

The Role of Norse Mythology Fantastic Creatures in J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter Series

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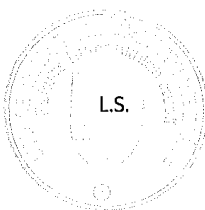
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ABSTRAKT

Práce Role fantastických tvorů severské mytologie v sérii Harry Potter J. K. Rowlingové popisuje způsob jakým domácí skřítkové ovlivňují vývoj událostí děje příběhu a také důvody které je k jejich chování vedly. První kapitola se zabývá autorkou díla, její inspirací a kritikou jejího díla. Druhá část práce popisuje skřítky jak se vyskytují v severské mytologii a třetí část se zabývá analýzou jednotlivých domácích skřítků a jejich vztahů s kouzelníky, podnětů a motivaci jejich činů. Práce dochází k závěru, že role domácích skřítků v sérii Harry Potter je ukázat a zdůraznit jak morální zásady jednotlivých lidských postav ovlivňují jejich okolí a také je samotné.

Klíčová slova: J. K. Rowlingová, skřítkci, domácí skřítkci, Severská mytologie

ABSTRACT

The thesis Role of Norse Mythology Fantastic Creatures in J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series portrays the role of house-elves in the story and the impact they have on the course of events or the story, and also the motives and incentives which caused their acts.

First chapter recounts the author, J. K. Rowling, her life, critique and the success or her work. Second chapter explores the base of house-elves in Norse mythology and the third chapter deals with the role of particular elves within the story and the reciprocal impact of house-elves and wizard on each other. The work comes to the conclusion that that the role of the house-elves in the Harry Potter series is to show and emphasize how the moral values of particular human characters affect their surroundings and also themselves.

Keywords: J. K. Rowling, Elves, House-elves, Norse mythology

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INTRODUCTION

As professor Minerva McGonagall, Harry's future professor and Head of House Gryffindor quotes in the first chapter of the very first book of the series: "He'll be famous – a legend – I wouldn't be surprised if today was known as Harry Potter Day in the future – there will be books written about Harry – every child in our world will know his name"¹ Dumbledore replied "Exactly."² The Hogwarts professors knew, what they were talking about in the scope of the magical world. What they did not know about (and nor the author did) was that this statement will actually cross the borderline of the imaginary magical society, and will apply also on the society of children fantasy books readers in the real world. As a member of this group I was bewitched by the story about Harry Potter from the first time I read it, and therefore, I decided to engage myself with the story and explore it some more.

The Harry Potter series is a vast piece of work, which contains seven books and thousands of pages in total. Among the main and minor characters there are hundreds of interesting people, creatures, events and happenings. Each of them helped to create the enormous wave of actualities which lead to the desired end, the victory of the good over the evil, the defeat of the Dark Lord Voldemort by Harry Potter. The chosen one.

As the whole series struggles with the question of equality between pure-blood wizards and those from *Muggle* (non-magical) families, house elves as well are involved into this problem in their own way. **House-elves are underestimated by wizards, but as Dobby claims in the Goblet of Fire, they "hear things"³ while they are working for wizards and because information is a priceless commodity, they have the power to change the course of events.**⁴ This haughtiness of wizards happened to be fatal for some of them. Some of the house-elves due to this loop in wizards attention cause change for the better as Dobby who saved Harry's life and lives of other characters countless times, and sometimes for the worse as Kreacher who vicariously caused Sirius' death.

In this thesis, I would like to explore and discover the ways of how particular wizards treat house-elves (whether they are their masters or not) and the reasons they might have

¹ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, (London: Bloomsbury, 1997), 15.

² Ibid.

³ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2000), 535.

⁴ See The Harry Potter Lexicon, "House-Elves," http://www.hp-lexicon.org/bestiary/house_elves.html, (accessed April 26, 2013).

for their behavior. What consequences this behavior of wizards had in terms of impact on the house-elves and to what actions all of those facts led.

The role of house-elves in the story about Harry Potter is indeed essential; however, it may not seem so because they are not considered as equals and I would say that in some parts, they even play a crucial part in the course of events which have an impact on the main plot - the fight of good against evil.

In the first part of my thesis, I would like to concern myself with the author of the Harry Potter phenomenon - Joanne Kathleen Rowling. Explore, how the circumstances of her life helped to form the character of Harry Potter, what steered up the idea of the whole concept and what encouraged the author to write even though she was in a difficult phase of her life. Then of course, how Harry, his friends and all the whole army of character included in her work, Hogwarts and the Platform Nine and Three-Quarters at the King's Cross station – simply the whole story changed her life.

In the second part of my thesis, I would like to focus particularly on the house-elves. As I assume they may have the base on the fantastic creatures of Norse mythology, as elves from the Scandinavian folklore. First of all I will briefly explore how elves are described in the mythical legends and then compare it with how J. K. Rowling described the house-elves in her work. Then I will move on to discover the role of house-elves in the story and what impact they have on it. In order to be able to show my aim I will attempt to describe particular house-elves, their masters and characters affected by relationships with those beings.

1 J. K. ROWLING AND HARRY POTTER

1.1 J. K. Rowling's life, how Harry was born and how he influenced her life

Joanne Kathleen Rowling, better known by her initials J. K. is ranked among the most famous British writers of the present time. Trying to find someone who have not read or even never heard about Harry Potter or J. K. Rowling might be a pretty hard job because she literally triggered an avalanche of attention, enormous interest and fame among readers of all age groups around the globe, ever since the first book of the series was published in 1997.

J. K. Rowling was born on 31 July 1965 as Joanne Rowling and according to her official website she was one of the people, who at the very early childhood knew what they want to be when they mature – she knew she wanted to be a writer. She wrote her first book at the age of 6, and even at this young age she wanted it to get published. It was a book about a rabbit called Rabbit.⁵

After her graduation at the University of Exeter in 1987, where she earned Bachelor's degree in French and Classical Studies, she moved to London and worked in various jobs.⁶ The first taught about Harry Potter as J. K. Rowling describes that moment on her official web page, came to her during the trip to London from Manchester where she lived at that time with her boyfriend. The train was delayed, and she spent four hours in a crowded compartment. As she was constantly working on her writing skills from the age of 6, she was thinking about some new characters and their stories to write about, and then suddenly Harry, the school of magic, the train coming from the Platform Nine and Three Quarters at the King's Cross station and many other things came to her imagination. Regardless she did not even have a pen with her and had to capture all her thoughts about the young wizard boy in training later at home, yet she managed to created the base of the magical world beloved by millions of children worldwide.⁷

⁵See Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc., "Biography," J. K. Rowling Official Site - Harry Potter and more, <http://www.jkrowling.com>, (accessed April 11, 2013).

⁶ See J.K. Rowling," The Biography Channel website, <http://www.biography.com/people/jk-rowling-40998> (accessed April 23, 2013).

⁷ See Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc., "Biography," J. K. Rowling Official Site - Harry Potter and more, <http://www.jkrowling.com>, (accessed April 11, 2013).

