Through the Looking Glass:

BA Students' Views on Popular Fiction

Edited by Mirna Bognar, Valentina Markasović, Biljana Oklopčić and Petra Sršić

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INTRODUCTION

"Never apologize for your reading tastes."

Betty Rosenberg[1]

This volume comes about as an attempt to explore a number of different contexts within which the student(s) of literature and the professor of literature can work in a literature class: class discussions, oral reports, audio and video materials, and, especially, critical writing. In our case, critical writing on popular fiction. Before examining what *popular fiction* is in more detail, let us first look at the term *fiction* as this is the starting point of any discussion about popular fiction. M. H. Abrams (1999) suggests three broad definitions of fiction. First, fiction can be used to refer to "any literary *narrative*, whether in prose or verse, which is invented instead of being an account of events that in fact happened" (94; emphasis original). We could, for instance, refer to a cartoon strip, a *Cosmopolitan* article, the lyrics of Lana Del Rey's song, and *Anna Karenina* as fiction because all of them depict to an extent imaginary persons and actions. This would be a perfectly understandable definition. A second use of the word fiction suggests "only narratives that are written in prose (the novel and short story)" (Abrams 94). Using this definition, if we are speaking of Anglophone prose, we could have in mind William Faulkner's novels, Hemingway's short stories or J.R.R Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Finally, Abrams suggests that the word fiction can sometimes be "used simply as a synonym for the novel" (94). Using this formulation, we could think of examples such as Octavia Butler's *Kindred*, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* or E.L. James's *50 Shades of Grey*. To speak of popular fiction usually means to mobilize all three meanings of fiction, as popular fiction is an invented prose narrative mostly written in the form of novel.

Now let us define the term "popular." Raymond Williams suggests four meanings of the term "popular": "well liked by many people"; "inferior kinds of work"; "work deliberately setting out to win favour with the people"; and "culture actually made by the people for themselves" (237). So, any definition of popular fiction will consist of a complex combination of the different meanings of the term "fiction" with the different meanings of the term "popular." An obvious starting point in

[1] *Genreflecting: A Guide to Popular Reading Interests, sixth edition*, edited by Diana Tixier Herald and Wayne A. Wiegand, Libraries Unlimited, 2006, the dedication.

any attempt to define popular fiction is to say that popular fiction is simply fiction that is well liked by many people. The quantitative aspect of this formulation can be confirmed by sales of books as *popular* of popular fiction would appear to call for it, for instance, by some estimates "crime fiction currently constitutes fully a third of the fiction published in English worldwide" (Smith 137). A second way of defining popular fiction is to assert that it is the fiction that is left over after we have decided what Literature is,[2] implying that popular fiction is inferior fiction. Thus, popular fiction is "conceived as the opposite of Literature [that is] . . . commonly regarded as self-contained, enclosed and completed by the author's apparent uniqueness, rather than as part of a shared and broad-based species of writing such as 'crime fiction'" (Gelder 11; 40). This definition accommodates novels and short stories that are mass-produced, commercial, and fail to meet the required standards of Literature as an individual act of trans-historical creation. In this definition, the notions of inferior and trans-historical are, however, problematic. For example, William Faulkner's *Sanctuary* has perplexed literary critics from the moment the novel appeared in 1931 as Faulkner himself repeatedly emphasized that the novel was to be seen as "a cheap idea . . . deliberately conceived to make money" (v), a commercial enterprise satisfying "current trends" (vi), and "the most horrific tale" (vi) he could invent. The same point can be made about William Shakespeare who is now regarded as the embodiment of Literature, yet up to the nineteenth century his plays were part of popular theater. A third definition of popular fiction draws heavily on the previous one as it looks at popular fiction as "mass fiction" – a hopelessly commercial fiction, mass produced for mass consumption. The sales of the *Harry Potter* series, the *50 Shades* trilogy or *A Song of Ice and Fire* series would undoubtedly confirm this definition. Yet, the mass fiction perspective might be sanitized by seeing popular fiction as a form of public fantasy, as a collective dream world. In this sense, the *Harry Potter* series functions in much the same way as dreams do: it articulates the collective "wish-fulfillment of the need to be special – and how much more special can one be than to be admitted into a magical world filled with like-minded people who have talents above and beyond the real world?" (Hiebert Alton 202). Other definitions of popular fiction may include views on popular fiction as folk fiction, as a site of ideological struggle between dominant and subordinate cultures or as a postmodern terrain of interpenetration of fiction and commerce.[3]

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[2] I adopt here Ken Gelder's term Literature: he ascribes a capital L to the term to distinguish it from literature as a general field of writing.

