Wizarding Hierarchy

A Portrayal of Discrimination and Prejudice

in J.K. Rowling’s Harry Potter novels

B.A. Thesis

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Abstract
This paper explores how the Harry Potter novels by J.K. Rowling touches on the subject of discrimination and general prejudice against minority groups throughout the history of mankind. Though there are many minority groups in the novels, only a few will be discussed. Each of them will be compared to minority groups that faces prejudice in the real world. The paper further examines the effect discrimination has on the wizarding world and the struggle that wizards have to face to break from old habits, such as the enslavement of house-elves and their ongoing quarrels with goblins and other non-human creatures. The history of these feuds will be discussed as well as possible ways of mending the relationship between wizards and the minority groups. Oppression and abuse towards these minority groups are parts of the daily life of wizards and has been for centuries. Likewise, there will a focus on the prejudice werewolves face and how they mirror HIV infected people. In order to compare werewolves and people with HIV, a series of articles and studies on attitude towards diseases such as HIV/AIDS will be analyzed. The paper will also include a discussion about a few characters from the series that in some way are connected to minority groups: Hermione Granger, Harry Potter, Ron Weasley, Dolores Umbridge, Lord Voldemort, Dobby the house-elf, and lastly the werewolf Remus Lupin. Though many of these characters are important characters, there will be a specific discussion and analysis of Remus Lupin as a representative of illness in the world of wizards. Additionally, there will be a short discussion about the effects of social media has on society in present days. The inspiration for this paper came after a recent reading of the series, during a highly debated racial and prejudice discussions taking place over social media.
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Introduction

Growing up reading Harry Potter it is hard not to be touched by the story of the boy who lived and his life in the wizarding world. At first it seems like a simple story about a boy, discovering his identity in the wizarding world as well as the fight against good and evil. However, the story becomes darker and more complicated as Harry gets older and Lord Voldemort slowly gains back his powers as one of the evil wizards ever to exist. Harry is drawn into a war where is morals are questioned along with the rest of the wizarding society. Battling the regime of Voldemort becomes for Harry more than a question of what is good and evil: he knows what he must do in order to defeat Voldemort, however, there are things he must do along the way which are at times dangerous and immoral. As an adult reader of the books, one begins to see similarities between the real world and the wizarding world: good things as well as bad. The story about the importance of family and love is one that many people can relate to as well as the story about power-hungry people and their means of gaining power. Such is the story of how Lord Voldemort came to power: he got rid of those who did not share his opinions and stood up against him.

Discrimination and prejudice have been part of human history for centuries and it is present in J.K. Rowling’s world of wizards, witches and magical creatures as well. Inequality is apparent throughout the series, showing itself in how wizards and witches treat other magical creatures. The idea for this paper comes from having recently re-read the books and seeing resemblances between the novels and our world: people of color and other ethnic groups still face racism and discrimination on behalf of white people, which is similar to the prejudice wizards have for non-wizards. Though there are many representations of minority groups, there will be a special focus in this paper on house-elves and werewolves, and how they represent discrimination and prejudice that has been usually how humans tend to behave towards anything that is different. This paper will examine all seven Harry Potter novels as well as other writings by Rowling on pottermore.com, which is a website created by Rowling for the fans of the Potterverse. These examples will then be compared to real stories and events that have been documented in books as well as journals and other writings. There will additionally be a short discussion about World War II and how it relates to part of the series including the topic of white supremacy. The second chapter of the paper will include a discussion about house-elves and goblins who make up the minority groups which are the
most oppressed and are the lowest ranking members of society in the *Harry Potter* novels. The half-giant Hagrid will have his own chapter due to his complicated status as an active member of the wizarding society, while still facing much prejudice and discrimination. Furthermore, a comparison of werewolves and HIV/AIDS infected people will be the topic of the final chapter of the paper, and is dedicated to a personal favorite Remus Lupin who will be the central focus of that chapter.

Overall, there will be four chapters in this paper, each with its special topic: privilege, oppression and slavery, complications and illness. What these chapters have in common is the ongoing discrimination and prejudice against minority groups on behalf of wizards despite being very distinct from each other and belonging in separate social classes. The discrimination against minority groups in *Harry Potter* represents itself in the way wizards treat magical creatures.
1. Pure-blood Supremacy and Wizarding Privilege

Pure-blood supremacy and wizarding privilege in the world of Harry Potter mirrors the white supremacy movements of our world. A person of white ancestry who believes that his own race is superior to other races and ethnic groups is according to Bonds and Inwood, a white supremacist (719-720). Rowling touches several times upon the subject of white supremacy and privilege; intentionally or not, the invisibility cloak which Harry inherits from his father is in a way a metaphor for white supremacy: the white skin-color, in this case the cloak, hides Harry from the consequences of his actions and because of the cloak he can roam around freely from being noticed around Hogwarts castle (Zoltan and Kuile). Because of their skin-color, the unseen and hidden actions of white people become the norm. On the other hand, if someone with different skin-color does the same, it becomes extraordinary (Bonds and Inwood 717). The inheritance says something about the privilege Harry got from his father. Though he did not grow up with his parents alive, they did leave him financially well of (Philosopher's Stone ch. 5) which cannot to be said about every orphan. Harry has the privilege to go through life without having to worry about money. The supremacy of people with white skin-color plays a big part in historical events throughout the centuries.