Later on she moved to northern Portugal and became a teacher of English language. During her stay in Portugal, she fell in love with a Portuguese journalist Jorge Arantes, whom she married in 1992. Even though, they had a daughter Jessica born in 1993, they separated quite soon after Jessica was born and J. K. Rowling decided to go back to British Islands and settled in Edinburgh. At that time, as a single mother, she struggled with lack of financial resources, and as she says, she started to fall into depressions.⁸ This was the time when she really decided to work hard on the story about the little wizard boy and get the novel published.

As I said before, Rowling was going through a tough phase in her personal life. All the problems in her privacy, the illness of her mother, who suffered from multiple sclerosis for almost a decade and died quite young at the age of 45. The wrongly chosen study program, which she asserts, was imposed upon her by her parents believing she can manage good career as a bilingual secretary, but this did not thrive very well. Inasmuch as Rowling says it was not her cup of tea, and she was unhappy there because she still wanted to become a writer.⁹ Fortunately, she managed to combine business with pleasure, and as people with any kinds of problems find a specialist to talk about their problems, meditate or use various kinds of therapies to cope with their difficult life circumstances, J. K. Rowling managed to escape from her shadows to the world of magic, to the world she created. People usually pay big amount of money for therapies – J. K. Rowling managed to become the first ever self-made billionaire by occupying her mind with fantasy thoughts about magic instead of the displeasing reality of that time. Similarly as other artists she put her emotions into her work.

However, her way to the aim of being a published and renowned writer was not easy at all. As I mentioned, her birth name was Joanne Rowling, but when the first book was finally about to be published, she was recommended, to change her name and use only initials. The reason for this was that the target audience was all children – boys and girls, and Joanne was told by her publisher that it would be better turn her name look neutral because many boys would not like to read a book written by a woman. In order to comply this suggestion, she decided to do so and changed her name to look neutral. Because she did not have any middle name, she chosen as her second initial K which stands for

⁸ See Ibid.

Kathleen, the name of Joanne's grandmother.¹⁰ This might also be a reason for that J. K. Rowling put so much effort into building and incorporating strong women into the story, who are as good as man wizards or even better because the usage of magic and not the physical strength deletes (to a certain extent) the divergence of possibilities between genders.¹¹

J. K. Rowling was so successful with her story that it was literally brought to life by 8 grand movies which were inspired by her seven books published between years 1997 and 2007. According to the Forbes magazine the only woman richer than J. K. Rowling working in the entertainment industry is Oprah Winfrey. By her earnings Rowling overcome among others Madonna or Martha Stewart, and she was also claimed to be "the first person to become a billionaire by writing books."¹² So even though it took her quite some time to reach her goal, she succeeded after all. The Harry Potter books were breaking the selling records in Britain, America and technically all over the world. Children were waiting for midnight in front of the book shops, dressed up in the Hogwarts' gowns, with scarves painted on their foreheads, just to get the book as soon as possible and learn what happened to Harry and his friends in the next year of his studies at the school of magic.

As the matter of fact, J. K. Rowling admitted that she had a pretty hard time back in the 90's getting this book published, and number of publishers refused her request, for various reasons – mainly because the book seemed too long for a children's book. Fortunately she succeeded with her effort and the first book of the series saw the light of the world in 1997. Albeit the story series was finished and the last book was published in the year 2007, and the premiere of the last film took place in June 2011, the Harry Potter phenomenon still lives its own life. What began as an innocently looking story about a little boy, grown up during the years into a machine for making money. Her work became a vast business nowadays there is an amusement park which looks like Hogwarts, and there are tons of Harry Potter themed things on the store shelves for fans to buy. She let lots of people earn great amounts of money. Not only her as an author of the whole idea, but also

⁹ See Ibid.

¹⁰ See "Oprah Entrevista a J.K. Rowling," YouTube video, 40:11, from The Oprah Winfrey Show on October 1, 2010, Posted by "Alejandro Ariza," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-bq2jbyG02Y>, (accessed April 14, 2013).

¹¹ See Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc., "The Women of Harry Potter," YouTube video, 22:32, posted by "allpotter323," http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15Pj-MPN_co, (accessed April 23, 2013).

¹² See Nancy Gibbs, "J.K. Rowling," *Time*, 2008, vol. 170, no. 27 (December 31, 2007): 72-74.

all the actors starring in the films and many other people participating on the Harry Potter franchise.¹³ Also, the selling records J. K. Rowling broke with her magical series speak about its fame and popularity. “Typically, a good book will take about four to six months to go gold and very few books reach platinum in their first year of publication. ‘Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince’ achieved platinum in less than one day!”¹⁴ As Richard Knight, the managing director of Nielsen BookScan said.

The fact that J. K. Rowling became very rich woman is no secret to anyone, but it is not only her, who made a fortune on the story. As I mentioned, the whole series was brought to life and reached the silver screen in a form of eight full-length films after J. K. Rowling sold the rights to shoot the movies based on her books to the Warner Bros studio. The last part was divided into two full-length film, simply because the happenings captured on six hundred and six pages would not fit into one movie without the need to cut out some important facts.¹⁵ It was a whole range of actors and directors, producers and the Warner Bros entertainment who bought the rights to shoot the movies. Even though, J. K. Rowling sold the story rights to Warner Bros, she did so under certain condition; thus she wanted the films express the idea of Hogwarts and the whole story as she imagined it in her mind.¹⁶ She wanted it to be as close to her imagination as possible, which makes sense when we consider that she was writing about Harry for more than twenty years. She developed a strong relationship with the main character, his friends and the whole magical world and for that reason she had the final word in shooting the films.

To have some kind of closure for herself, even though she always knew Harry will survive all the life threatening moments (it was not always certain which characters will die during the course of the story; originally she intended Ronald Weasley to die, but in the end he makes it through the whole story, on the other hand Remus Lupin was supposed to

¹³ The Leaky Cauldron.org, “Radcliffe, Watson, Grint, and Rowling Make Sunday Times Rich List for 2010,” <http://www.the-leaky-cauldron.org/2010/4/25/radcliffe-watson-grint-and-rowling-make-sunday-times-rich-list-for-2010>, (accessed April 11, 2013).

¹⁴ NBC NEWS.com, “New Potter book topples U.S. sales records,” <http://www.nbcnews.com/id/8608578/>, (accessed April 11, 2013).

¹⁵ See Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc., “Biography,” J. K. Rowling Official Site - Harry Potter and more, <http://www.jkrowling.com>, (accessed April 11, 2013).

¹⁶ See Ibid.

survive and in the end he died, side by side with his wife Nymphadora Tonks)¹⁷, and his life will continue after the story will continue. When Rowling was talking about Harry and writing the climactic part of the series, where he goes to the Forbidden Forest to meet Voldemort while giving the interview for *The Time* magazine, she claimed that she “was walking him to his death because she was about to finish writing about him”.¹⁸ and the years she spent by writing about Harry she describes as “one of the longest relationships of her adult life” as Harry was with her through the rough time of her life, and every time she needed to hide from the thought world, she could always escape to her own world of magic.