[3] The given definitions of popular fiction have been inspired by the analysis of popular culture by John Storey in his *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction, 5th edition*, pp. 5-13.

What all these definitions have in common is the idea that whatever popular fiction is, it is definitely "a craft" (Gelder 17), which is simple, fantastic, sensuous, caught up with "danger" and "intrigue," excessive, exaggerated, plot-oriented, and exciting (Gelder 19). The last trait unambiguously points out that popular fiction "often enjoys a particular kind of reader loyalty, one that can build itself around not just a writer and his or her body of work (which certainly happens) but the entire genre and the culture that imbues it" (Gelder 81). One of the key words in the afore-cited quote that encapsulates contemporary critical views on popular fiction is, without doubt, *genre*. Understood as "as a means of categorising fictional formulae" (Bloom 86), genre is the most productive way to think about popular fiction as "the entire field of popular fiction is written for, marketed and consumed generically: it provides the primary logic for popular fiction's means of production, formal and industrial identification and critical evaluation" (Gelder 40). The afore-mentioned definition of genre contains the second most important concept recurring in discussions of popular fiction – *formula*. As "a completely conventional structure of conventions" (Cawelti 119), formula makes genre even more specific by imposing "a much more limited repertory of plots, characters, and settings" (Cawelti 121) to it: chick-lit must have a certain setting, a particular cast of characters, and follow a limited number of lines of action. A chick-lit that does not take place in a big city in contemporary time, that does not feature a young woman in her late twenties or thirties who is usually employed in the media sector, and that does not depict her career and relationship issues, is simply not chick-lit. A fantasy novel that does not involve an internally consistent secondary world, magic, common characters, a quest, and a conflict between good and evil is not a fantasy novel. That is why popular fiction is often termed *genre fiction* or *formula fiction* – the fiction that shares "multiple characteristics and features, allowing them to be characterized as belonging to a specific genre" (Tixier Herald 31). Those characteristics and features define popular fiction in terms of Westerns, mysteries, romances, adventures, science fiction, fantasy, popular historical fiction or horror.

Popular fiction is inseparable from the study of literature, at least in the last fifty years. Scholarly interest in popular fiction has resulted not only in a number of monographs and articles in scholarly journals exploring the hows, whys, and whats of popular fiction but also in undergraduate and graduate courses, discussing popular fiction and its place in contemporary culture/literature and thus acquainting students with contemporary theories of popular. Reading and understanding existing popular texts can help students comprehend the features of popular fiction genres, the differences and similarities between popular fiction and mainstream literature, and the construction of cultural, class, race,

and gender identities in popular fiction. Ultimately, popular texts will enable students to "engage with a literary tradition" (Culler 116) as all popular fiction has its roots in Literature.

Papers discussing popular fiction genres collected in this volume were part of the 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 (research) paper assignments within the BA literature course *Popular Fiction*. All the topics, except the last that allowed students to "defend" popular reading interests of their own choice, concentrated on the popular fiction texts discussed, analysed, and interpreted in the course classes: *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone, Divergent, Carrie, Bridget Jones's Diary,* and *Murder on the Orient Express*. The assigned topics were:

1. The House as the identity formation tool in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* / The concept(s) of family in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*;
2. The teen subculture in Veronica Roth's *Divergent* / The quest for identity in Veronica Roth's *Divergent*;
3. The fear of femininity in Stephen King's *Carrie* / Toxic relationship(s) in Stephen King's *Carrie*;
4. Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* as the novel of female empowerment? / *Bridget Jones's Diary* and women's self-definition;
5. Theatricality in Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*, and
6. In defense of popular fiction: convince me why I should read your favorite popular fiction novel.

