



HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

Hugvísindasvið

Magical Minority

Social Class and Discrimination in the Harry Potter Novels

Ritgerð til B.A.-prófs

Anna Guðjónsdóttir

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Kt.: 210190-2609

Leiðbeinandi: Anna Heiða Pálsdóttir

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Abstract

This essay explores the separation of people into different social classes in the Harry Potter novels and does as well give focus on the treatment of minority groups in the story.

Dividing wizards and witches into upper, middle and lower class controls the wizard society and where the power lies. Those that form the upper class come from a long line of wizards and witches that are referred to as purebloods while those that form the lower class have parents who are Muggles, that is, possess no magical power. The essay explores the negative treatment of non-human beings and others that fall out of the norm in the wizard community and are placed as simple workers or even slaves since they are seen as inferior to wizards and witches. Authority and the upper class are portrayed in a very negative way since their sole interest seems to be on protecting their power and eliminating those that they deem unworthy of possessing magical power. The essay gives examples of characters that fall out of the norm and how they have accepted their place outside of the society. By applying Marxist theory focus is given on the class structure and shows how the upper class creates the superstructure while the lower class, formed by Muggleborn wizards and witches as well as the non-human beings, form the base of the society. Postcolonial criticism shows the minority groups that have been pushed out of the community and how they are seen as the Other, something that does not fit into the conventional society. It becomes evident that the story of Harry Potter is more than just a heroic story where good triumphs over evil but a firm social criticism as many of these groups mentioned can be associated with groups that have fought for human rights through history, for example African-American and Caribbean slaves.

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1. Introduction

The importance of class has for long been significant in every community and the division of people into social classes, that is, upper, middle or working class, has been a custom since the beginning of civilized society. This way of placing people within these classes has long ruled where the power lies. As Marxism came about, with the aim to bring a classless society and with that seeking to change the world, more attention was given to the social classes and the corruption in the society that followed the division (Barry 150). The seven books on Harry Potter by Joanne Kathleen Rowling, published between the years 1997 to 2007, are one of the best-known stories of the last decade. They tell the story of a young boy called Harry Potter who is raised by his cruel aunt and uncle after the death of his parents. On Harry's eleventh birthday he finds out that he is a wizard and attends to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. There Harry, with the help of his friends Ron and Hermione, faces many troubles and challenges as the dark wizard Lord Voldemort struggles to gain his power back and to eliminate Harry.

The stories are claimed to be children's fantasy novels and that is in fact true about the first two stories in the series, where the concept is that good triumphs over evil as Harry prevents Lord Voldemort from gaining his power back. The later novels do however begin to develop a macabre tone as they become more complex and the story gives more focus on prejudice and corruption within the wizard society. This is best seen in the treatment and attitude towards people in the lower class of the society and how those from old and respected families withhold the power. This essay will refer to five of the books, that is, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (1999), *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (2000), *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (2003), *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (2005) and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2007), using abbreviated titles. The five books will be used to analyze the difference between the social classes by using Marxism and focus on the discrimination that those who are placed in the lowest class must face, using postcolonial criticism. The people that possess magical power form the main social classes, upper and middle, while those that must face prejudice based on their origins form the lower class. Many people in the wizard world have parents where one is a wizard while the other is a Muggle, a person that does not have any magical powers. There are as well cases of Hogwarts students who have both parents that are Muggles. In the story it becomes evident that the Muggleborn people in the society form the

lower class and they suffer from prejudice from many of those who view themselves as the rightful rulers of the society, that is, the upper class. This lesser part of society does however have the right to get an education and many have decent jobs in the wizard society. Those who do not have equal rights and are clearly placed outside of the society are those who are partly not human, that is half-breeds. Many of these people in the lowest class of the wizard society can be connected to various minority groups that have struggled and fought for human rights throughout history, for instance African-American and Caribbean slaves or people with AIDS. A number of mythical creatures in the wizard world face discrimination in a more serious sense than wizards and witches with Muggle parents or even those that are half-human and half-creature. This discrimination is not just from those that form the upper class but most wizards and witches view that these non-human beings are simple workers or servants in the wizard community and it is interesting to see how some accept their role while the others are firmly against it. Postcolonial criticism shows that these different groups of creatures are viewed as the Other, something immoral that does not fit in to the traditional society (Barry 187). The application of Marxist theory shows as well that there are explicit examples of the proletariat and bourgeoisie in the story. There is evidently social criticism present in the Harry Potter novels, as the author gives a negative impression on those that have the power in the wizard civilization and how those that form the lowest class must face much discrimination and struggle to find their place in the wizard society.