Harry is to the certain extent similar to J. K. Rowling because the character same as the author misses his parents. Each of them experience this actuality from a different way because Harry the main character of the books lost his parents in his very early childhood while they were killed by the most redoubtable wizard Lord Voldemort while J. K. lost her parents in the course of her life. Therefore, the lack of the parents diverge here, but as she says she was able to write about it and break this theme down in depth so vividly because she simple knew the feeling.¹⁹

The impact of the whole Harry Potter mania on J. K. Rowling’s life is huge. Even after years of being in the business, she sometimes wanders how this could even happen. As for example, on the opening ceremony of the Summer Olympic games in London. “While watching a rehearsal, she recalled “when that section arrived, and the huge Voldemort grew up out of the middle of the stage, I had one of these moments that I have every so often, when my entire body goes cold and I think, ‘How the hell did this happen?’ ... That was once an idea in my head that no one knew about.”²⁰

1.2 The mystery of Rowling’s success

Regardless she is often denoted as a teacher of values for children, Rowling does not see herself that way. As she says: “I never think in terms of What am I going to teach them?

¹⁷ See “Oprah Entrevista a J.K. Rowling,” YouTube video, 40:11, from The Oprah Winfrey Show on October 1, 2010, Posted by “Alejandro Ariza,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-bq2jbyG02Y>, (accessed April 14, 2013).

¹⁸ J. K. Rowling by Nancy Gibbs, “J.K. Rowling,” *Time*, 2008, vol. 170, no. 27 (December 31, 2007): 72-74.

¹⁹ See Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc., “The Women of Harry Potter,” YouTube video, 22:32, posted by “allpotter323,” http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5Pj-MPN_co, (accessed April 23, 2013).

²⁰ Carol Memmott, “Does Rowling still have the magic touch?” USA Today (September 2012).

Or, What would it be good for them to find out here? ... Although, undeniably, morals are drawn.”²¹ So she probably tried to show the life from her point of view. As it follows from Grossman’s interview with J. K. Rowling, she shows to children that life is not always easy or fair, Grossman uses here the example of Cedric Diggory’s unnecessary murder, or that things and people are not always as they seem, as when it becomes clear that Harry’s father bullied Snape when they were young. Interesting fact also is, that albeit J. K. Rowling believes in God her work is religious free.²² However, the connection between Harry and J.K. Rowling is apparent also from the little things as for example the fact that Harry and Joanne have birthday on the same date.

J. K. Rowling’s work became extraordinary successful. She managed to create whole new world beside the actual real one, with its own history, rules, laws and fauna and flora, where everything is full of magic. The fact itself would not be so interesting, since she is not the only successful fantasy book writer in the world. There are many others who created their own worlds long before J. K. Rowling was even born, as for example J. R. R. Tolkien with his impressive stories about the hunt for the Ring of Power, *The Lord of the Rings*. The difference, in my opinion, is the time factor. J. K. Rowling, unlike most of the writers, became famous very soon after her first book was published. Most of her books became bestsellers on the first day of its release. This gave her excellent opportunity to raise whole army of fans. The generation of people who grown up with Harry.

I see in the good fortune of Harry Potter series in fact that it took so long to write it and it was published gradually. During those ten years, while she was little by little writing and publishing her books, J. K. Rowling basically brought up her own fans, a whole army of Harry Potter readers.

1.3 Criticism of J. K. Rowling, plagiarism accusation

Regardless J. K. Rowling claims that the idea of Harry Potter just popped up in her mind out of the blue,²³ she was accused of plagiarism when it became clear, that there is a film

²¹ J. K. Rowling by Lev Grossman, “J. K. Rowling Hogwarts And All,” *TIME Magazine* (July 17, 2005), <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1083935-4,00.html>, (accessed April 11, 2013).

²² Lev Grossman, “J. K. Rowling Hogwarts And All,” *TIME Magazine* (July 17, 2005), <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1083935-4,00.html>, (accessed April 11, 2013).

²³ See “J.K. Rowling,” *The Biography Channel website*, <http://www.biography.com/people/jk-rowling-40998>, (accessed April 23, 2013).

named *The Troll* from the year 1986, where the main character's name is Harry Potter. The actress Anne Lockhart's last name matches with the surname of the Defence of the Dark Arts subject teacher in Hogwarts, Gilderoy Lockhart, and between the lines it is possible to notice several more common features, as for example when the Harry Potter junior asked who unpacked all the kitchen equipment in the short amount of time, his father answers him that it was the House-Elves who did it.

On one hand, all of these facts signify particular similarities with the J. K. Rowling's work, and I would say that this is little bit too much to be only a coincidence, if we consider even that there was magic used in the story of the Troll film. The main plot, however, diverges a lot. The film from 1986 is about Trolls trying to come to power and rule the and several same or similar names do not seem to me, as Rowling intentionally constructed her story on the base of this film, and moreover, Rowling herself claimed that she have never seen this film before her Harry Potter was published. Either way, Rowling won the trial against her.²⁴

I do not believe that the name of Harry Potter is very important. The name itself has no influence on the phenomena on J. K. Rowling's story about magical world. Without a shadow of doubt I would say that this story would be just as phenomenal and famous with different name.

1.4 Supporters and opponents

As there are two sides to every coin, there are also different attitudes of people to the story about the little wizard boy.

There are parent who forbid their children to read Harry Potter, and explain their decision by the fact that making magic is not natural and it only confuses the mind of their children. As they say who might be than influenced by the fact that it is not possible to do the things from the books in the real life.²⁵ Well, in my opinion this book is exactly what it is supposed to be, it is an allegory to the actual world.

²⁴ See Mike Masnick, "JK Rowling Accused Of Plagiarizing Harry Potter... Yet Again," <http://www.techdirt.com/articles/20090616/0335525246.shtml> (accessed April 19, 2013).

²⁵ Jodi Wilgoren, "Don't Give Us Little Wizards, The Anti-Potter Parents Cry," *The New York Times*, (November 1, 1999), <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/11/01/us/don-t-give-us-little-wizards-the-anti-potter-parents-cry.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>, (accessed March 19, 2013).

In my opinion fairy tales are not supposed to show children the world as it is – for this reason we have documentary films and encyclopaedias – fairy tales are supposed to develop children’s imagination and creativity and show them the moral values via allegory of fantasy stories. Otherwise the children would be taken what in my opinion is the most beautiful part of childhood. Of course, it is fantasy and the people are using spells and magic in the book, but this is what the stories are about. The Red hoodwinked was eaten by a wolf, and survived – this is not normal or natural either, yet it is still considered as a tale for children, to tell them via allegory that they should not *take candy from strangers or talk to strange wolves*.