The paper topics were so structured to help students develop critical reading skills by observing popular fiction through the lens of 1) trends and market demands that make fiction popular or unpopular, (2) its relation to "high" and "low" culture, and (3) its (de)construction of gender, race, class, and cultural identities. In this volume, they are organized according to the genre rule, i.e. all the papers addressing a specific genre (e.g. fantasy, science fiction, romance, mystery or horror) are grouped together regardless of their topic (the required reads or students' free choice).

The scholarly value of this volume could be contested as it does not deal with mainstream literature. Yet, what makes it worthwhile and original is the attempt at criticism, the attempt to express, and defend, one's views and embark on a journey whose results might be disappointing as well as rewarding. Not everyone has the courage to publish their views and perspectives on such a contested subject as popular fiction and that is why this volume is so special: it is not only a book documenting an attempt to discuss popular fiction in the BA literature

class, it is also a tribute to the students who had the courage to show the world that they are not afraid to express their views. We thank them all for their contributions: thank you all for your time, interest, and support.

Your student editors Mirna Bognar, Valentina Markasović and Petra Sršić

Your literature professor Biljana Oklopčić

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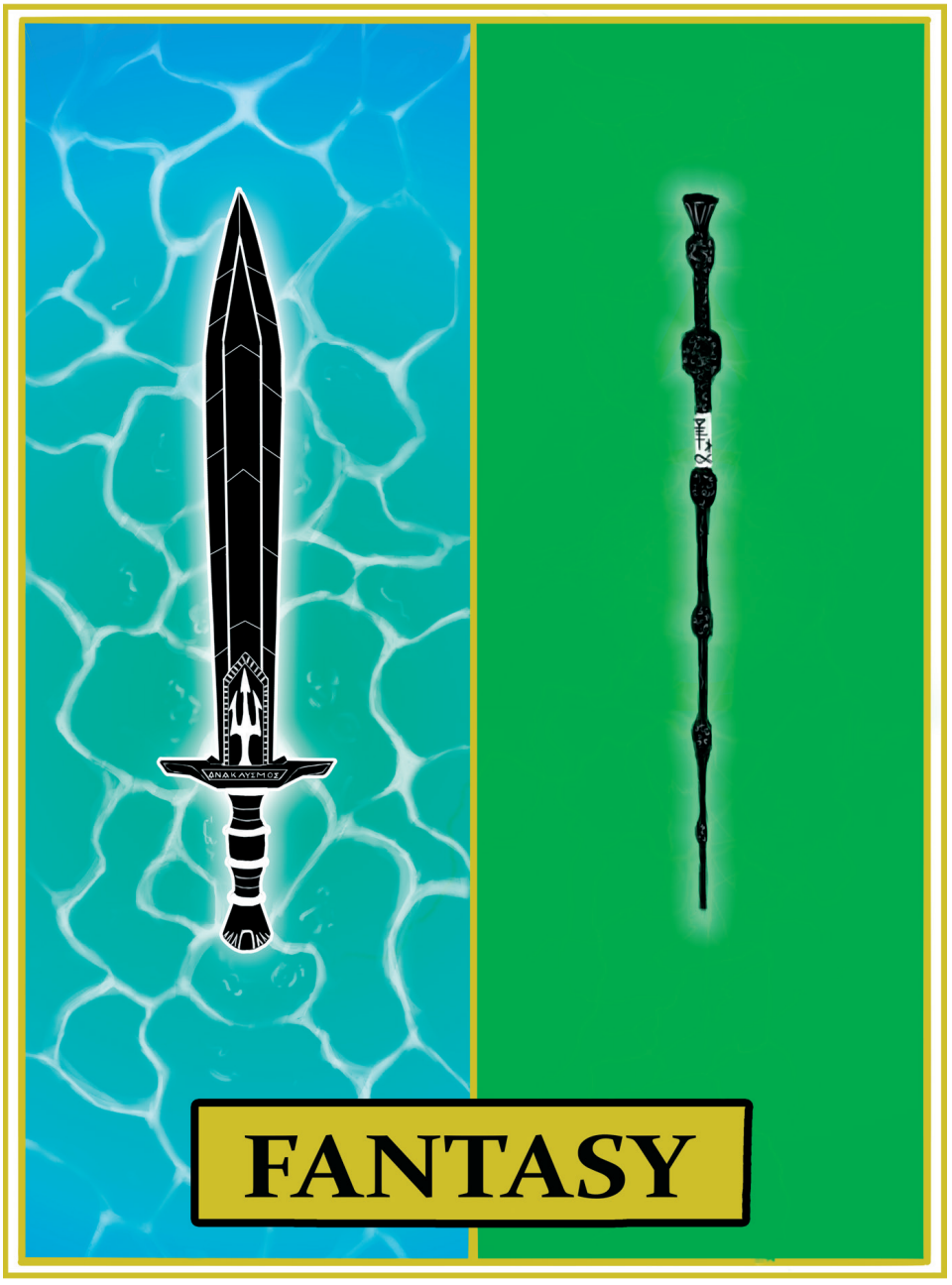
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FANTASY