The belief of white people that they are superior to others was the basis of the slave trade around the world, not to mention the slave trade in the United States (Bonds and Inwood 720). Closer in history, white supremacy was one of the reasons for the outbreak of World War II. The beliefs in racial superiority held by Adolf Hitler almost led to the extinction of Jews. More than that, the regime led by Hitler made thousands of homosexuals, handicapped and psychiatric patients suffer through experiments and medical practices, which were performed to maintain the pureness of the white race (Tambiah 134 - 135). The ongoing idea of the pureness of white people is much the same as the idea of wizarding pureness.

Wizards who are born into a non-wizarding family, are the humans who face the most discrimination in the magical society, and simply due to the fact that they were not born into a wizarding family. Those from families of wizards are unofficially known as ‘pure-bloods’ and are usually the ones calling those of non-wizards’ parentage ‘mudbloods’. Those ‘pure-blood’ wizards who think they are above all others are the ones that use these terms the most. The ‘pure’ suggests that their blood is perfect and clean, while the ‘mud’ is dirty.
According to those who do not support these ideas this is the worst thing that can be said to a fellow wizard (*Chamber of Secrets* ch. 7). These offensive terms are similar to the time in the United States when instead of using names for individuals, people of color were called names that de-humanized them such as ‘negroes’ or other offensive terms that are not appropriate for this paper. This goes to show that in order to make less of people that are not highly positioned within society, those higher in the social ladder tend to make up names for the group as whole, not focusing on the individual.

The belief in the hierarchy of pure-bloods is as old as the story of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry: the founder of House Slytherin, Salazar Slytherin, only wished to teach those of pure ancestry, and make the world free of muggle-borns (Rowling, Pure-Blood). When Voldemort first came to power, he promoted the idea of a world without muggles with which many pure-blood families agreed: they encouraged the early ideas of Voldemort, but when he began to use violence in order to gain power, some backed away (*Order of the Phoenix* ch. 6). The ideas of Voldemort and Slytherin show that are always some within each generation who takes up inhumane ideas of others and try to adapt them to their current culture and society. By doing so they often take their beliefs further than their predecessors and as in the case of Voldemort, starting a war. Though Salazar Slytherin commenced the beliefs on ‘pure-blood’ hierarchy, he was not the one who began murdering those of muggle ancestry. He left his position as Hogwarts founder in order to protest of the enrolment of muggle-borns into the school. He did, however, leave behind a deadly creature whose purpose was to kill ‘mud-bloods’ and could only be controlled by his true heir, Voldemort (*Chamber of Secrets* ch. 9, 17). Because the monster only attacked muggle-borns, those from magical families were able to walk around Hogwarts without the fear of being attacked. Similar to how the invisibility cloak Harry owns hides him from the world, the blood-status of ‘pure-bloods’ is the thing what protects them against the monster. Though the fear of the monster is there, ‘pure-blood’ students do not have to worry about getting attacked, while those of muggle parentage have to be on constant look-out for the monster (*Chamber of Secrets* ch. 11). The fact that Slytherin did not take on the reasonability to kill muggle-borns illustrates his powers within the wizarding world: he is so powerful that centuries after his death, he manages to make someone else do his bidding. By doing so, Slytherin minimizes his responsibility and maintains his reputation as a founder of the school.
Muggle-borns are not the only humans who face discrimination in the wizarding world. A squib is someone in a wizarding family who was born without any magical powers. According to many wizards, they are as bad as muggle-borns and are usually isolated from the world (Chamber of Secrets ch. 9). Squibs are not isolated to prevent any harm to themselves or others, it is simply done to hide the fact that a shame has been brought onto the family. It shows how the wizarding society has these inhumane standards of perfection and if there are any signs of peculiarity or being slightly different, these should remain hidden. Though the novels show that this has improved toward a more humane and inclusive approach, both our world and the wizarding world still face problems of ideas of perfection which has increased with the popularization of social media which pressures people to be flawless.