2. A Capitalist Society

Marxist theory is based on the work of the German philosopher, Karl Marx and his colleague Friedrich Engels, a German sociologist (Barry 150). The concept of class is crucial in Marxist theory and it gives focus on the power struggle between the classes. The simplest Marxist model of society sees it as constituted by a base, that is, the material means of production, distribution and exchange, and a superstructure, which is the cultural world of ideas, art and religion (Barry 151). Peter Barry does as well point out that Marxist literary criticism maintains that the writer's social class has a major bearing on what is written by a member of that class (152). The author of Harry Potter, J.K. Rowling, lived in poverty as a single mother and struggled with unfulfilling jobs before writing the story of Harry Potter (Shapiro 14). With Barry's statement about Marxist literary criticism in mind it is evident that the treatment of the lower class in Harry Potter as well as the negative image of the ruling upper class and the authority that shapes the books is inspired by Rowling's life.

2.1 Class System in Harry Potter

Marxist theory usually looks at five general types of social relationships and in the Harry Potter novels three of those relationships are apparent. Michael Curtis states in the introduction to the anthology on Marxism that these types of social relationships are, "slavery with its slave-owning and slave classes; feudalism with its lords of the manor and serfs; capitalism with its capitalists and proletariat" (5). These relationships are present in the Harry Potter novels, especially in the later books where it becomes evident that social class and the treatment of minority groups influence the story greatly. Marxist theory gives a better focus on the impact this has on the story as people are placed in groups based on their importance in the society, more often than not in connection with power and money. Portrayal of authority and the upper class in the wizard society is shown in a very negative way throughout the story as they place other wizards and witches into middle and lower classes based on their origins. Those that are half-breeds, that is, half-human and half-creature, and the non-human beings are then placed in the lowest place in the society. They are seen as simple workers, or the base of the society by both the upper class as well as the middle class. This group in the wizard society, whether it is half-breed wizards and witches or non-human beings, are all noticeably bullied to stay in their place and do not fight for their rights. This representation of bullying, that is often evident in

literature, is a clear metaphor for intolerance and discrimination. The bullying in Harry Potter is not however in the form of a conflict between an individual and society but different groups of people or creatures that are bullied and forced to stay in their place in the bottom of the society (Lopez-Ropero 147-148). This mistreatment of the lower class and the negative image of the upper class in the Harry Potter novels show a strong sense of social criticism that shapes the books. It seems that almost everyone in the wizard society accepts this division that is based on clear prejudice, even those suffering the discrimination. This group is unable to stand up and fight for their rights but merely accept their role as common workers.

2.2 Maintaining Authority

The Ministry of Magic is the authority figure in the Harry Potter novels, yet Rowling gives a rather negative image of the Ministry of Magic and its bureaucrats (Barton 1525). From the first introduction of the Ministry's headquarters it becomes clear to the reader that the general notion within the wizard society is that wizards and witches are superior to other creatures. In the entrance hall of the Ministry of Magic there is a large fountain that gives an indication of this attitude. The fountain is described as,

A group of golden statues, larger than life-size, stood in the middle of a circular pool. Tallest of them all was a noble-looking wizard with his wand pointing straight up the air. Grouped around him were a beautiful witch, a centaur, a goblin, and a house-elf. The last three were all looking adoringly up at the witch and the wizard. (*Order* 127)

This detailed description of the fountain gives criticism against authority as they seem willing to accept and even encourage the idea that wizard and witch are rulers over those that are thought to be inferior to them. Even though those non-human beings mentioned do all possess magical power they are evidently not seen as equal to the humans.

Benjamin Barton points out how the negative image of the Ministry is enforced even more by Rowling in numerous ways throughout the story. The Ministry has sentenced criminals to death without a trial, they control the press, are known to force confessions out of people by using magic and use harsh measures to discipline students that put up a fight against the Ministry's methods to control the society (1524). The importance and seemingly sole driving force of the Ministry is to protect their power and can be seen when they refuse to believe that Lord Voldemort has

returned and gained his former power back at the end of *The Goblet of Fire*. The acceptance of this would cause panic in the society and the Ministry would be forced to take action to ensure safety of the people that might threaten the Ministry's status in the society. The people in the Ministry deliberately work on suppressing Harry and Professor Dumbledore's, the Hogwarts headmaster, story all through the *Order of the Phoenix*, seemingly to ensure that their power stays intact. They strip Dumbledore of various awards and try to expel Harry from the school in order to undermine the credibility of their story of Lord Voldemort's return. As mentioned before the Ministry controls the media and they make the decision that it should be published in the wizard magazine the Daily Prophet that Dumbledore is becoming senile and Harry is putting forth this rumor in order to get attention. They resort to this since they fear that Professor Dumbledore is only telling the story of Lord Voldemort's return in order to cause dissent so that he can take over the Ministry and become the Minister of Magic himself. Therefore the Ministry takes drastic measures to protect their power. Dolores Umbridge becomes a teacher in Hogwarts, hired by the Ministry, and is later given power equal to the headmaster and her job is to suppress all those that protest against the Ministry's lack of action in order to stop Voldemort and his followers. A select group of students that object to the Ministry's ways form an alliance, lead by Harry, to practice defense against the Dark Arts, that is, magic used by Voldemort and his followers, the Death Eaters. Umbridge is utterly relentless and cruel when it comes to oppressing the students who steadily insist that Lord Voldemort has returned and her merciless nature is emphasized when she forces the students who dare to argue against her or the Ministry to write lines in their own blood. She is as well shown as a hater of half-breeds, that is, those that are not completely human. This image of a Ministry worker who is willing to stop at nothing in order to protect their cause and power gives a very negative image of authority in the Harry Potter novels.