CHAPTER 1: **FANTASY**

It is believed that the genre of fantasy is almost as old as literature itself, tracing its roots back to the myths and legends of ancient times and the stories containing elements of the unexplainable that have been present in every culture. As a literary genre, fantasy emerges in the eighteenth century with ballads and fairy tales such as Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765) (Sandner 6). In the nineteenth century, fantasy becomes part of popular literature with Edgar Allan Poe writing for the newspapers and collections of folk tales being published (Calvino 134). Notable nineteenth-century fantasy authors include, among others, Hans Christian Andersen with his *Fairy Tales*, and Lewis Carroll with his *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. In the twentieth century, fantasy affirms its literary position as more and more theoretical works on the genre emerge and help to define it (Sandner 9). Moreover, the twentieth century features the best-known fantasy writers such as J.R.R. Tolkien (*The Hobbit*), C.S. Lewis (*The Chronicles of Narnia*), Ursula K. Le Guin (*The Earthsea* series), Philip Pullman (*His Dark Materials*), and many others.

Thus, fantasy slowly evolved into, what J.R.R. Tolkien described in his essay "On Fairy-Stories," a genre consisting of two important elements – the creation of an internally consistent secondary world and the use of magic and enchantment (James 66). The fantastic can enter a story through (1) the portal-quest, where the protagonist enters a new world; (2) the immersion, where the protagonist is part of the fantastic world; (3) the intrusion, where the fantastic breaks into the primary world, and (4) the liminal, where magic might or might not be happening (James and Mendlesohn 2).

No matter how the fantastic is introduced into the story, aspiring authors need to fulfil the following criteria for a fantasy novel to appeal to the ever-growing market: the story needs to be internally consistent and its elements based on some principle or law. It has to be original and possess the capacity to incite wonder. Finally, the use of a vivid setting and exciting style are greatly encouraged (Gates et al. 10-18).

As already mentioned, fantasy's main characteristic is going beyond the "real" and the "possible" (Jackson 16). Other important traits include (1) the use of a story, which has to be believable and interesting; (2) common, everyday characters (O'Keefe 179); (3) the evocation of another world ("Genre Fantasy" 396); (4) the conflict between good and evil; (5) an adventure in the form of a quest (O'Keefe 167), and (6) a resolution that offers optimism ("Fantasy" 339). In fantasy, themes are usually clustered into several related areas such as

invisibility, transformation, dualism, which then generate a number of motifs: shadows, werewolves, doubles, beasts, etc. (Jackson 49). These themes and motifs, depending on their purpose, are used to create different subgenres of fantasy. Probably the most famous fantasy subgenre is that of Epic or High Fantasy, which is set in an imaginary world, its main representative being Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Other subgenres are: Sword and Sorcery Fantasy, which connects warrior and supernatural characters ("Sword and Sorcery" 915); Slick Fantasy, usually in short story form that portrays pacts with the devil, three wishes, and so on ("Slick Fantasy" 874); Fairy Tales, a subgenre that reworks classic fairy tales; Urban Fantasy, where fantasy and the real world intertwine to form a tale about a real city ("Urban Fantasy" 975); Dark Fantasy, which incorporates a sense of horror ("Dark Fantasy" 249); Saga, Myth, and Legend and its other subgenres based on prominent cultural mythologies, e.g. Celtic, Nordic, Asian, and Arthurian (O'Keefe 176). An essay written by Petra Sršić – "An In-depth Analysis of Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson* Series," in which she analyses how contemporary issues are represented in the novel, could best be classified into this category.