1.2. Magical Creatures and the Many Laws Against Them

In J.K. Rowling’s world, wizards have debated over the definition of magical creatures and it has caused much controversy within the subject. Rowling describes the arguments about which magical creatures should be defined as ‘beings’ and which as ‘beasts’ in her book Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them. The book explains how it was not until 1811 when those magical creatures that “have sufficient intelligence to understand the laws of the magical community and to bear part of the responsibility in shaping those laws” could be classified as ‘beings’ Thus, those creatures who do not fulfil these terms are defined as ‘beasts’. Trolls and sphinxes are two examples of creatures that have caused the most controversy: trolls can learn basic human language, but they must always have someone with them to help. Sphinxes do understand human language, but they only talk in riddles which makes it hard for humans to understand and they become dangerous when they get an incorrect answer. Because of their aggressive nature and how they react to wrongly answered questions they do not belong in the ‘being’ division (Rowling 22-23). This conflict of definition of magical creatures shows how complicated wizarding society is and that it has the desire to define and categorize everything, particularly minority groups. The racial groups of our world are defined as their races, not as individuals, similarly to the magical creatures in the magical world created by Rowling.
One of the clearest examples of wizard supremacy is the Code of Wand Use. Wizards made this law to disallow all non-humans, e.g. all magical creatures, to carry a wand. When a magical creature is caught with a wand, it must be interrogated and punished (*Goblet of Fire* ch. 9). To have the power to prohibit others to have a better quality of life including knowledge which would be beneficial to them with no reason, is apparent throughout the novels and is the Code of Wand Use a good example. Wizards want to be the sole owners of the knowledge of wands and how to use them and therefore they do not allow any other being to carry a wand.

The way wizards prohibit others to use wands is similar to the way white people in the United States used to view the education and basic rights of black people in the 1960s. At that time the rights of black people were as little as none; they were denied proper education and the ability to speak up for themselves. White people wanted to be the ones in control of the government as well as other important positions within society. In order to maintain that power they made laws which segregated and minimized the education of black people. Without the proper education, black people were left without anyone to represent them in the legislature or any other superior position in society. By denying people of color proper representation, white people were able to maintain their ongoing power for many decades (Mendelson 6, 34). When in control of power it can be hard to decide what is best for other.

Dolores Umbridge should have been stopped as soon as she got a taste of power: as a well-positioned employee of the Ministry of Magic, her loathing of any part-human creature was apparent through her way of working, for example, her anti-werewolf legislation which made it harder for werewolves to get a decent job etc. During her year at Hogwarts, she used her power to inspect and prohibit teachers who teach in a more progressive way than what Umbrigde feels appropriate. Additionally, she does not hide her prejudice against all part-human creatures, or in her words: half-breeds. The half-giant Hagrid becomes a constant subject of her scorn. Throughout her year at Hogwarts she treats Hagrid horribly: her goal is to get rid of him and in order to do so, she blames him for accidents and mishaps that he did not have any connection to (*Order of the Pheonix* ch. 14-15, 21, 31), which is exactly what got him expelled from Hogwarts in the first place. Her hatred for anything abnormal is fear and prejudiced upbringing mingled together.
The post-Hogwarts career of Umbridge and her return to the Ministry of Magic is of great importance, since she plays a significant part during the war. As the head of the muggle-born registrations, she was responsible for getting rid of muggle-borns and keeping them out of public life in the wizarding world (Deathly Hallows ch. 13). Her actions against the magical creatures and her part in the war waged by Voldemort resembles the police misconduct of the 1960s whose main focus was to keep black people away from the eyes of the public. Police brutality and misconduct is perhaps one of the worst examples of discrimination against minority groups. The victims of police brutality are often those who cannot retaliate due to their social and economic statuses (Mendelson 143). This behavior of getting rid of those that are slightly different from the norm is a part of how humans behave, in our world and in the wizarding world, and given the fact how long it has been going on, it is unlikely to change in the near future.

2. Slavery and Oppression in the Wizarding World

Slavery presents itself in many ways in the Harry Potter novels, but those creatures that are the most oppressed and have the least freedom or respect in the society of wizards are house-elves and goblins. These creatures have different positions as members of the magical world but it is clear that the house-elves have it the worst.