The Order of the Phoenix ends on a hopeful note where the Prime Minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge, acknowledges that Lord Voldemort has returned after seeing him with his own eyes, making it impossible for him to continue to deny Harry and Dumbledore's story. Things do however not change much in the following book, *The Half-Blood Prince*. Rufus Scrimgeour replaces Cornelius Fudge as panic takes over in the wizard world and Scrimgeour tries to calm down the public by imprisoning people that the Ministry wrongfully claim are Death Eaters in order to make it seem as the

Ministry is taking action and by doing so keeping the society under control. He also tries to convince Harry to join the Ministry's cause by making it seem like he is working for the them, as he claims, "it would give everyone a lift to think you were involved", to which Harry refuses, claiming he does not approve of the way the Ministry is handling the situation and how he has not forgotten how the Ministry had refused to believe him and Dumbledore at first (*Half-Blood* 346-347). The portrayal of Ministry workers in the books all contribute to the negative image of the Ministry and authority in general within the wizard society as most of the employees are shown to be primarily motivated by self-interest, with the exception of Mr. Weasley, father of Harry's friend, Ron (Barton 1530). Though Mr. Weasley is shown as a hardworking man who enjoys his job in the Ministry, he is seemingly not willing to switch from the department he enjoys to work for in order to get a more powerful job. It is evident that he is regarded as a lower class worker and the Weasley family struggles financially, encouraging the image of him as a simple office worker for the Ministry. This does support the idea that those that are willing to do anything for power and stop at nothing are those that get ahead in the Ministry, urging even further the negative image of the Ministry.

Further examples that show the Ministry as a dictatorship in the wizard society that holds the sole power and stop at nothing to protect it is that Rufus Scrimgeour is seemingly appointed Prime Minister without any formal election. The society holds no power, only the select few that hold high jobs and those that have the money to buy their way in. Benjamin Barton points further out what was mentioned before that J.K. Rowling's background and the struggles she was facing as a poor, single mother when she first started writing the Harry Potter novels has influenced her negative portrayal of the Ministry since she experienced it herself. Those who struggle financially have evidently no power within political groups since they are unable to support them financially, making it evident that the political groups aim to serve the higher class, that is those that are able to pay them (1536). By making the authority in the novels power-hungry wizards and witches willing to do anything for power and to protect their image, Rowling begins to establish the social criticism that is manifests throughout the entire story where those that form the upper class are corrupted and those that form the lower class hold no power and are regarded as simple workers.

3. Heritage and Power

Throughout the Harry Potter novels heritage is an extremely important factor in determining the social status of people in the wizard society. People are labeled into groups within the society based on their family history, that is, the blood that runs in their veins. Those that come from old and respected families are those that have the most powerful connections within the society and form the upper class. Others that are not from respected families are placed lower in the social ladder and often face prejudice from the upper class. The books give a strong social criticism by showing how heritage controls the wizard society and where the power lies, causing much corruption amongst the people. After Lord Voldemort has gained his power back, he and the Death Eaters set out to eliminate all those that they believe do not deserve magical powers, that is, those that do not have the right heritage. It seems that wizards and witches in the society all possess the same magical power and most get education in a magic school. They are however placed into different classes simply based on origins and this portrayal of the society is evidently criticism against the division of people.

3.1 The Question of “Pure” Blood

Pureblood wizards form the upper class in the wizard society and possess the most power, money and the best connections to other influential people. The wizards and witches that are pureblood come from old and respected families, often living in mansions that have stayed within the family for a long time, giving an image of them as the aristocracy in the society. The pureblood families are all interrelated since there are very few of them left and the importance is to keep the family pure, stated in the book as the Malfoy family and Black family share a family tree, both among the few old and respected families (*Order* 113). That entails that the purebloods are not to be linked to those that do not hold the same status as them in the society.

It would seem that members of this upper class have extensive connections in the wizard society and some hold important jobs, for example in the Ministry of Magic. It is even indicated that some pay to gain power and get connection in the Ministry, seen when Harry sees Lucius Malfoy, from an old pureblood family mentioned before and later a known Death Eater, talking to the Minister of Magic and Harry hears gentle clinking of what sounds like a full pocket of gold coming from Malfoy’s robes (*Order* 154-155). A large part of the upper class in the magical community does evidently

view themselves as superior to those who do not come from pureblood families. Others are seen as unworthy and the common opinion is to view the non-human creatures in the wizard society as simple servants or even slaves. Many of the pureblood wizards and witches approve of the ideology the dark wizard Lord Voldemort has, that only pureblood and half-bloods are worthy of possessing magical power and others should be eliminated from the society. This outlook of the upper class is very similar to the attitude in the society and literature before postcolonial criticism came about in the 1990s. Before that the only right cultural, social, regional and national image was thought to be that of the Western society and every variation from that was regarded as the Other and inferior to the West (Barry 185-187). This mind set is very similar to the upper class in the wizard society seeing as they view themselves as the right and true wizards, the only ones that should have the right to possess magical power and control the society. Meanwhile others, those that do not have the right blood, are placed as simple workers and as outsiders of the society until Lord Voldemort and his followers take the extreme action to eliminate them. This shows that the pureblood wizards and witches further encourage the negative image of authority that the books give as well as judges where the power lies.

