentata da siti dedicati alla loro pubblicazione. Infine, l'utilizzo dei testi della Rowling è stato rilevante anche nelle scuole, dato che spesso e volentieri i professori utilizzano i libri della saga per insegnare la letteratura e la grammatica, grazie all'uso magistrale della lingua della scrittrice.

Dopo aver analizzato le ragioni alla base del successo della saga, il secondo capitolo della tesi si basa su argomenti più delicati e tematiche di grande importanza inserite dalla Rowling nei libri. È così che il capitolo diventa un'analisi di razzismo, schiavitù e inegualità di genere. Queste tre tematiche sono di fondamentale importanza nel mondo attuale, ma è interessante come la scrittrice sia riuscita ad inserirle nel

contesto di una saga fantasy. Il razzismo è il tema più persistente e, probabilmente, anche più evidente nei libri. Innanzitutto, è importante sottolineare che il razzismo nella saga non ha nulla a che fare con le diverse provenienze dei vari personaggi: a differenza del razzismo basato sui pregiudizi riguardanti persone con diversi contesti culturali alle spalle (tipico del mondo reale odierno), quello della saga è attuato in base ad un'ideologia differente. La Rowling ne distingue due tipologie: quello di sangue e quello contro le creature magiche. Entrambi, tuttavia, sono basati sul sentimento di superiorità insito nei maghi.

È necessario, al fine di comprendere il razzismo di sangue, considerare che i maghi della storia si dividono, in base al loro albero genealogico e in base alla loro discendenza, tra nati babbani, mezzosangue e purosangue (anche se altre "razze" sono descritte nei libri). È così che i babbani e i mezzosangue, a causa del loro sangue definito come sporco per il solo motivo di avere anche solo un parente non mago nella propria famiglia, sono soggetti a odio e discriminazione da parte dei maghi purosangue e di altri maghi che supportano questa ideologia. Lord Voldemort si pone a capo di una vera e propria dottrina di odio e di una 'dittatura' il cui fine è quello di eliminare la specie ritenuta inferiore. Si riscontrano quindi forti analogie tra il personaggio di Voldemort e il dittatore Hitler e le loro politiche di terrore: le loro ideologie sono molto simili, come lo sono anche le modalità per metterle in atto e i loro seguaci.

Per quanto riguarda il secondo tipo di razzismo presente in *Harry Potter*, è importante menzionare la presenza delle creature magiche. Queste ultime sono soggette a discriminazioni esattamente come lo sono i babbani e i mezzosangue, anche se l'odio nei loro confronti questa volta proviene da tutti (o quasi) i maghi. Qui torna ad essere evidente l'ideale di supremazia di ogni uomo, ma si apre la strada anche per l'analisi di un'altra tematica rilevante nella saga: quella della schiavitù. Infatti, tra le creature magiche spicca la figura degli elfi, che da sempre sono utilizzati come servi domestici presso le famiglie di maghi. Tra di essi, è importante soffermarsi sulla situazione di tre elfi: Dobby, Winky e Kreacher, che agiscono in modo diverso nei confronti della loro situazione. È importante anche la tentata ribellione di Hermione, probabilmente l'unico personaggio della saga che tenta di cambiare la loro condizione e di mettere un fine al loro sfruttamento. Tuttavia, le sue ragioni non saranno ascoltate, sottolineando ancora una volta il mancato interesse e il complesso di superiorità di ogni mago rispetto a chi

ritenuto essere inferiore e diverso. Ma la Rowling attribuisce spazio nei suoi libri anche ai folletti, che a differenza degli elfi, tentano di ribellarsi e di far valere la loro importanza.

Ma ad essere soggetti a trattamenti di discriminazione sulla base della diversità sono anche i personaggi femminili dei libri. Il personaggio che nella saga rappresenta al meglio quanto appena detto è Merope Gaunt, la madre del sopra citato Lord Voldemort. Dopo la lettura della sua storia familiare e delle sue esperienze in quanto donna, è chiaro il riferimento della Rowling alla situazione di inferiorità delle donne in epoca Vittoriana. Merope, come le donne vissute durante il regno della regina Vittoria, infatti, è trattata come inferiore e il suo solo compito è quello di rimanere nel contesto domestico, occupandosi della casa e non ribellandosi alla sua condizione, tanto da non dire mai la sua opinione e da rimanere in silenzio davanti agli uomini che la circondano. Merope condiziona la sua intera vita in base a quella degli uomini che ha al suo fianco e non trova ragione d'essere senza di loro. Anche Winky, l'elfo femmina, risulta essere importante nell'analisi della situazione delle donne della saga. Dopo la sua liberazione, infatti, a differenza di Dobby, soffre e si sente ancora legata al suo vecchio padrone tanto da non trovare nessun sollievo e da pensare costantemente a lui ubriacandosi. Ancora una volta l'attaccamento della donna alla figura maschile è sottolineato. Tuttavia, la Rowling non attribuisce a tutte le donne della saga una situazione sottomessa. Ne è l'esempio Hermione, donna forte e indipendente, che non ha bisogno di nessun uomo al suo fianco. Anche Minerva, professoressa ad Hogwarts a capo della casa dei Grifondoro, è l'esempio di donna emancipata, che rappresenta una posizione autorevole.