House-elves are first introduced to the story in the second novel, Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, with the unexpected visit by Dobby in the bedroom of Harry Potter. The purpose of a house-elf is simply to serve a family until the day it dies. The only way a house-elf can be set free from its enslavement is to be given proper garments (ch. 2). According to wizards, the house-elves want to be enslaved and it is a fulfilling existence for them. This view on enslavement resembles the belief white people held on African American slaves in the 1830’s: the slaves were happy to serve their masters and did it with loyalty and happiness. (Horne 80-81). Though the elves are supposed to be happy to serve their masters, they do not have the permission to have fun nor a life of their own. Their only delight is to work. Enslavement of house-elves goes back centuries but is never talked about openly (Goblet of Fire ch. 9, 15); wizards tend to disregard and not talk publicly about their actions against other magical races. In doing so they are denying their awful treatment of others and in the eyes of wizards, house-elves are loyal by nature, and to them it might seem that they
fought against the Death Eaters, supporters of Voldemort, in the final battle of Hogwarts only because of their loyalty to their masters. Though Rowling does not give any hint about why they fought in the battle, the most logical reason considering their position is their bondage to Hogwarts castle and they fought because of their bond to either Hogwarts itself or the students and staff:

“The house-elves of Hogwarts swarmed into the Entrance Hall, screaming and waving carving knives and cleavers, and at their head... They were hacking and stabbing at the ankles and shins of Death Eaters, their tiny faces alive with malice...” (Deathly Hallows ch. 25, 36).

Assuming that they were fighting in order to protect the castle and its inhabitants, it does not change anything for them, and Rowling does not give any hints regarding their future (Horne 97). It seems that after the war, the elves maintained their position within the wizarding society. The house-elves are the most loyal creatures in the *Harry Potter* novels, although there are always exceptions.

As discussed above, Dobby the House-Elf is the first of his kind introduced to the series. He is introduced as an eager creature, trying to warn Harry from unknown but terrible things that will take place at Hogwarts that year. He did this despite knowing that if he was caught by his masters, he would be punished severely. Consequently, he broke the most important law to which he is magically bound to: to be loyal to his master no matter what. Throughout the course of trying to warn Harry about upcoming dangers at Hogwarts, Dobby constantly tried to hurt himself, especially when he hinted at that his masters are not very pleasant (*Chamber of Secrets* ch. 2). When a house-elf disobeys his master, he must be punished.

There are many reasons why someone would want to hurt themselves, but in his case, self-harm is a form of self-punishment to make up for the fact that Dobby had insulted his family. He uses the punishment as a way to feel better, seeing that after each outburst of self-harm he calms down (Klonsky and Laptook 191, 193). Two years after he becomes a free elf, Dobby still has trouble speaking negatively about his former masters: after accidentally saying that they were bad and dark wizards, the self-harm reoccurs (*Goblet of Fire* ch. 21). It seems that the magical bondage between house-elves and the family they serve is so strong that it still exists even years after it was cut off. It is the mark of their enslavement as well,
that the house-elves are not allowed to wish or hope for freedom. Acknowledging such a pervasive problem is one step of many to make the world a better place for everybody.

2.2. The Golden Trio and Elfish Welfare

Hermione Granger is the first character to speak openly about the house-elf enslavement and her dislike on the subject. After her encounter with the house-elf Winky and her sacking from her duties with the Crouch family, Hermione begins to see the less positive aspects of the wizarding world (Goblet of Fire ch. 9). As Horne points out, her realization of the enslavement of house-elves begins with Hermione acknowledging that it is the norm in the wizarding world. However, she does not do anything to help the house-elves until she realizes her own wizarding privilege at Hogwarts which is supported by house-elf labor (84-85). It took Hermione, Ron and Harry four years to realize that there are house-elves cooking their dinner and clean the castle but it was only Hermione who took it to heart (Goblet of Fire ch. 12). The fact that it took them about four years to realize that house-elves were responsible for cleaning and cooking for the inhabitants of Hogwarts, shows how ignorant people can be and do not question things because they really do not want to know the real truth because it might be uncomfortable. Before they were told about the house-elves in the kitchen, they believed that the food magically appeared on the golden plates in front of them and which in turn cleaned themselves:

“When everyone had eaten as much as they could, the remains of the food faded from the plates, leaving them sparkling clean as before. A moment later the puddings appeared. Blocks of ice-cream in every flavour you could think of, apple pies, treacle tarts, chocolate éclairs and jam doughnuts, trifle, strawberries, jelly, rice pudding…” (Philosopher's Stone ch. 7)

Not happy with how things are run at Hogwarts, Hermione establishes S.P.E.W: The Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare. She does this to influence her fellow wizards about the treatment of house-elves. She wants house-elves to get fair wages and proper working conditions, as well as to change the laws which prohibit house-elves and other beings, to use a wand. Hermione tries her best, but there are only a few of her classmates that have a slight interest in hearing her opinions (Goblet of Fire ch. 14). Though Hermione is very clear about her aim to set the elves free, she has a hard time to convince those closest to her to do the
same. There are many reasons why Hermione takes this problem to heart, but it is clear that she is aware that she herself a minority group in this world as she comes from a muggle family. She feels that sympathy on a personal level because she knows how it feels to be judged based on your social class.