In contrary to the opponents, there are also many supporters of the Harry Potter phenomena. In the interview for The New Yorker Rowling said “I met a girl in a shop. She was in her early twenties, and she came up to me and said, 'May I hug you?' And I said yes, and we hugged. And she said, 'You were my childhood.' That's an amazing thing to hear.”²⁶

1.5 Harry Potter

The whole series include seven books, where each of these represents the happenings of one year that Harry and his friends spent in Hogwarts. Each of them begins during the summer, usually around Harry’s birthday, which is on 31 July and then describes the way to Hogwarts and the life inside its walls during the school year. The first six parts, apart from the last book, close by Harry coming back to his aunt and uncle’s house to spend the summer, and that is where the reader meets him again in the following book. In addition to the main book series there are several books as for example *Quidditch Through the Ages* or the *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*. Those additional books are mentioned within the main story as real books of the wizarding world. They are books and encyclopaedias written by fabricated writers Newt Scamander or Beedle the Bard. In fact they were written by J. K. Rowling to fill in the missing information, which did not make it into the main books of the series.

The famous, well-known story about the little wizard boy Harry Potter, bewitched millions of people all around the world and also the society within the story. As I mentioned before, professor McGonagall and Headmaster Dumbledore knew that Harry

²⁶ J. K. Rowling by Ian Parker, “Mugglemarch: Profiles,” The New Yorker, 2012, vol. 88, issue 30 (October 1, 2012): 52.

will be famous. They had known this when he was just a baby, long before he learned the truth, because Harry himself was for the first eleven years of his life doomed not to know the truth at all. Not about that he at the age of one lost both of his parents by the hand of the most redoubtable wizard of all times Lord Voldemort, nor about that thanks to his mother sacrifice he himself was the “only person in the world who survived the Avada Kedavra curse”²⁷ (the killing curse) which left him (not only) the famous lightning shaped scar on his forehead. This unaware period of his life changed quite suddenly while at the age of eleven came the time for Harry to attend the school of witchcraft and wizardry Hogwarts, where he found his best friends Ronald Weasley and Hermione Granger, Rubeus Hagrid and many others, and of course few enemies as for example Draco Malfoy and the Potions class teacher Severus Snape.

All the parts of the series are tangled more or less with one goal - the defeat of the Dark Lord Voldemort. The last four parts more; however, than the first three ones. The first part is more about being introduced to the magical world and getting to know something about it. In my opinion the first three parts are more fairytale than a dramatic and a suspenseful story, into which is the story turns in the following parts. The second part is much darker and scarier than the first one. It may be caused by the use of creatures that usually have bad connotation as spiders and snakes and the Basilisk, which J. K. Rowling uses to emphasise the fear of Voldemort. But this is what people want – stories with a good end – and what can emphasise the victory of good better than preceding feeling of danger evoked by poisonous and lethal creatures.

Through all the story Harry, even though he has friends, struggles with the feeling of loneliness, but in the second part for the first time people are turning back to Harry and are afraid of him. They feel threatened by him. It is because after the fact that Harry speaks Parsel tongue, the language of snakes, emerges and because it is known in the wizarding world that Voldemort speaks it too. They are afraid that The Chamber of Secrets will be opened again and the history will repeat itself. According to the legend, Salazar Slytherin, one of the four founders of the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, did hide some beast in it. Even Harry had doubts about himself. Then it becomes clear, that the Secret Chamber was indeed opened, but with the help of the Sword of Gryffindor and the Phoenix

²⁷ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, (London, Bloomsbury, 2000), 237.

Fawkes Harry managee to defeat the Basilisk and destroys the first one of the seven parts of Voldemort's soul hidden into a Hoacrux.

The next parts of the story follow Harry through his teenage years at Hogwarts. The third part The Prisoner of Azkaban reveals that Harry has a Godfather Sirius who was unjustly accused from killing Harry's parents and we meet in this part also another friends and enemies from his parent's youth. The fourth chapter The Goblet of fire, brings us to the Quidditch World Cup and introduces also the Triwizard Tournament which is a trap for Harry and so at the end we witness to the reborn of Lord Voldemort. From now on it is sure that the war is coming. The fifth part The Order of Phoenix represents the time when Harry teaches his friends to fight because the Ministry of Magic clearly think that Harry lies about Voldemort's return and so the ministry forbid practising defensive magic at the Hogwarts school. The events of the sixth part lead to Dumbledore's death and the last part describes the extensive and challenging hunt for Hocruxes, the Battle of Hogwarts and finally the victory of the good over the evil.

The story is much more complex than it might seem on the first sight. If we look at it closer, we find out, that much of the characters have their own history, their own story within the story. Lot of these stories and facts about particular characters are not visible right away, but they played crucial role in the process of formation of constituent elements and characters in the story.

2 THE BASE OF HOUSE-ELVES IN MYTHOLOGY

Since time immemorial people were inventing stories and legends to explain the events and happenings in everyday life and the phenomena surrounding them, which they did not understand. Therefore, they had let their imagination go on and created stories about the world. The mythology across the cultures have in many cases similar base and diverge according to the religion of the particular cultures or also according to the natural conditions as people were coping with different things. For example, we can see highly similar patterns between Gods in Greek mythology and Norse mythology. Both the cultures worship very similar gods but they only have a different name for them, or their powers differ slightly as, for example, Odin in Norse mythology and Jupiter in Greek mythology. “Jupiter, like Odin, was the father of the gods, the god of victory, and a personification of the universe. Hlidskialf, Allfather’s lofty throne, was no less exalted than Olympus or Ida, whence the Thunderer could observe all that was taking place; and Odin’s invincible spear Gungnir was as terror-inspiring as the thunderbolts brandished by his Greek prototype. The Northern deities feasted continually upon mead and boar’s flesh, the drink and meat most suitable to the inhabitants of a Northern climate while the gods of Olympus preferred the nectar and ambrosia which formed their only sustenance.”²⁸

It may not seem so, but without realizing it, we use words and terms with a touch of mythology in everyday life. For example, the days of the week are named after the Norse Gods and not only in the Scandinavian languages, but it reflects also into other languages as English, German or Dutch as John Lindow explains in his book “Some of the variations of the names in the various Germanic languages are also of interest. German Dienstag and Dutch dinsdag, “Tuesday,” are based on an adjective thingsus, “protector of the thing or assembly,” used to describe the war god, and this suggests that the predecessor of Týr had a connection with lawful assembly that is hardly to be seen in the god as we know him. German Mittwoch, “Wednesday,” may suggest an aversion to Odin, but Dutch woensdag and Scandinavian onsdag still retain Odin’s name.”²⁹ If we consider, how much we come into contact with mythology and do not even realise it and how many moral lessons there

²⁸ H. A. Guerber, *Myths of the Norsemen, From the Eddas and Sagas*, (London: George G. Harrap & Company, 1909, PDF e-book), 346.

²⁹ John Lindow, *Norse Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Heroes, Rituals, and Beliefs*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 203.

hidden, it is no wonder that the artists and writers apply their own point of view on the matrix of the myths and legends. Norse mythology is full of various interesting creatures as werewolves, trolls, dragons and of course elves.