This collection of essays attests to the popularity of the fantasy genre, and especially to the popularity of one of its writers – J.K. Rowling. Classified as an Alternate and Parallel Worlds fantasy in which characters travel from one world to another, the *Harry Potter* series provides many topics for literary examination. One of them is the concept of family, which is discussed in Vedran Domjanović's essay "Rubeus Hagrid and Minerva McGonagall as Harry Potter's Substitute Parental Figures in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*" and Amila Hadžibeganović's essay "The Redefined Family in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*." Quite a few essays offer various perspectives on the Houses of Hogwarts as an identity formation tool. Thus, "*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*: Does Sorting Do You Good?" by Mirna Krasnić, "You Are What House You Are in" by Anna Maria Lovrić, "The Importance of the Houses in Hogwarts" by Andrea Nikoloso, "Forging the Identity in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*" by Tomislav Stojanović, "The Extent and Limitations of the House as the Identity Formation Tool in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*" by Matea Peček, "Lions, Serpents, Eagles, and Badgers: The House as an Identity Formation Tool in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*" by Matko Marković, "Identity through Houses in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*" by Merzlota, and "Did You Just Assume My House" by Dragutin Šimić analyse how each of the four Hogwarts Houses influences its members and in which way it shapes their identity. In their essays "The Evolution of a Lion: The House as an Identity Formation Tool in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*" and

"The House of Gryffindor as a Means in Shaping Harry's Personality in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*," Lucija Novokmet and Sara Tišljar focus on how the House of Gryffindor shaped Harry as a person. Last, but not least, in her paper "House and Prejudice in *Harry Potter*: The Case of Slytherin," Valentina Markasović discusses the prejudice that the House system creates among Hogwarts students.

Petra Sršić

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Rubeus Hagrid and Minerva McGonagall as Harry Potter's Substitute Parental Figures in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*

Vedran Domjanović

On Halloween of 1981, Harry Potter experiences the harshest possible disaster that can befall a little child: his parents die a tragic death, after which he is put in the care of his only remaining relatives, the Dursleys. In the following ten years, Harry's life is close to hell. He spends a decade in the misery of their home, without any kind of parental figure, unloved and confined in a cupboard under the stairs. Despite being Harry's blood kin, his aunt's family presents him with nothing but neglect, abuse, and humiliation. However, on his eleventh birthday things begin to change as he finds out that he is not a regular boy but a wizard who is set to start his education at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. In this new, previously unknown world, he meets people who actually care for him, something he experiences for the first time in his life. This is visible from the very first time he meets Hagrid, who shows him more affection in one day than the Dursleys did in the previous ten years. Their relationship soon becomes very loving and warm and Hagrid becomes Harry's safe haven. The Head of Harry's House, Professor McGonagall, also shows a great inclination towards him. Despite being stern and coming off as cold and distant at first, she shows that she harbors very noble feelings towards Harry. The aim of this paper is to assert that Rubeus Hagrid and Minerva McGonagall are the first proper father and mother figures in Harry Potter's life after his parents' death, as depicted in the first instalment of the series.