Though Harry Potter himself recognizes the problem house-elves face, he does not do anything to help Hermione with her aims to make the lives of the elves better. When discussing the rights of the elves, Harry feels awkward and ill at ease. Hornet discusses this very well, saying that though Harry sees the discrimination that is prevailing in the wizarding world and how it relies on slave labor, he does not think that the cause is worth fighting for and is not keen on joining Hermione in S.P.E.W. However, he is ready to recognize the fact that the elves do have feelings of their own (83), though at first he only feels pity towards them, especially Dobby. Harry sees the way Dobby is treated by the Malfoys and by the end of book two, he sets Dobby free by giving him his own sock by making it seem that Lucius Malfoy did it himself (Chamber of Secrets ch. 18). In later books, Harry becomes to a degree fond of Dobby, but then again not enough to help to set his kind free. When Harry finds himself in tight situations, Dobby is almost always there to help him: in book four Dobby desperately helps him overcome the second task of the Triwizard Tournament (Goblet of Fire ch. 26) and the year after that, Dobby is the one suggesting that Harry uses the Room of Requirement for DA meeting (Order of the Phoenix ch. 18). Dobby becomes the one who Harry calls to when in need and it shows the limited sympathy Harry has towards Dobby and house-elves in general: again, their main purpose is to serve wizards. As Harry did not grow up in a society of the norms of enslaved elves there is a slight difference between his outlook and those who did, but as he is not a member of a minority group that faces much discrimination he is unable to connect to Dobby and the other house-elves on a personal level.

Ron Weasley is the only one of the three to have no sympathy towards the elves. As he is the only one that grew up in the wizarding society, he is blinded by the norms of it: he does not realize his privilege and therefore he does not see any reason to end it. In a way it makes him the opposite of Hermione who uses her privilege to help the elves. Ron was taught from an early age about the hierarchy of wizards and humans in general: this is how the world work and it should not be questioned. This attitude can be seen in his
behavior throughout the novels, particularly whenever the subject of elfish welfare is mentioned:

“…Elf enslavement goes back centuries. I can’t believe no one’s done anything about it before now.’ ‘Hermione – open your ears,’ said Ron loudly.

‘They. Like. It. They like being enslaved!’…” (Goblet of Fire ch. 14).

Ron has the tendency to joke about the house-elves and their living condition: more than once after some hard work he talks about how he feels like a house-elf (Order of the Phoenix ch. 9) and is always faced with reactions of disgust from Hermione. His brothers Fred and George have similar viewpoints of the house-elves as Ron: the house-elves are happy with their lives and it should not be discussed further (Goblet of Fire ch. 14-15).

2.3. Goblins versus Wizards

Goblins are those magical creatures that protest the most about the way they are treated. A clear oppression towards goblins is the already discussed Code of Wand use. Though goblins are able to perform magic they are not allowed to use a wand. Consequently, they do not share any of their magic with wizards which has caused many debates and arguments between the two species (Deathly Hallows ch. 24). However, as goblins run the wizarding bank, Gringotts, they are not as oppressed as the house-elves. They do have their own lives and families and earn their living, but they face much prejudice and discrimination. For centuries, wizards have denied them complete freedom and in the eyes of wizards their only purpose is to run Gringotts (Order of the Phoenix ch. 5). Goblins are very clever and persistent creatures. Every few centuries they rebel against the oppression of wizards and it has become a way of life for them. Their rebellions are never discussed in detail, moreover the reader does not get to know what really happened during those rebellions: only that they happened (Horne 89-90). By not discussing in more details about goblin rebellions and their history, Rowling minimizes the opportunity that the reader feels sympathy towards them and makes them less relatable. Only their harsh attitudes, etc. is presented as their main quality. The reader only sees the view on goblins from the eyes of wizards which makes it even harder for the reader to get a proper look on how goblins feel, etc.

The regime of Voldemort was a time of desperation amongst wizards as well as goblins. The goblins were left with a choice to join either Voldemort’s side of the war or
those against him, even though it was not their war to fight. Some goblins chose to go into hiding instead of being forced to choose. As the war escalated and Voldemort gathered more strength, Gringotts got under his rule: goblins were slaughtered for trying to carry out their protective duties, which brings into light the awful way goblins have been treated throughout history, especially in times of difficulties *(Deathly Hallows* ch. 15, 24). The goblins are forced to fight the wars of others and are not allowed to be neutral. Though they wanted to sit by and watch wizards slaughter each other, it brings out the moral question of the goblins. Should they choose to fight with a wizard who wants to get rid of all the muggle-borns without any special cause, or should they fight amongst those who have oppressed them for centuries hoping that their involvement in the war would help their cause to be freer. If they were to fight with Voldemort and his supporters, they would have no chance of complete freedom regardless of whether the outcome of the war. Nevertheless, their chances of freedom might not necessarily be higher if they fought against Voldemort because as discussed above, wizards are very ungrateful and ignorant towards goblins and might see their support as a given thing. Both sides of the war might have promised the goblins a better quality of life but looking at the history of conflicts between the two species, it is highly unlikely that neither of them would ever fulfill them.