3.2 Half-bloods, Muggleborn and Squibs

Many wizards and witches have one parent who is a Muggle and possesses no magical power and the other is a wizard or a witch, making them half-blood wizards. This part of the society seems to be the largest part of the wizard society since there are very few pureblood families left, as mentioned before. Harry Potter is an example of a half-blood wizard, his father was pureblood while his mother was a Muggleborn witch. Half-bloods do not often face much prejudice in the society and seem to skip general criticism, something that no other social group does in the Harry Potter series. They do at times suffer insult aimed at their Muggle parent, for example after Harry says the name of Voldemort, who is normally referred to as You-Know-Who by others, one of the Death Eaters says “You dare to speak his name with your unworthy lips, you dare besmirch it with you half-blood’s tongue” (*Order* 784). It is possible to place the half-blood wizards and witches as the middle class in the society as they more often than not have common yet decent jobs, such as the teachers at Hogwarts and rarely get trouble for their heritage.

The wizards and witches that are placed in the lower rank of the social order are those who are Muggleborn, that is neither parent has magical powers. It is not stated in the books how they acquire magical powers but it seems rather common. Lord Voldemort and his followers believe that this part of the society does not deserve magical powers or to get education how to use their ability. They should be kept in ignorance and placed as outsiders of the community; they are the Other and the upper class feel that they do not belong. This portrayal of Muggleborn as the Other and lower in status is seen for example with the usage of “mudblood”, a derogatory name for those that are of Muggle parentage, common among pureblood wizards and witches. A wizard war begins after Voldemort regains his power in *The Goblet of Fire* where he and the Death Eaters begin to fight for their belief that pureblood and half-blood wizards and witches are the only ones worthy of magical power as they begin to establish a society where pureblood and half-blood wizards and witches are the only ones in power, excluding those that are Muggleborn from the society. Voldemort and his followers take drastic measures to free the wizard society of Muggleborns. He quickly takes over the in the wizard world when he gains power in the Ministry of Magic by using his followers that had connections in the Ministry. These events take place in the last book, *The Deathly Hallows*, and Voldemort enforces workers in the Ministry to survey all those that are Muggleborn by assembling a Muggleborn Registration Commission to “better understand how they came to possess magical secrets”, claiming that they have most likely obtained magical power by stealing wands or by using force (*Deathly* 209). Later a statue replaces the fountain that was mentioned before in the entrance hall of the Ministry of Magic. The new statue shows a wizard and a witch that are sitting on top of carved naked Muggles with the engraving “Magic is might” (*Deathly* 242). In Hogwarts Lord Voldemort instructs that the subject of Muggle Studies is compulsory for everyone, where the students are told Muggles are “like animals, stupid and dirty” (*Deathly* 574). All those who object in any way are oppressed in a violent manner, even students in Hogwarts. The act of hunting down and eliminating Muggleborn wizards and witches out of the society and believing that pureblood wizards are superior to others is very similar to the ideology of Nazis during World War II, where they believed that the Aryan race was superior to other races. The purebloods take drastic measures in order to free their society of those they feel are unworthy and enforcing this negative image of authority and the upper class influences the story greatly.

In the Harry Potter novels there are examples of people born into a wizard family yet possess no magical powers, known as Squibs. Even though Muggleborn wizards and witches are placed lower in the society, they do have the right to live and belong to the community and most without much trouble before Voldemort gains his power back in the fourth book. Squibs are however placed as complete outsiders in the wizard society and the society seems to disregard this rare group of people. This is seen for example in the fact that the Ministry of Magic does not keep a record of Squibs in magical families, enforcing the idea that Squibs have no place in the wizard world (*Order* 143). Squibs are encouraged to join Muggle schools and live in a Muggle society since there they will not be treated as second-class citizens like they are in the wizard society (*Deathly* 155). In the Harry Potter books there are very few Squibs mentioned, as it seems to be uncommon for them to live with the wizards. Notable are two, Argus Filch and Arabella Figg; both are shown as odd and give the impression that Squibs are outsiders of society. These two characters do not bond well with other people and seem to prefer the company of their cats. The subject of Squibs seems to be a very sensitive topic for all in the society and it is not explained how some people have the right genes, according to pureblood wizards and witches, but lack the ability to perform magic. There are examples of those who have lost their magical powers due to a massive emotional trauma, for example Lord Voldemort's mother as well as Professor Dumbledore's sister. It is possible to connect these few Squibs that are shown in the Harry Potter books to people living with mental or physical illness in modern society. Many are able to function properly in the society, hold jobs and live on their own, yet lack some aspects that are considered the norm with others and are in that sense placed as outsiders. Squibs are not even given fair chance to coexist in the society they are born in with the wizards and witches and those that do not enter the Muggle society are outsiders of their own society.