2.1 Elves

Since Elves belong to one of the oldest mythical creatures,³⁰ None of the sources gives a very specific and precise description of the appearance because it is simply not possible to do so with fabricated supernatural beings. This impassibility to prove their visual aspect nor the character make these supernatural beings very popular for the amount of space for human creativity to build on its concept. Through the ages, the paucity of information encouraged people to explain myths in their own way depending entirely on one's imagination and creativity.³¹ Elves are supernatural creatures shrouded in a haze of mystery. They are typical and sufficiently important as supernatural nature beings in the Scandinavian folklore.³² As fantastic creatures, they are only figment of human fantasy and, therefore, they are described differently in different sources, according to the purpose they were supposed to imbue in particular stories.

Mostly they are referred to as charming noble beings, accompanying gods, amusing them by dancing and singing, as for example Guerber portrays them in *The Myths of Norsemen*: "Here Frey, the god of the golden sunshine and the warm summer showers, took up his abode, charmed with the society of the elves and fairies, who implicitly obeyed his every order, and at a sign from him flitted to and fro, doing all the good in their power, for they were pre-eminently beneficent spirits."³³ This follows, they possess the ability to enchant one, but still they conform to the higher authority which in this case is the god Frey.

H. A. Guerber portrays elves as charming creatures with specific qualities, however he does not speak a word about their external appearance except the part where he mentioned their stature. "The elves were so small that they could flit about unseen while they tended the flowers, birds, and butterflies; and as they were passionately fond of dancing, they often glided down to earth on a moonbeam, to dance on the green. Holding one another by the

³⁰ See Ibid, 110.

³¹ See Ibid, 110.

³² Ibid, 110.

³³ H. A. Guerber, *The Myths of the Norsemen*, (London: George G. Harrap & Company, 2009), 117.

hand, they would dance in circles, thereby making the “fairy rings,” which were to be discerned by the deeper green and greater luxuriance of the grass which their little feet had pressed.”³⁴ This leads to another aspect of elves which is their character and nature.

The character of elves seems to be rather sinister. The mischievousness of elves also diverges in particular cultures. In English legend elves were considered more innocuous than in the Scandinavian ones, where they were considered rather dangerous nearly lethal as Guerber states: “If any mortal stood in the middle of one of these fairy rings he could (according to popular belief in England) see the fairies and enjoy their favour; but the Scandinavians and Teutons vowed that the unhappy man must die.”³⁵

However, even the fairies as elves were called in England were not innoxious. Instead of being sentenced to death because after revealing the stupendousness of elves as it was in Scandinavian folklore, elves from English legends operated in slightly different way. As the same source follows with the assertion, that their elf-dance which included also singing, “was so irresistible that no one who heard it could refrain from dancing.”³⁶ A mortal who was charmed by the melody and tried to imitate the elfish song “suddenly found himself incapable of stopping and was forced to play on and on until he died of exhaustion.” The only possible ways how to prevent this horrible fate was to be “deft enough to play the tune backwards, or someone charitably cut the strings of his violin.” This was nevertheless unlike to happen, because whoever heard the tune was “forced to dance as long as the tones continued” and “could only stop when they ceased.”³⁷

2.2 Inspiration in Norse mythology

Mythology, since it is mostly fabricated stories with supernatural factors and elements, it gives writers huge range of possibilities to base on it and build up their own stories, and to incorporate their own personal points of view and opinions. Not only writers but also other kinds of artists were inspired by the old myths of the North. As John Lindow asserts: “During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries Norse mythology was the vogue, especially in Germany and Scandinavia, and many of the famous Romantic poets reworked stories from Norse mythology into drama or verse. Romantic painters also found

³⁴ H. A. Guerber, *The Myths of the Norsemen*, (London: George G. Harrap & Company, 2009), 246.

³⁵ Ibid, 247.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

inspiration in the Norse myths.”³⁸ Into this range we can include also English university professor and writer, the author of the fantasy work *The Hobbit: There and Back Again* and *The Lord of the Rings* series, J. R. R. Tolkien.

However the stories of J. R. R. Tolkien and J. K. Rowling show some common features, both are to certain extent inspired by the phenomena and creatures of the Norse mythology, each of them explained the terms in a different way and beside that the circumstances of the process of publishing and becoming fame were quite different. While J. K. Rowling was planning to get the books published from the first moment she started to write, the vast piece of J. R. R. Tolkien’s work was published after his death by his son. However both of these writers work with the model of elves, each of them interprets elves in a different way.

As I mentioned before, the interpretation of elves diverges highly, because each author is free to adjust the idea by which they were inspired by according to the desired purpose in their story. J. K. Rowling held to the image of elves in terms of their size where they according to Guerber were believed to be small creatures. Elves were also meant to amuse the higher authority which in the mythology was the god Frey. The house-elves in the *Harry Potter* series follow this pattern only except the higher authority is not gods but magicians and they are not supposed to amuse them but to serve them. Also the house-elves, since they are magical creatures living in the magical world also possess their own kind of magic which works differently than the magic of human wizards.

In contrast to J. K. Rowling, J. R. R. Tolkien looks at elves as beings on a higher level than people, because in his fantasy world humans do not dispose of any magical abilities unlike elves who also are not able to do spells, but because of their immortality they are very wise and also possess different kinds of skill which make them more noble than people. This follows that myths are flexible to build on therefore they are so popular among fantasy writers.

³⁸ John Lindow, *Norse Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Heroes, Rituals, and Beliefs*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 37.

2.3 House-elves

Since the Norse mythology interdigitates with myths and legends of English culture, it is no wonder that J. K. Rowling was abundantly inspired by it. There can be found a considerable amount of creatures and beings from those myths, as troll, werewolves, dragons which are an inseparable part of the Viking's era legends. Some of them play only a minor episodic role in the story as the troll in the *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and some of them are more complex, as for example the motif of House-Elves.

The house elves caused one of the biggest mysteries for the first year Hogwarts students, especially the ones from Muggle families as little Harry Potter and Hermione Granger were. Despite Harry was a true wizard after his ancestors nevertheless he was raised by his non-magical uncle and aunt Dursleys, also one of his best friends Hermione Granger who was so called Muggle born and also other students in Hogwarts who did not have their own House elf at home. All of them were surprised by the fact that their luggage was already in their dormitory rooms when they arrived there and that during the feasts in the Great Hall the food just magically appeared on the tables as a magic trick. As most of the weird happenings in the magical world, happenings which seemed to be done with no one causing them, it always had its explanation. The truth is that it was the house-elves who did all the work and prepared all the food. Similarly as for example the mystery of carriages taking students from the Hogwarts Express to the castle. They seemed to move without anyone forcing them, but the mystery was solved in the fifth part of the series, when Harry was after witnessing Cedric's murder enabled to see Thestrals pulling the carriages.

As J. K. Rowling describes Dobby in the *Chambers of Secrets*, we can make an overall picture of the appearance of the House-Elves in general. Dobby has "large, bat-like ears and bulging green eyes the size of tennis balls".³⁹ She also portrays them as small statured. House-elves usually wear something useless, ugly and dirty, regarding the convention that whenever a house-elf gets a piece of clothing, his obligation to the master is terminated. However, it must be precisely his master who gives the clothing. House-elves are born as slaves, they replace their antecedents in the family they served before as Winky says in the

³⁹ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, (London: Bloomsbury, 1998), 18.