Like wizards, goblins are very proud of their heritage. However, they have different perspective on the matter: wizards pass objects of importance to generation after generation, and often those objects are goblin-made. Goblins are prone to the idea that if something is goblin-made, it should belong with goblins. As Bill Weasley tells Harry: “…the rightful and true master of any object is the maker, not the purchaser” and after the purchaser’s death it should be brought back to the goblins *(Deathly Hallows* ch. 25). This view on heritage of both species illustrates how two different cultures try to live together and because they are so different, there will always be quarrels due to misunderstandings and different opinions. Wizards buy goblin made items, but in the eyes of goblins it is only a loan and must be brought back to the goblins after the purchaser’s death. If it were to be handed down through generations, it would be considered stealing by goblins. The act of taking something and taking credit for it, or stealing someone else’s idea is today a common problem, especially in a world where social media influences the life of many people. More than that, it is a reflection of the struggles of Native Americans to keep safe and get back archaeological
artifacts which had been taken by collectors to examine and study (Horne 94). Because of this, goblins have gotten a reputation of greediness and viciousness. In contrast to how they are treated by wizards, their attitudes have become an armor against wizards: they are the only ones that actually fight back against them and to do so they must be as vicious as them. Goblins do not share their magical secrets, including the secrets of Gringotts.

3. The Curious Case of the Half-Giant Hagrid

Rubeus Hagrid is one of few characters in the series that is half-human and half-creature, e.g. half-giant. Described as a very tall and big man with long, shaggy beard and hair covering most of his face, the reader soon realizes that the supposedly scary man is very kind and is mostly harmless except for the occasional high temper after a few drinks (Philosopher's Stone ch. 4). Hagrid’s true identity as a half-giant are kept hidden throughout the first three and half novels. When Harry and Ron overhear Hagrid opening up to Madame Maxime, who is also described as a ‘very big woman’ their mindset go two ways: Ron becomes flabbergasted over the fact that the kind and beloved Hagrid could be connected to the vicious giants while Harry’s understanding of Hagrid’s physical structure becomes clearer (Goblet of Fire ch. 23). Ron’s reaction is very similar to the prejudice Hagrid faces on a daily basis after the news of his giant relations become known, but as Ron knows Hagrid very well, his prejudice quickly disappears. How Ron’s prejudice soon disappeared goes to show that prejudice is based on fear and lack of knowledge. Those who do not know Hagrid, only see him as a son of a giant and the fact that wizards grow up hearing stories about vicious giants who do not have any morals and conscience, they are afraid of him. Therefore, they do as other humans do: they turn their fear into judgement and prejudice. Madame Maxime’s reaction to Hagrid’s confession of being a half giant is not what Hagrid expected. Though that Maxime’s big structure implies that she is as well not entirely human, she denies such accusations mainly due to fear of being judged. She is not willing to take the chance Hagrid is taking because some might overhear them and she will be judged (Goblet of Fire ch. 23). It is devastating to Hagrid who for the first time thought he could relate to someone. Thus his hope of finding an equal dies.

Because of his relations to giants, people are quick to judge Hagrid and assume that he is as bad-tempered and aggressive as the giants and that he does not have any human
characteristics at all. For this reason, Hagrid has always been an easy target: in his third year
as a student of Hogwarts, he was expelled from Hogwarts due to being accused of a crime he
did not commit (*Chamber of Secrets* ch. 16). Because he was different it was easy to believe
that he had something to do with it. Though Hagrid is a victim of consistent discrimination
based on his parentage and looks, he does sometimes forget his status as a minority group on
because he did grow up amongst wizards. Therefore, he has much of their prejudice towards
other minority groups. A few times throughout the novels the reader sees Hagrid forget his
minority status and judges others: his views for example on the enslavement of house-elves
are the same as Ron’s and the most part of the wizarding world. He believes that house-elves
are stupid creatures who live to serve and should not be set free:

“‘It’d be doin’ ’em an unkindness, Hermione,’ he said gravely, threading a
massive bone needle with thick yellow yarn. ‘It’s in their nature ter look after
humans, that’s what they like, see? Yeh’d be makin’ ’em unhappy ter take
away their work, an’ insultin’ ’em if yeh tried ter pay ’em.’” (*Goblet of Fire*
16).