It is widely known that a child needs love, sense of security, and appropriate guidance while growing up in order to develop properly. However, the Dursleys fail to provide Harry with any of that and, on the contrary, disregard all of his needs: "Harry was used to spiders, because the cupboard under the stairs was full of them, and that was where he slept" (Rowling 20). He is completely in the shadow of his cousin Dudley, who mistreats him as well. Harry is far from being a part of their family so much so that Emma Hofeling argues that the Dursleys can in no way be seen as Harry's parents but merely legal guardians (5). Moreover, they act as if he is not there and their house "held no sign at all that another boy lived in the house, too" (Rowling 19). The little communication that goes on between Harry and his aunt and uncle is abusive. They do not refer to him as Harry but as "the boy" or "him." He is constantly hushed and when they do talk

to him, they mostly use short sentences in imperative forms. The Dursleys try to conceal Harry's real identity as well, so he grows up being completely unaware of who he is since he knows neither about the existence of magic nor the cause of his parents' death. Only when he enters the magical world and starts meeting people who are part of it is he treated with dignity, as an equal, and is even perceived as a hero by many.

Harry's first contact with the magic world is Hagrid, which is symbolic since he is the same man who takes him from the ruins of the Potter home in Godric's Hollow and brings him to the Dursleys after Lily and James's death. It breaks his heart having to leave Harry with such a horrendous family, or as McGonagall puts it: "the worst sort of Muggles imaginable" (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* 00:20:40). Even then Hagrid shows tender feelings towards Harry: "He bent his great, shaggy head over Harry and gave him what must have been a very scratchy, whiskery kiss. Then, suddenly, Hagrid let out a howl like a wounded dog" (Rowling 17). This kiss is probably the last sign of affection shown to Harry up to the moment when (again) Hagrid bakes him "a large, sticky chocolate cake with Happy Birthday Harry written on it in green icing" (Rowling 40). During his visit to the shack, Hagrid "looked at Harry with warmth and respect blazing in his eyes" (Rowling 47). He informs Harry about magic, Hogwarts, and, later, the cause of his parents' death. Hagrid is also the person who buys Harry his first proper birthday present (considering that he is used to getting coat hangers and old socks, which can hardly be classified as presents) – a snowy owl named Hedwig, Harry's faithful companion in the following six years. He takes Harry to Diagon Alley in order to help him get everything he needs for school, which is something other students of Hogwarts usually do with their parents. In this transitional period between Harry's admission to Hogwarts and the beginning of the school year, Hagrid takes on the responsibility of taking care of Harry's business since there is no one else around to do it.

Hagrid's amiability continues when Harry arrives at Hogwarts. Hagrid makes sure that Harry feels welcome, so he invites him over to his hut often and befriends Harry's new friends, Ron and Hermione. He attends every Quidditch game Harry is in. For Christmas, Harry receives a flute personally whittled by Hagrid. It is safe to say that Hagrid, alongside Ron and Hermione, is the most important person in Harry's life during his first year at Hogwarts. Harry even states that "Hagrid was the only one who ever sent him letters" (Rowling 192). After Harry's near-death experience with Professor Quirrell, Hagrid's state of extreme distress shows the amount of love he feels for Harry. He visits Harry in the hospital, sobbing and saying that he should be blamed for what happened. Hagrid's love for Harry is so great that Megan L. Birch says that he is "overly

emotional" (114). One of the most emotional scenes in the novel is when Hagrid gives Harry an album containing pictures of his parents. Hagrid "sent owls off ter all [Harry's] parents' old school friends, askin' fer photos" (Rowling 220) and even took a day off to make the album, knowing that it would make Harry happy. Ronnie Carmeli asserts that "Hagrid might be the first adult to show Harry parental care" (19), which, judging from Harry's relationship with the Dursleys, is entirely correct.