Goblet of Fire. So the house-elves are sentenced to live their lives as servants and slaves, totally committed, dependent on the mercy and the will of their masters.

3 THE ROLE OF HOUSE-ELVES IN THE HARRY POTTER STORY

3.1 Relationships between particular house-elves and wizards and causes of their attitudes to one another

As I mentioned before, the house-elves are born as slaves and serve to the family of their antecedents. Not all of them hate it however. Some of the house-elves are happy to work for their family, as Winky who chooses the lesser of two evils and is rather a servant to his unfeeling master Barty Crouch than experience the shame of being dismissed from his service. “This is considered a punishment by most elves because they have internalised society’s image of them, and have no autonomy outside of the institution of slavery”⁴⁰, as Jessica Seymour writes.

On the other hand some house-elves experience very poor treatment from their masters and therefore secretly hate them, because not all wizard act to house-elves’ content. As Seymour continues in her article: “Unlike in most instances of moral reasoning, where “bad” characters do bad things and “good” characters fight for justice, house-elf slavery is somewhat of a grey area in the books, with many “good” characters favouring it while others do not.”⁴¹ Some house-elves than try to escape as Dobby and some are waiting for their revenge as Kreacher.

3.1.1 Kreacher

Kreacher is the house-elf of the Black family.

3.1.1.1 Sirius and Kreacher

Sirius Black, the best friend of Harry’s parents and Harry’s godfather described as a good man would die for his friends. As a member of the Order of Phoenix he provided his house on Grimmauld place as the headquarters while they were fighting against Voldemort and the Death Eaters and the evil side in general.

Regardless Sirius is considered a positive character, his attitude to house-elves is influenced by the environment where he matured. In a family where the house-elves

⁴⁰ Jessica Seymour, “Harry Potter and the House-Elf Rebellion,” *Write4children* vol. 3, issue 2 (October, 2012), [http://www.winchester.ac.uk/academicdepartments/EnglishCreativeWritingandAmericanStudies/Documents/w4cApril2012\(2\).pdf](http://www.winchester.ac.uk/academicdepartments/EnglishCreativeWritingandAmericanStudies/Documents/w4cApril2012(2).pdf), (accessed on April 26, 2013).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

believed in what the family believed in and they were totally devoted to them, and as Sirius was different from the rest of his family and hated their opinions so he left at the age of 16 and came back after all his family members died.

In my opinion, regardless Sirius was generally good man, the fact that he was a pure-blood wizard and was brought up in the idea that wizards are better than any other creatures left a trace of contempt to house-elves on him. As Seymour shows while quoting Dumbledore in *The Order of Phoenix*: “I warned Sirius when we adopted twelve Grimmauld Place as our headquarters that Kreacher must be treated with kindness and respect. I also told him that Kreacher could be dangerous to us. I do not think that Sirius took me very seriously, or that he ever saw Kreacher as a being with feelings as acute as a human's.”⁴² The clue to the Sirius’ attitude to Kreacher might also be that he did not consider house-elves generally worth of good treatment and when we also consider that he was frustrated by being hold in Azkaban for so many years and for the crime he did not commit and needed to stay hidden. His frustration needed to be ventilated somehow, and he used for this purpose poor Kreacher when he yelled on him and was rude to him. Than it is no wonder, that Kreacher was not loyal to Sirius. As Seymour further asserts “Sirius made Kreacher what he is, and although Sirius was a good man in general, the mistreatment of house-elves is something which every witch and wizard should be held accountable for.”⁴³

3.1.1.2 *Kreacher and Regulus vs. Voldemort*

As a pure blood wizard, Regulus joined the Dark Lord with a vision of Voldemort “[bringing] the wizards out of hiding to rule the *Muggles* and the *Muggle-borns*”.⁴⁴ Kreacher was loyal to Regulus because he was in contrast to Sirius mostly kind to the house-elf, so even though Regulus lend Kreacher to Voldemort, who used him to test the hiding-place for the locket, Kreacher still idolized Regulus.

⁴² J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2000), 382.

⁴³ Jessica Seymour, “Harry Potter and the House-Elf Rebellion,” *Write4children* vol. 3, issue 2 (October, 2012),

[http://www.winchester.ac.uk/academicdepartments/EnglishCreativeWritingandAmericanStudies/Documents/w4cApril2012\(2\).pdf](http://www.winchester.ac.uk/academicdepartments/EnglishCreativeWritingandAmericanStudies/Documents/w4cApril2012(2).pdf), (accessed on April 26, 2013).

⁴⁴ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 159.

Voldemort did not consider “the house-elf’s highest law, [which] is his master’s bidding”⁴⁵. He made Kreacher drink the poison and then left him for death in the cave. Kreacher was told by Regulus to come back, and so he did. This leads to the possibility that if Voldemort did not use a house-elf to drink the poison, nobody would ever find the locket because if Voldemort used a human, this poor guy would die there (together with the secret) and Voldemort’s plan would be much more effective.

Regulus, after he changed his mind on Voldemort, decided to destroy the locket and told Kreacher to do it. Kreacher failed; nevertheless, he helped Harry to find it and so he contributed on its destruction.

The fact that Voldemort used a house-elf who was able to disappear from the hiding place, happened to be a fatal mistake for him. Kreacher’s influence on the course of the story events was significant. On one hand, he led to Sirius’ death, which weakened Harry but, on the other hand, by knowing the necessary information he weakened Voldemort even more.

3.1.2 Dobby

If we consider the fact that Dobby was almost all the way through somehow shaping the story line by saving the day by his own way. He was helpful to the main characters in so many ways, that I would say without hesitation, he is the most valuable minor side character, at least among all the creatures occurring in the series.

Reader meets Dobby for the first time in the second book of the series – The Chamber of Secrets, and he accompany us through all the story. From the beginning he is trying to take care and secure Harry Potter, however in some cases he almost manages to kill him, as for example in the *Quidditch* match with Slytherin team when he tries to hurt Harry in order to make him leave Hogwarts. Sometimes it feels as Dobby makes more harm than usefulness.

3.1.2.1 Dobby’s relationship with Lucius Malfoy

Lucius Malfoy is a faint-hearted wizard wick, I would say from pure fear, joined the evil side and became a Death Eater. He was afraid of Voldemort and therefore desperate to please him. As weak individuals try to convince themselves and also others that they are

⁴⁵ Ibid, 161.

not weak, they turn their attention to weaker ones and bully them and “feed off the energy of [someone else’s] fear”⁴⁶. Lucius picked Dobby for this purpose and the way he treated Dobby only supports this idea. As Malfoy himself had a weak personality, the only way for him was to find someone weaker or someone who could not fight back. When we consider, that Dobby was bound to Malfoy’s family will and whenever he acted against this will he was compelled to punish himself. This fact, however, never stopped Dobby from trying to do *the right thing*, even though he did not always find the best way to do it, still he was brave enough to try and confront the danger.