Tuttavia, nonostante lo scopo della scrittrice sia quello di condannare la discriminazione in ogni sua forma, spesso ricade in contraddizioni evidenti. Ne sono la prova gli elfi per il fatto che sono spesso ridicolizzati e la cui situazione non interessa a molti maghi, ma anche le donne, che sebbene siano rappresentate come indipendenti e autoritarie, sono sempre affiancate da una figura maschile o la cui storia è raccontata attraverso gli occhi di un uomo. Nonostante quest'ultimo aspetto, l'introduzione di tematiche tanto importanti e delicate è sicuramente stato un grande vantaggio nel successo della saga, in quanto potersi identificare o poter trovare delle analogie con il mondo attuale è sicuramente un punto favorevole per ogni lettore.

Infine, il terzo e ultimo capitolo della tesi si concentra sul tema della psicologia in *Harry Potter*, mediante un'analisi dei traumi sofferti dai personaggi della saga e delle malattie cliniche eventualmente sviluppate da questi ultimi. In quanto storia di guerra, molti sono i personaggi della saga ad avere alle spalle una storia traumatica. Tuttavia, analizzare il mondo interiore e il passato di ognuno di loro in questa tesi risulterebbe difficile. Per questo, è interessante focalizzarsi solo su alcuni di essi, al fine di comprendere le diverse modalità per affrontare un trauma. Due di loro sono legati dalla stessa malattia, ovvero il disturbo da stress post-traumatico: Harry Potter, il protagonista della saga, e Alastor Moody, professore ad Hogwarts. I due, tuttavia, sebbene afflitti dallo stesso problema, riportano una sintomatologia differente. Se il sintomo più frequente in Harry, oltre all'impossibilità di dimenticare quanto accaduto, si manifesta principalmente tramite disturbi del sonno ed incubi che riportano in vita costantemente gli avvenimenti del passato, in Alastor la malattia è esplicitata dalla sua ipervigilanza e dalla costante paura di ciò che lo circonda. Nonostante i sintomi siano diversi, però, alla base del disturbo per entrambi giace una storia di traumi e diversità.

Dopo aver analizzato il trauma in due personaggi amati da quasi tutti i lettori della saga, analizzare quello di uno dei personaggi più controversi dei libri, Severus Piton, è complicato. Quest'ultimo, infatti, durante tutto il corso della saga risulta essere l'antagonista per eccellenza, ma nell'ultimo libro dei sette, *Harry Potter e i Doni della Morte*, si rivelerà un personaggio con un passato e un mondo interiore alquanto complessi. È così che, con la rivelazione delle esperienze passate di Piton, tra una situazione familiare ostile, un amore mai corrisposto ed esperienze di bullismo, affiorano i traumi subiti da quest'ultimo e si comprendono, di conseguenza, le motivazioni di alcuni comportamenti.

Il capitolo tre è incentrato inoltre sull'analisi di un ulteriore personaggio, i Dissennatori, ovvero delle creature magiche che popolano il mondo magico. Risulta di primaria importanza innanzitutto il fatto che la stessa scrittrice abbia sofferto di una malattia mentale: la depressione. Questo, infatti, è il punto di inizio per la creazione dei Dissennatori, che si pongono come rappresentazione della malattia mentale appena citata. Tramite l'introduzione di questi personaggi la Rowling fornisce un quadro clinico della sintomatologia e anche della cura alla depressione. Infatti, proprio come nella depressione, gli effetti di un contatto ravvicinato con i Dissennatori sono un senso

di vuoto e apatia. Allo stesso modo, anche le modalità per respingere l'attacco di queste creature sono molto simili a due fattori di grande aiuto nelle vittime di depressione. Il primo è la cioccolata, che grazie alle sue proprietà benefiche ha effetti positivi sull'umore delle persone; il secondo è un incantesimo che consente di evocare un protettore, il cosiddetto Patronus, che ha tutti i requisiti per rappresentare gli amici e il supporto psicologico del mondo reale.

Il successo della saga, dunque, è sicuramente riconosciuto grazie ad una varietà di motivi, tra cui la maestria della Rowling nella scrittura, una trama coinvolgente e l'inserimento di elementi fantastici. Tuttavia, ciò che ha consentito di rendere *Harry Potter* un vero e proprio fenomeno socio-culturale sono motivazioni più profonde e tematiche delicate in forte analogia con quelle del mondo di tutti i giorni, in grado di colpire nel profondo il lettore e di apportare degli insegnamenti.