The most important female character in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* who could serve as Harry's mother figure is Minerva McGonagall. Even though finding the female counterpart of Hagrid in relationship to Harry in the first instalment is impossible, on several occasions McGonagall shows that she truly and deeply cares about Harry, making her Harry's most prominent female caretaker and "a strong and supportive maternal presence in Harry's life. In fact, Professor McGonagall displays her maternal protection to Harry before she has met him" (Weiss 28). In the very first scene of the book, McGonagall's usually calm demeanour is replaced by dread when she finds out that Harry is going to be living with the Dursleys. She feels sorry for him, expresses her worries about his future, and even cries when they leave him on the Dursleys' doorstep. When Harry arrives at Hogwarts, he finds out that McGonagall is the Head of his House and that, "while [they] are [t]here, [their] House will be something like [their] family within Hogwarts" (Rowling 85), so McGonagall is in a way the head of Harry's (Gryffindor) family. When she catches him flying and chasing Malfoy on a broom, instead of expelling him, she introduces him to Wood as the new Gryffindor Seeker. In that instance, "she channels Harry's impulsive behaviour into a positive, constructive talent and an opportunity for him to experience success and pride, instead of simply punishing him for breaking rules and acting recklessly" (Heyman and Provenzano 116). When compared to Dumbledore, who also takes to Harry, "McGonagall is a firmer but equally dependable figure on whom Harry can rely for more frequent direction guidance" (Heyman and Provenzano 115). Perhaps the biggest proof of her fondness for Harry is the broom she sends him before his first Quidditch match. Aurélie Lacassagne states that she could have ordered him to get a broom, knowing that he has a lot of money, but instead she presents him with the most expensive one on the market, which is something a mother would do (115).

Having lost his parents at a really early age and not being provided with adequate care while living with the Dursleys, Harry enters the magical world subconsciously looking for the affection that he has not received so far. He starts creating a surrogate family for himself, comprised mainly of his friends and teachers. The most affectionate male figure towards Harry in the first book is

Hagrid. He might not be the best contender for the surrogate father title overall, considering his lack of reliability, which is also suggested by Ronnie Carmeli, who asserts that "alongside his many merits, Hagrid does not have a strong enough character to fulfil the role of an idealised father figure" (19), but he does show unconditional love towards Harry throughout all seven novels, which is what Harry needs the most. Arden and Lorenz add that he is more of a "devoted uncle" (65) than a father. As for the mother figure, McGonagall is the closest Harry gets to having a mother in the first instalment of the series. Despite being a very reserved person, on several occasions she shows that she truly cares about Harry's wellbeing and perhaps that she favors him over other students. "Professor McGonagall plays an essential caretaking role in Harry Potter's life. She blends into the storyline in an unassuming, nearly invisible manner – until the reader endeavours to pay special attention to Minerva McGonagall" (Pahel 319).

Even though Hagrid and McGonagall might not be the best examples of parental figures throughout the entire series, they certainly are the first. In the remaining novels, Hagrid and McGonagall step aside and other people emerge as more adequate parental figures, yet their importance in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's* Stone is immense. They pave the way for other maternal and paternal figures, such as Molly, Lupin, Sirius, and many other witches and wizards who love Harry as if he was their own child. Hagrid and McGonagall help to make Harry's transition to a new community easier and help Harry at his most vulnerable hour – when he arrives in a new world, all alone. With their help and with the help of his friends, Harry's first year at Hogwarts is the best year of his young life because he finally has the chance to experience what it is like to be loved and taken care of.

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The Redefined Family in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*

Amila Hadžibeganović

When simply relying on a dictionary to find the definition of family, one knows of this concept only in its prototypical and simplified form. The *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* provides the following definition of the term: "the basic unit in society traditionally consisting of two parents rearing their children, also: any of various social units differing from but regarded as equivalent to traditional family." From it, one can deduce that family is a unit of people, prototypically of two adults with a child, which can in certain situations take different forms from the one that is regarded as central. Such a definition does not account for the complexity and layering of this concept. It does not take into consideration the function of this unit. Therefore, the quoted definition is lacking in several respects. Firstly, it provides the simplified understanding of what this unit is, and even though it attempts to provide for instances that are divergent, there is not enough explanation of what those cases might be. Secondly, the definition decontextualizes the term and turns it into a mathematical equation in which smaller units, parents and children, are added together to form a bigger one.

The proof of the complexity of this unit can be found in everyday life along with numerous variations on the form of the same. Since art is considered to mimick life, there one also finds the concept of family present. J.K. Rowling's first novel in the *Harry Potter* series, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, is a great example of representation of family in its various shapes and forms and, therefore, the proof of how flawed the afore-mentioned dictionary entry is. The following essay will attempt to discover the ways in which Rowling depicts family and to determine whether her representations require a redefinition of the concept.