3.1.2.2 *Dobby’s relationship with Harry*

Harry perceived Dobby from the beginning as a threat. He did not want him to get involved. There was a big conflict of interests - Harry was desperate to get out of the Dursley family house because he had a feeling that he was going to suffocate there, if he stayed any longer. He suffered from a total lack of contact with the surrounding world, and he did not receive a single letter from his friends and he could not send them any because Hedwig was locked in her cage (on the uncle Vernon’s command). Harry was left completely helpless and wanted nothing else than get out from the Dursleys. After Harry’s refusal to agree with Dobby’s suggestion, that Harry must not go back to Hogwarts, Dobby said “Than Dobby must do it, sir, for Harry Potter’s own good.”⁴⁷ And from that moment on weird things started to happen to Harry. Closed magic portal leading to the Platform Nine and Three Quarters or bewitched *Bludger* and other odd happenings.

After Harry realized that Dobby actually saved his life and he genuinely suffered under his master’s sway, he decided to free him. Harry discharged Dobby from the obligation to the Malfoy’s family, by tricking Lucius Malfoy into giving Dobby an old sock which Harry stuffed in advance into the old Tom Riddle’s diary after it was destroyed by the Basilisk’s fang. Harry fabricated genial plan and in a blink of an eye Dobby was divested of the bound he had to Malfoys and was set free. As Dobby said at the very last chapter of the second part of the series “Harry Potter freed Dobby (...) Harry Potter set Dobby free.”⁴⁸

⁴⁶ AskGrace.com, “Why People Feel the Need to Bully?”, <http://www.askgrace.com/advicecolumns/0922-target-workplace-bully.htm>, (accessed April 26, 2013).

⁴⁷ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, (London: Bloomsbury, 1998), 26.

⁴⁸ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, (London: Bloomsbury, 1998), 363.

“Dobby has no master, Dobby is a free elf!”⁴⁹ In my opinion, this is the key to Dobby’s infinite devotion to Harry Potter, because Harry gave Dobby something he desired, his freedom. Dobby became determined to help Harry and preserve him from various dangers after Harry freed him, not as house-elf is determined to his master but as friend loyal to another friend. Dobby was ready to die for Harry, because Harry gave him also another thing he wanted very much – the feeling of being considered equal and this gave Harry the advantage of Dobby’s limitless help.

Harry is supposed to personify the good side in contrast with the evil side represented by Lord Voldemort. He is considered to be a good character because he fights for the good, for the defeat of Voldemort and in the end he actually decides to sacrifice himself for this aim. He was brought up in totally different environment than Sirius, and was actually treated by the Dursley’s family in a very similar way the house-elves are treated in Wizarding families. As Dobby claimed he “ [was] used to death threats”⁵⁰, because he “gets them five times a day at home.”⁵¹ Harry, while living in his aunt and uncle’s house was also used to threats whenever he did something (even unconsciously or accidentally) what Dursley’s did not like, they threatened him to get locked in his cupboard under the stairs or being without dinner.

The difference between the relationships of Dobby to Harry Potter and the Malfoy’s family is, that even though Dobby acts as Harry was his master, there is still the beauty of free will and the option of refusing any command – which in Harry’s case are always polite requests. In contrast with Malfoys who always treated Dobby as a slave, and a creature not worthy of decent treatment.

3.1.2.3 *Dobby’s sacrifice*

As I said the different kind of magic and the information house-elves possess are two very powerful factors in the story. However Dobby was given information about Harry’s location from Dumbledore’s brother Aberforth (from Sirius’ broken Two-way mirror) and was sent to the Malfoy’s Manner. Only as a house-elf Dobby could utilize the gap in the Anti-Apparation charm restriction and take all the captives with him to the safe place of

⁴⁹ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 384.

⁵⁰ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, (London: Bloomsbury, 1998), 193.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Shell Cottage. Unfortunately Dobby was hit by knife Bellatrix thrown in order to prevent their escape and right after saving Harry and the rest of the captives Dobby died.

As Dobby died, he was the one from two characters in the book who died while immediately saving Harry's life. Of course there are other characters who died while protecting Harry, as for example Mad-Eye Moody, but this was under different circumstances, as Mad-Eye died while moving Harry from Private Drive to The Burrow, the Weasley family's house just few days before Harry became major. Mundungus Fletcher disappeared and Mad-Eye fell of his broom. Fred, Lupin, Tonks and others were killed in the battle of Hogwarts while fighting against the evil side. Dobby's sacrifice was different, because Dobby died so Harry (and Ron and Hermione) could live. Only one witch did the same thing for Harry in the whole story and it was Lilly Potter, Harry's mother.

The inscription on Dobby's tombstone which says "Here lies Dobby, a Free Elf"⁵², even though Harry could have used magic to bury Dobby, instead he decided to dig the hole manually – to bury Dobby as a wizard and to revere him as equal.

As Dobby usually saved the day by little things as for example giving Harry the Gillyweed, because he knew that Harry had no clue how to stay under water for an hour (and he also knew what the second task were going to be), or helping Kreacher to bring Mundungus to the Grimmauld Place while looking for the locket, Dobby's death in fact might have been one of the last drops Harry needed to take the courage to sacrifice himself and win the fight with the Dark Lord.

3.1.3 Winky

The fate of Winky the typical example of house-elf was indeed lamentable. She served in the family of Barty Crouch and she was totally devoted to her masters, but as the family was "divided against itself"⁵³ she struggled with the question of loyalty. "She [tried] to help both, [the father and the son] all at once [, but by unlucky coincidence she winded] up being the tool to destroy the whole family."⁵⁴

After Winky was terminated, as Seymour writes, she "[became] so depressed that she [developed] a drinking problem," which made her "unable to function in her new job". What's

⁵² J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 389.

⁵³ Shmoop Editorial Team, "Winky in Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire," Shmoop University, Inc., 11 November 2008, <http://www.shmoop.com/harry-potter-4-goblet-fire/winky.html> (accessed April 30, 2013).

⁵⁴ Ibid.

missing from this master-elf relationship is that element of abuse which made freeing Dobby necessary.”⁵⁵ I disagree with this statement because firstly, in my opinion Winky was abused, which proves the fact that Barty Crouch sr. made her go to the Top Box or the arena on The Quidditch World cup and she was clearly scared and did not want to be there, yet she fulfilled master’s order, as she was the one who caused (though accidentally) that Barty Crouch jr. escaped, infiltrated into Hogwarts and realized the plan for Voldemort’s reborn by sending Harry to the graveyard after he touched the Triwizard Tournament Trophy Cup bewitched into a Porkey. And she was also the one who (again accidentally) caused Barty senior’s death when she brought him to Hogwarts where the evil Barty junior found him and murdered his father.