4. Half-man and Half-creature

As mentioned before a large part of the wizard society faces much discrimination based on their origins yet no group more than those that are only partly human, that is half-man and half-creature, often referred to as half-breeds. This part of society is not very large and the prejudice they face seems to come from all classes in the wizard society. The half-breeds seem to be associated to the animalistic urges that are linked to their non-human heritage and are often seen as incapable of performing the same tasks as other wizards and witches. There are few examples of half-breeds in the books, yet it is evident that this small part of society has accepted their place as outsiders in wizard society. They seem to be unable to fight for the same basic rights that other wizards and witches have and an example of that are two notable half-breed characters, Rubeus Hagrid and Remus Lupin. It is possible to connect this part of the wizard society to minority groups that have struggled throughout history, such as people from mixed heritage, African-Americans or people diagnosed with AIDS. Both Rubeus Hagrid and Remus Lupin play a big part in the story and an even bigger part in the social criticism the story is putting forward since they are both bullied and forced to stay in the place in the society by nearly the entire community. Hagrid is bullied to stay at his place as gamekeeper and it is never mentioned that he objects or fights when he is wrongfully expelled from Hogwarts. Lupin is held down by society because of half-breed status and he has accepted his place in the bottom rungs of the society, making him unable to stand up for himself and fight for his basic human rights.

4.1 Hagrid the Half-Giant

Rubeus Hagrid is one of few half-breeds in the Harry Potter novels and his struggle to fit in the society gives a clear image of how full of prejudice the wizard society truly is and how deeply it influences the story. Rubeus Hagrid is presented in the first book as a very large man who works as gamekeeper and keeper of keys at Hogwarts and later becomes a teacher in Care of Magical Creatures. In the second book it is revealed that Hagrid got expelled from Hogwarts in his third year when he was wrongfully blamed for a crime that resulted with the death of a fellow student. Dumbledore, the Hogwarts headmaster, is said to have fought to let Hagrid continue to stay at the school as an employee after he was expelled and his wand was

confiscated. Hagrid is shown to have accepted his place as a worker, never expressing regret of not being allowed to continue with his education and own a wand like every other wizard and witch, something that makes him subordinate to others. He is shown as an animal lover and shows special interest in animals others view as dangerous, such as dragons and three headed dogs and he trains a herd of thestrals, animals that are normally regarded a bad omen within the wizard society. This demonstrates how Hagrid relates to creatures that are viewed by the wizard society as dangerous, much like happens to him later in the story. He is as well very protective of the students, especially Harry and his friends Ron and Hermione, as well as Dumbledore and goes to extreme lengths to ensure their safety, emphasizing his good nature.

In *The Goblet of Fire*, Harry and Ron find out that Hagrid is in fact a half-giant who was left by his mother, a giantess, as a child and raised by his wizard father (*Goblet* 427-428). Ron voices the opinion on giants, that seems to be common and agreed upon by most in the wizard society, to Harry who was raised by Muggles and does not see the problem with Hagrid's background since he knows Hagrid for the good man that he is. Ron explains, "they're vicious, giants ... they just like killing, everyone knows that" adding that it is no wonder that Hagrid keeps his origins a secret (430). The giants are known to be brutal and were linked to Lord Voldemort during the first Wizard War, when Lord Voldemort first started his mission to eliminate all Muggleborn wizards and witches from the society before he was stopped. Hagrid's origin is then exposed to the public later in book four when the journalist Rita Skeeter writes an article where she claims that Hagrid is dangerous and should not be trusted to teach at Hogwarts due to the fact that he is a half-giant (*Goblet* 439). It is clear that students from the house of Slytherin, one of four houses in Hogwarts and the one that holds mostly pureblood students, are very much against the fact that Hagrid is a teacher and try to get him fired in any way they can. Hagrid struggles to prove himself as a teacher throughout the story, but is faced by many obstacles and is at times willing to give up his fight to prove himself as worthy and seems willing to accept his role as an outsider.

There do not seem to be many half-giants in the wizard society, yet Hagrid finally meets someone who shares the same origin as he does, Madame Maxime, the French headmistress of another wizard school. When Hagrid asks her about her origin she answers him, "I've never been more insulted in my life! 'Alf-giant? *Moi*? I've-I've big bones!" (*Goblet* 429), showing even clearer how these origins are not

viewed as a positive thing and should be kept hidden. Madame Maxime's denial makes an indication that if she had been open about her heritage, there would have been a possibility that she would not have gained the powerful position as a headmistress, especially with the struggle Hagrid faces as a teacher after his origin is exposed. After the second war against Lord Voldemort has started, Hagrid and Madame Maxime set out in a journey to try to convince the giants to join the side of those fighting against Lord Voldemort. The giants have been dying out over the years since they fight much among themselves over power, emphasizing the brutality of the race. They are unable to gain support from the giants since they fail to fit in with them.