However, he does not agree about the hierarchy of ‘pure-bloods’ and talks very openly about
his detest on how those of muggle parentage are treated (*Chamber of Secrets* ch. 7). It is then
ironic that Hagrid is unable to see that others have it bad and his focus is much on himself
and his struggles amongst wizards. Though there is a chance that his dislike of other minority
groups is faked, performed by him to make him more accepted amongst wizards and perhaps
to gain more sympathy from them. This is very common in our world, where people hide
their true self in order to fit in with other people. By hiding their true feelings and beliefs,
they avoid being judged for what they are but celebrated for having common beliefs and
interest. This is another problem with social media and its ideal flawlessness as discussed
above: people tend to be someone they are not and/or only showing what they think others
will want to see. By doing so it becomes harder for people to get to know each other: they do
not have the opportunity to see each other for what they really are.
4. The Werewolf Disease

The representation of illness in the *Harry Potter* novels is the werewolf disease. Werewolves belong to this division due to the fact that once a month during full moon, they turn into dangerous beasts who have no morals nor a human conscience. To become a werewolf, a wizard or a Muggle must be bitten by one; it is a disease spread from one individual to another (Rowling, *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* 19, 83). What truly separates werewolves from real wolves is their behavior. While werewolves seek out humans to pass on the werewolf gene, wolves are not likely to attack humans without a reason. There are as well some physical similarities between the two species, even so they are as little as none (Rowling, *Werewolves*). Once bitten, the werewolf faces a life full of pain and discrimination.

When the human to wolf transformation takes place, the werewolf must be in total isolation due to the loss of human morals and sense of right and wrong. That only happens when transformed: the rest of the month, the werewolf can be as kind and honorable as other human beings (Rowling, *Werewolves*). The transition itself is very painful but with recent discoveries in potion making, i.e. the Wolfsbane Potion, werewolves can transform without losing their human morals and less painfully (*Prisoner of Azkaban* ch. 18). Because of their dangerous transformations, werewolves must live differently than non-werewolves.

Werewolves have overall a hard time to fit into society because of their lifestyle, and therefore many chose to live in total isolation. For those who decide to live amongst humans, the werewolves’ identity is soon discovered, and when that happens, they instantly become outsiders. Those who try to live a normal life, are judged by those werewolves who choose to live underground and survive by stealing and sometimes killing (*Half Blood Prince* ch. 16). They get labelled as untrustworthy and unworthy of human kindness. A good example of a wizard learning about a werewolf’s true identity is when Ron Weasley discovers that Remus Lupin is a werewolf. In an instant Ron’s emotions go from liking Lupin to pure disgust as can be seen in the example given: “Get away from me, werewolf!” (*Prisoner of Azkaban* ch 17). In his paper “The Werewolf in the Wardrobe”, Siamak Naficy explains this behavior: “…in order not to become a werewolf yourself, you must learn to avoid werewolves entirely, for werewolves, as we know all have a penchant and an aptitude for
biting”. The response humans have for negative things, like werewolves in *Harry Potter*, is an ongoing condition in which people define those with one common negative attribute as all bad. The outsiders, i.e. those who are slightly different from the norm, are easily judged and categorized as all bad (Naficy 212, 217). The way werewolves are excluded from society puts an emphasis on the ongoing idea of perfection which was discussed in the first chapter of this paper. Though the case of the werewolves are slightly different: it is the danger that follows them once per month that is the main factor of their exclusion.

4.2. Remus Lupin and AIDS

Being only four when a werewolf bit him, Remus Lupin learned quickly that his new identity was to be hidden. Until he attended Hogwarts at the age of eleven, he lived in hiding and did not have any other contact other than with his parents. At Hogwarts, his condition is kept well-hidden and he gets to live like a normal child, except for the monthly disappearance to a secure house in the village of Hogsmeade. There he got to transform in peace for years until his friends, James Potter, Sirius Black and Peter Pettigrew discovered what he was. They managed to become animagi [wizards who can transform into animals at will] and joined him every month during transformation and keep him company in their animal form (Rowling, *Remus Lupin*). Though it is not a part of this paper, it is worth mentioning the importance of friendship. Because of his friends, Lupin was able to go through his years at Hogwarts alone with his illness. They put aside any prejudice they might have had towards werewolves and helped a boy who was lonely and ashamed of his situation. Transforming every month is very tiring and takes a lot of energy.