Seymour argues further that “Winky ... [was] devoted to her master – without him she [was] lost and miserable, which draws the reader’s sympathy and also highlights the points made by the stock narrative in the wizarding world: elves would be lost without masters to serve, and it is therefore only fair that wizards enslave them.”⁵⁶ In my opinion it is not so, because as Dobby has proven, it is not fair for those house-elves who want to leave their masters and cannot do so and as he says he likes working, but as a free elf who gets paid for his service, which he eventually achieved.

3.1.4 Hermione’s attitude to house-elves

Hermione is the only person fighting for rights of all the house-elves without distinction. Even though she is extraordinary witch and she knows witchcraft very well, she is still Muggle-born which puts her in the eyes of some wizards on the lower level in the hierarchy of magical society, therefore she identifies with the house-elves who also comprise the lower level of magical society even though they possess magical skills and are able to think and speak as wizards do, still they are not considered to be equal. The house-elves working in Hogwarts seem to be very irritated when Hermione tries to give them some clothing and set them free. In their eyes they are supposed to be working for wizards and fulfil their every desire. Hermione refuses to accept the fact that wizard think of themselves as more valuable than other beings, and they look down to house-elves. In my opinion, her obsessive need to help house-elves even though they do not ask for help may have the base

⁵⁵ Jessica Seymour, “Harry Potter and the House-Elf Rebellion,” *Write4children* vol. 3, issue 2 (October, 2012), [http://www.winchester.ac.uk/academicdepartments/EnglishCreativeWritingandAmericanStudies/Documents/w4cApril2012\(2\).pdf](http://www.winchester.ac.uk/academicdepartments/EnglishCreativeWritingandAmericanStudies/Documents/w4cApril2012(2).pdf), (accessed on April 26, 2013).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

in her own problems. As a witch coming from the non-wizarding, Muggle family, even though she is said to be extraordinary witch, she is looked down at by wizards from pure blood families. As Roni Natov writes: “Even though Harry has freed Dobby . . . [,] Hermione alone understands the oppression of the house-elves, as they serve their masters, bowing and scraping, without pay”.⁵⁷

In truth, although Hermione Granger is trying to fight for the House Elves’ rights, they are not pleased with it, they are even insulted. Hermione is so stubborn that she does not see that she can actually hurt the house-elves or that she acts against their will because she over generalises that all the house-elves are treated as Dobby and all of them want to escape this destiny same as Dobby did.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Roni Natov, "Harry Potter and the Extraordinariness of the Ordinary," In Whited, *Ivory Tower*, 125-39, quoted in Lana Whited, "1492, 1942, 1992: The Theme of Race in the Harry Potter Series," *The Looking Glass : New Perspectives on Children's Literature*, vol. 10, no. 1(January, 2006), <http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/ojs/index.php/tlg/article/view/97/82>, (accessed April 26, 2013).

⁵⁸See Shmoop Editorial Team, "Hermione Granger in Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire," Shmoop University, Inc., 11 November 2008, <http://www.shmoop.com/harry-potter-4-goblet-fire/hermione-granger.html> (accessed April 29, 2013).

4 EVALUATION OF THE HOUSE-ELVISH IMPACT ON THE HARRY POTTER STORY

The house-elves are devoted to their masters so much that they undergo even things to which they object from the bottom of their hearts or fear them. The second case is supported by the moment when in the fourth book *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, Harry, Hermione and the Weasleys arrive to the Top Box in the Quidditch World Cup arena. Harry finds there the female house-elf Winky, who was clearly terrified because she was shaking and covering her eyes with her hands. As she says: “House-elves is not supposed to have fun Harry Potter. House-elves does what they is told. I is not liking heights at all, Harry Potter – but my master sends me to the Top Box and I comes, sir. (sic)”⁵⁹ Also Kreacher proved his loyalty to Regulus even after he lent him to Voldemort.

The question is, to what extent is this idea of being totally devoted to wizards based on house-elves nature and how far it can go. There are clearly loops in the devotion and loyalty of particular house-elves to their masters. I would say that the degree of the devotion, loyalty and free will may depends on the master, whether he treats the house-elf good or bad, because if the house-elf does not agree with particular commands he can find a way how to break the order. Whenever the house-elves act contrary to the command they must punish themselves, as in the *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* Dobby had to burn his hands because he sealed the gateway to the Platform Nine and Three Quarters so Harry and Ron could not go through⁶⁰ and this Dobby’s feat was clearly in conflict with his master Lucius Malfoy’s plan, but Dobby underwent this fact even though he knew about it in advance and tried to stop Harry from getting hurt in Hogwarts in any way he thought would be for a good case.

The power of house-elves is limited, but as these creatures posses special kind of magic which differs from human wizards a lot, in many cases this difference enables them to do things wizards are not allowed – for example wizards cannot *apparate* to Hogwarts because the Human magic restriction does not permit this kind of magic. On the other hand this charm does not ban house-elves to *apparate* there, and this fact gives them significant advantage.

⁵⁹ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2000), 112.

⁶⁰ See J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, (London: Bloomsbury, 1998), 192.

Wizards simply do not see the power of house-elves and therefore are not afraid of them. They treat them as slaves not worth respectful treatment and this was fatal for some of those wizards. As Voldemort left Kreacher for death in the cave where he had hidden the locket and did not think of the fact that Kreacher has the power to come back to his master Regulus Black. Sirius was always uncongenial to Kreacher so the house-elf waited for his revenge and when he had the opportunity he gave Sirius up to Death Eaters. Hermione commented on this: "I've said all along that wizards would pay for how they treat house-elves. Well, Voldemort did... and so did Sirius."⁶¹

Kreacher's example clearly shows what power house-elves possess, what influence they may cause to the course of events of the whole story, and what is hidden inside those little creatures who are perceived as harmless, innocent, inferior and helpless beings. It also portrays how much anger or contrariwise good and loyalty can cumulate in house-elves depending on the treatment they receive – whether it is devotion, hatred or gratitude. As the case of Kreacher shows, it is very important for the wizards to know if their house-elf is really loyal to them or not, because these creatures see and hear things, and can collect information and eventually use it against their masters.⁶²

The power of house-elves reside in the fact that wizards are not afraid of them. They do not consider them dangerous because most of them perceive house-elves as servants and slaves without their own will, so wizard do not pay attention to what they say in front of house-elves. House-elves than on behalf of the information they acquire can quietly change the course of events in the way they feel it fits.

⁶¹ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 164.

⁶² The Harry Potter Lexicon, "House-Elves," http://www.hp-lexicon.org/bestiary/house_elves.html, (accessed on April 26, 2013).

CONCLUSION

This thesis portrays the potential of house-elves and the role they play in the story about Harry Potter, and comes to the conclusion, that the treatment of the house-elves within the story does not answer only to the good or evil personality of their masters as it may seem but to the influence of the environment where these characters were brought up.

I feel strongly about my beliefs, that every being walking on the Earth, and not just humans but all beings globally, have the right to act freely, unless they hurt someone else by that. By the studying of the material, relationships, happenings and the consequences they evoked I came to the conclusion that the role of the house-elves in the Harry Potter series is to show and emphasize the qualities and the moral values of particular human characters within the story.

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