It is possible to look at Hagrid's situation in the wizard world to people from mixed heritage since he does not fit in with either group completely. There seems to be a culturally accepted notion that people of mixed-heritage must select the identity of one parent (Pao, Wong and Teuben-Rowe 622). Hagrid evidently chose his wizard side, yet after his mother's identity is made, Hagrid is faced with the struggle of holding on to his place in the wizard world as a human. Language does as well play an important part in forming an ethnic identity and creates a sense of belonging (Pao, Wong and Teuben-Rowe 622). With that in mind it is evident that Hagrid does in fact not belong completely in the wizard society since he does not speak standard English.

4.2 Lupin the Werewolf

Remus Lupin is an old friend of Harry's father, James, who becomes a teacher in Defense Against the Dark Arts at Hogwarts in Harry's third year. Lupin enters the novel and is shown as looking "ill and exhausted" and "wearing an extremely shabby set of wizard's robes" (*Prisoner* 74). This does give the image of him as a poor man that seemingly has been out of a job for a while. This worn out state and ratty appearance that seems to be connected to Lupin throughout the books is in fact due to the fact that Lupin transforms into a werewolf on full moon. This transformation is a result of a bite from a werewolf, that is, he is, as Amy M. Green puts it, cursed with lycanthropy (87). Lupin was bitten as a young boy and at the time there was no cure so he must face the painful transformation alone on every full moon (*Prisoner* 352). When he is transformed Lupin becomes a murderous and bloodthirsty animal and every human instinct is lost, making him a danger to all those around him and even himself. Even though he is a very powerful and good wizard as is shown numerous

times in the books, he has a hard time making an honest living due to his condition. He has learned from an early age how society views him and those alike him as outsiders and has begun to behave accordingly. His submissive behavior, seen for example in the fact that he never stands up for himself when he is taunted for his appearance and poor status in the society, emphasizes how he has accepted his place as an outsider (Green 102). The fact that he was infected at an early age makes it apparent that he has been raised knowing where society places him and this makes him as well reluctant to form emotional bonds with other people, since he fears of losing them when they find out his true identity. Lupin is as well very careful to keep his distance and not interfere with other people's business since he is afraid of rejection and there are numerous examples of his submissive behavior.

Lupin keeps the transformation hidden from his friends in school for a long time and never tells his friends to back down even when he feels they are treating someone cruelly, a good example of this is when they are tormenting their fellow student Snape, since he fears he might lose his friends if he stands up to them or fears they might turn against him since he is an easy target (*Order* 645). Harry notices in an old photograph of Lupin, Harry's father, Sirius Black and Peter Pettigrew when they were young in school that Lupin was "even then a little shabby-looking, but he had the same air of delighted surprise [as Pettigrew] at finding himself linked and included" (*Deathly* 179). With that it is shown that even as a young boy Lupin had begun to adapt to his role as an outsider and is seemingly happy yet unsure when he is accepted into a group of friends. Lupin does not form an emotional bond with Harry like Sirius, Harry's godfather, and Harry refers to Lupin by his last name throughout all the novels, showing how Lupin attempts to keep his distance and Harry does not connect to him as well as he does to Sirius. After Professor Snape makes the fact that Lupin is a werewolf known to the public, Lupin resigns as a teacher at Hogwarts, claiming that parents of the students will not approve of a werewolf teaching their children (*Prisoner* 423). He even treats Professor Snape politely and with respect after this and is not willing to fight for his job, merely accepting his fate, knowing how a majority of society sees him, as nothing more than a monster. Lupin evidently feels he does not deserve the same things that other people do, such as being romantically involved with someone, since his condition puts the person in danger and he fears as well the reaction of other people. Nymphadora Tonks wishes to be with him despite his illness and it takes much persuasion from many people for him to enter into a relationship

with her and marry her. Lupin faces again a difficult situation when Tonks becomes pregnant with his child. He leaves her and offers his help to Harry, Ron and Hermione who are hunting for the horcruxes in order to be able to defeat Voldemort. When Harry finds out that Lupin has left his unborn child, he and Lupin have a heated argument where Lupin states that by marrying Tonks he has made her into an outcast in society and he fears that his child will inherit his condition, filling him with guilt that he has possibly sentenced an innocent child to live a life with the same struggles and pain as he has (*Deathly* 213). All these factors shed a light on how Lupin is clearly accepting how society views him as a monster and plays his role as an outsider. Werewolves and other half-breeds are the outcasts of the wizard society and looked at with disgust and are even limited by law to find a way of living. Critics have connected this shunning and disapproval of werewolves in the wizard society to many minority groups in the real world. There are similarities in the view to people who have suffered from AIDS when the disease was first discovered (Green 100). There are also similarities to people who have been persecuted based on their race, especially African-Americans after the Civil War as African-Americans faced much discrimination even after slavery was abolished and there were strict laws that limited their right to vote, get education or find employment and housing (Mendelson 3). This is very similar to the situation Lupin is in. He is only allowed in as a student at Hogwarts after Professor Dumbledore is willing to take responsibility for him and promise he will guarantee to keep Lupin and the other students in the school safe by separating Lupin from the others during his transformation on a full moon. As mentioned before, Lupin is shown as a poor man, emphasizing his incapability to get a job due to the society's restrictions and as a result it limits his ability of proper housing. Werewolf segregation is even mentioned in *Order of the Phoenix*, emphasizing the similarity to African-Americans.