Remus Lupin is described as sickly-looking man with flecks of grey in his light-brown hair, despite being unmistakably young (*Prisoner of Azkaban* ch. 5). As a young-adult, Lupin went between jobs, only staying while his illness and disappearance during full moon to go unnoticed. Because he was constantly changing jobs, he was not able to get hands on the Wolfsbane potion, which was expensive to make. Rowling herself states that Lupin’s illness is a metaphor for illnesses that cause a lot of controversy and are not accepted in society, such as HIV and AIDS in addition to the way blood-borne conditions are superstitious on account of taboos surrounding blood (*Remus Lupin*). Even though AIDS/HIV can only be transmitted through sex, blood transfusion, etc. a lot of prejudice has
surfaced against those who carry the disease, particularly homosexuals. They become outraed from society and are only defined for being homosexuals and/or AIDS carriers, as Lupin gets shunned away, even in his human form (Naficy 213). The epidemic of infection with HIV and AIDS has caused a lot of controversy and those infected by it face a lot of discrimination.

Since the outbreak of AIDS and HIV, many studies have been made on the stigma concerning the disease. Taking into consideration that homosexuals have a high chance of being infected during unprotected sex, the disease has become so stigmatized that even children who were infected through blood contamination are discriminated and judged, as well as those who are not affected of the disease at all. One study made in 1993 showed that people with a negative opinion towards homosexuals were quick to judge and exclude heterosexuals with any disease somewhat connected to homosexuality (Pryor, Reeder og Landau 1200). Rowling’s wizards are prone to this behavior and its affect can be seen in the way Remus Lupin pushes everyone he cares about away from him. He does talk openly about the way his kind is treated and how he does not want anyone else getting the same treatment: he claims that he does not deserve love because it will bring his loved one a lifetime of being a victim of prejudice (Deathly Hallows ch. 11). The best protection the woman he loves can have is to not love him (Half-Blood Prince ch. 29). The same study as discussed above presented the burden those who have relatives with HIV bear: a mother who was uninfected but had an infected child was less approached than mothers without AIDS bearing children. This type of discrimination is linked to fear of the illness being spread to themselves (Pryor, Reeder og Landau 1200): humans tend to avoid those who carry diseases to protect themselves from getting infected. It is an act that has developed due to centuries where people lived in small societies and learned that if one member gets ill, there is a chance that other will become ill. The social distancing that has been discussed is nevertheless somewhat outdated due to modern sciences: some diseases like AIDS can be monitored and its side-affects decreased with medicine. However, that does not minimize the bias (Naficy 214).
Conclusion

The story about Harry Potter and his fight against evil is what most people think about when thinking about Harry and his world of magic, not discrimination and injustice. Though the most obvious presentation of discrimination is the one against muggle-borns, there are other and less apparent illustrations of prejudice and discrimination within the novels, which are focused on house-elves, goblins, squibs, werewolves and other minority groups. The minority groups of the *Harry Potter* novels are treated horribly at the hands of wizards, particular by those who call themselves ‘pure-bloods’. The wizards of the magical world of Rowling have changed very little when looking at their attitude towards other magical creatures and it is unlikely to change anytime soon, that is to say if Rowling continues writing a mirror world to ours in her Potterverse. Rowling’s wizards see themselves as superior to all other citizen of their world and there are some wizards that even see them superior to other wizards. Many conflicts have risen throughout the years about the superiority of wizards but they mainly focus on the well-being of wizards. What makes it similar to our world is the hierarchy of white people, e.g. white supremacy. White supremacy mirrors the ‘pure-blood’ and wizarding hierarchy in J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* novels. The inequality people of color throughout history and magical creatures of *Harry Potter* face are very similar as well as the restriction of education black people were faced with for decades is much the same as the ban of wand use for magical creatures. The resemblance between not only the minority groups, but also the oppressors are very clear: Voldemort’s intentions to make muggle-born wizards extinct is very similar to holocaust of the Second World War, as well as how Dolores Umbridge uses her powerful status as the oppressors of white ancestry. Rowling’s presentation of Hagrid the half-giant shows that though belonging to a minority group does not get rid of feelings of prejudice. By doing so, she implies that everybody has the tendency to judge others no matter the position within the social ladder. The discrimination werewolves and goblins face is to a certain degree more complicated than the discrimination against house-elves. The werewolf’s identity can go undetected through the eyes of the public, but that would mean a life of no social interaction and the possibility to live life the fullest. Goblins are accepted in society, though only as long as they obey the wizards’ rules and maintain their status as protector of their gold. They have then very little chance of living a
life based on their own terms. The representation of AIDS/HIV as the werewolf disease is a clear one: it shows how people with AIDS are discriminated and stigmatized: as soon as someone knows about their illness, they try everything in their power to not interact with the diseased. Overall, Rowling mirrors discrimination and prejudice of our world in her wizards’ attitudes towards deviations from the norm.
Works Cited