5. Enslaved Creatures

In the wizard society there are not only people with magical power but also a number of non-human creatures that most seem to possess some sort of magical powers. They play different roles in the society yet all have in common the fact that they are placed lower in society than those that are human. Three races are shown in great detail in the books, the house-elves, the goblins and centaurs. Most of these non-human beings form the base of the society. That is, their job is to serve and produce so that the superstructure, that is the wizards and witches, can go on with their life without any trouble. The society within the walls of Hogwarts even thrives on slavery, where house-elves do all the work, yet no one gives it much focus.

The portrayal of these non-human beings is similar to minority groups that do not have the same rights as others in the society. The house-elves have accepted their place as simple workers and lack the belief that they are capable of being on their own. It is possible to place the goblins and centaurs into the same group since their attitude and loathing towards wizards and witches is similar. Neither group does try to be a part of the wizard world but shuns it in any way possible yet are bound to the wizard world in some sense. Wizards and witches are the only ones that have the right to use and own a wand and it becomes evident that there has been a struggle between the non-human beings and the wizard and witches for years.

5.1 House-elves

House-elves are described to be tiny creatures with bat like ears and large eyes (*Goblet* 97). House-elves are servants to wizard families and normally serve within the same family and are passed down until their death. Most wizards and witches treat house-elves very poorly and the house-elves seem to have accepted their place as simple workers in the society. Hermione Granger, Harry's friend points out "house-elves get a very raw deal! ... It's slavery, that's what it is!" since no house-elf gets paid for his or her work (*Goblet* 125). The house-elves are evidently very dependent on wizards and extremely loyal to their masters and are known to turn to self-harm if they disobey their master's wishes or commands. House-elves do possess magical power and can even perform some magic, such as apparating, a magical transportation to and from places wizards and witches are unable to. Yet they, as well as other magical creatures, are not allowed to carry a wand like wizards and witches and there is law against it that states, "No non-human creature is permitted to carry or use a

wand” (*Goblet* 132). The society in Hogwarts does thrive on the work of the house-elves; they do all the cleaning and cooking yet they stay hidden. It is not until in *The Goblet of Fire* that Hermione, Harry and Ron realize that there are house-elves that do all the work in the castle. After Hermione discovers that the house-elves do not get paid or receive any vacation, she forms an organization called Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare, or S.P.E.W., to fight for basic rights for house-elves (*Goblet* 224). This idea of hers is met by indifference or even ridicule from her schoolmates and even the house-elves themselves. This social status is, as Marion Rana points out, due to the fact that the house-elves are believed to be inferior to wizards since they lack intelligence, like to serve humans and are seemingly incapable of living on their own (53).

The story shows three house elves in depth and all are shown as very different, yet all share the common ground of being completely dependent on wizards or witches in some form and they are all forced to follow direct orders from their masters, or as one of them states, “the house-elf’s highest law is his Master’s bidding” (*Deathly* 195). The house-elf Dobby is shown as the only elf that is against this enslavement after he is set free from the Malfoy family. He is considered weird and placed as an outsider in the house-elf community within the walls of Hogwarts after Dumbledore offers him a paid job with vacation days. Even though Dobby is presented as the most liberal elf, he is still shown as naïve and asks for very little pay and seems terrified at the thought of too much pay and vacation (Rana 54). Dobby begins to worship Harry, as he was his owner, taking commands from him and is willing to do practically anything for him, even sacrifice his own life as he does. This need for a master shows that Dobby is in fact incapable of living on his own. Winky is an example of a house-elf who is so dedicated to her master that after she is freed, that is fired, she becomes deeply depressed and an alcoholic. Kreacher is the house-elf that Harry inherits from his godfather Sirius. Sirius treated Kreacher badly, resulting in Kreacher betraying Sirius by finding a way to twist direct orders from him. Harry holds resentment towards the elf, yet after Harry changes his mind about him and starts to treat him with respect, Kreacher’s behavior changes drastically. He begins to groom himself and starts cooking and cleaning the house, doing his job with great pleasure.

The house-elves can clearly symbolize African-American and Caribbean slave struggles. They are simply meant to serve, not to be seen nor heard, and are trapped in

their work, made to believe that they are unable to have a life outside of their work. This notion that Kreacher, as many other house-elves, is passed down gives an even greater focus on the fact that house-elves are enslaved (Rana 54). Many other factors strengthen this image of house-elves as slaves, for example the fact that house-elves seemingly only have one name, something that was common among slaves. The way the house-elves speak focuses on the fact that they are thought to lack intelligence. The way they speak is similar to immigrants as they speak very simple English, an example of this is how Winky speaks of herself, “I is a good elf, I isn’t using wands. I isn’t knowing how” (*Goblin* 136). The house-elves do not share a common grammar, but those house-elves shown do all speak incorrectly (Rana 55). This image of the house-elves as slaves places them as the base of the society, they are simply meant to serve the wizards and witches without getting any credit or payment as they are made to believe that they are incapable of being independent from the humans.

5.2 Goblins and Centaurs

Goblins and centaurs are two very distinct races in the wizard world, yet have in common the fact that they are looked down on by wizards and witches and should be kept at their place at the bottom of the society. These two groups also have in common their negative outlook on wizards and witches as they feel they are themselves superior to them. The people in the society see both the goblins and the centaurs in a negative way as they are regarded cruel, harsh and unyielding in their belief that they are greater than the humans.

Goblins are shown as very intelligent beings that have their own language and possess great skills in the making of weapons, jewelry and money. They are slightly larger than house-elves, have long thin fingers and black eyes (*Deathly* 485). Goblins make up a large part of the workers in the wizard bank, Gringotts. Even though they retain much talent and possess magical powers, a large part of the wizard society regards them as lower class and place them as simple workers with other magical beings that are not human. Goblins are shown as a very proud race and are not willing to submit to wizards calling, making them very unlike house-elves. Many things have caused troubles and tension between goblins and wizards, for example the right to carry a wand, which is propitiated to goblins. Even though they are capable of performing magic without a wand, one goblin, Griphook, puts it that “wizards refuse to share the secret of wandlore with other magical beings, they deny us the possibility

of extending our powers” while wizards argue that goblins refuse to share with them their secrets in sword and armor making (*Deathly* 488). Goblins feel that the rightful owner of an object is the maker, not the purchaser and disapprove of the habit within wizard society of passing objects down a family (*Deathly* 517). Lourdes Lopez-Ropero states that mistreatment may generate to rage and fatal retaliation (151). The quarrel between goblins and the humans has resulted in a number of rebellions from the goblins throughout the years that are only mentioned in History of Magic at Hogwarts (*Goblet* 234). The story only shows one goblin in detail, Griphook, that Harry must rely on for help in order to defeat Lord Voldemort. The goblin is presented in a very negative way and Harry states that he does not like the goblin since he is “unexpectedly bloodthirsty, laughed at the idea of pain to lesser creature, and seemed to relish the possibility that they might have to hurt other wizards” (*Deathly* 509). The humans in society only see the goblins as workers, yet they see themselves as greater. Though they have evidently struggled to take power into their own hands with rebellions, they have failed and been kept down by the wizard society.

Centaurs are first briefly shown in the first Harry Potter novel and are said to have a human body to the waist while their lower body is of a horse. From the beginning they are portrayed as a very proud race and live together in a herd in a forest following their own rules and laws, completely apart from the wizard society. In *The Order of the Phoenix* the centaurs are shown in more detail and they are as well seen in a very negative way, much like the goblins. One of the centaurs, Firenze, agrees to take a teaching position at Hogwarts. The others from his herd exile him and almost kick him to death, claiming he betrayed and dishonored them by becoming a worker for humans (*Order* 698). The centaurs view themselves as superior to wizards and witches and seem in no way want to be meddled with the human society.

The goblins wish to gain the right to use a wand and possibly some more power within the society and the centaurs are willing to exile and attempt to murder one of their own who leaves the herd to join the human society, giving both races a very negative image. Both groups feel that they deserve something greater yet have been held down by wizards and witches, simply placed in the base of the society with the house-elves.

6. Conclusion

The story about the young wizard Harry Potter is extremely popular all around the world. Though the main moral message of the story might be that good triumphs over evil, it is evident that there is a clear social criticism present in the books that evidently shapes them. The upper class and the authority, with the portrayal of the Ministry of Magic and the purebloods, gives a very negative image of those that hold the power in the wizard society since they are corrupt and their main interest is in keeping their power protected. The treatment of those that form the lower class is seen in great detail and holds much similarity to many minority groups that have been known in history, such as African-Americans. Muggleborn wizards and witches must struggle to prove their worth and fight to hold on to their right to practice magic after Lord Voldemort and his followers wish to eliminate all those that they deem unfit to use magic, that is, those that do not have the right blood. Two notable characters, the half-breeds Rubeus Hagrid and Remus Lupin, show the discrimination people out of the norm of the wizard community must face and how it influences their life and at the same time the story itself. The characters and the treatment of them gives the reader a deeper look into the society and how the wizard world works as it becomes evident that discrimination is a ruling power in the wizard community like in any society. The story gives a strong social criticism on the old habit that has followed mankind throughout history and has had great impact in it, to divide people into groups and judge them based on their origins.

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