As the reader follows the life of the protagonist, Harry Potter, in the *Harry Potter* series, it seems appropriate to focus on an examination of his family. Harry's family consists of his aunt and uncle, Petunia and Vernon Dursley, and his cousin Dudley. This family seems to combine two units into one. It seems to be a family within a family. The principal one is that of the Dursleys consisting of the spouses and the child they have together who were later joined by another member belonging to a different nuclear family. Harry's parents died when he was a year old and the only relatives he has are his aunt and uncle. By taking Harry in, the Dursleys changed the dynamics of their family and created, in a way, a dual family. The duality lies in the fact that they kept the core of their family, keeping

themselves as three central members, and added Harry as an additional and not equal member. Harry is given a lower status and treated as a mere servant. That brings into question whether this family in which Harry grew up could indeed be considered as one or if redefinition of the term is necessary.

Furthermore, to understand the concept of family and see whether it needs redefining, one should bring into question what makes family a more complex concept than the one provided in the definition. The complexity of the concept can be accounted for through psychology, namely the Family System Theory founded by Murray Bowen. Bowen conducted research on families, the connections that form within them, and how they affect anxiety. Thus, he created "comprehensive theories of family systems functioning" (Brown 2) where family is seen as a system that has its role, identity, and functions that are jointly fulfilled. This creates space for a more complex definition of family:

> Family identity is a latent cognitive structure which encompasses a complex range of fundamental beliefs, attitudes and traits shared by the family. The combination of these traits and qualities makes a family unique in that it helps to distinguish it from other families. Subjective as it is, the family identity is a group psychology phenomenon with a shared beliefs system at its core. (Margasiński 14)

According to Andrzej Margasiński, family is not just the combination of an appropriate number of individuals related in particular ways but rather a collective of consciousness that shapes each other. If one applies this view to Harry Potter's family, it is hard to say what the family's shared beliefs and attitudes would be. It seems as if Harry does not fit into the consciousness of the family of which he is considered to be part. Namely, as Harry cannot understand the spoiled nature of his cousin, the lack of emotions that his aunt and uncle exhibit towards him and the fact that he is the constant subject of the family's jokes and object of ridicule, he never seems to be able to immerse himself into family conversations. Harry thus does not share in the family identity, which brings into question his belonging to the family.

In his study, Andrzej Margasiński introduces the McMaster model of Family System Theory in which there are "six different dimensions of family functioning: problem solving, communication, roles, emotional responsiveness, emotional involvement, behavior control" (18). These dimensions represent the things that are accomplished by the joint work of families. Together they solve problems, learn how to communicate, respond to emotions, and behave, and consequently build one's character. In *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, however, Harry's character seems to be built in spite of the family. He never receives support, understanding, and encouragement from his aunt and uncle, actually

his character building occurs only after he leaves their home, in places that are not the Dursley home.

One of the first communities in which elements of Harry's identity building can be found is his Hogwarts House. This is the community of people created by individuals who possess similar qualities or traits, such as, for example, bravery. Together they share a communal living space and work as a team when it comes to study. Their identity is, from the moment of being sorted into a particular House, being jointly built and developed. Harry finds his home in Gryffindor House and there he befriends people who are similar to him and creates another type of community.

The other type of community is definitely friendship. Harry is unable to choose who his family is. When he became an orphan, his only family were his aunt and uncle. On several occasions, Harry wishes that to change: "When he had been younger, Harry had dreamed and dreamed of some unknown relation coming to take him away, but it had never happened; the Dursleys were his only family" (Rowling 30). Harry, however, has complete control over who will become his friend. He chooses Ron and Hermione as his two closest friends. They become the people Harry can rely on, find support in, and share all his ups and downs with. Harry feels no such connection to his actual family and, in one instance, standing in front of the Mirror of Erised, he even utters the following: "All my family are dead…" (Rowling 211). In this way, he denies any connection to the Dursleys who do a similar thing. At the end of the novel when asked if they are Harry's family, uncle Vernon says: "In a manner of speaking" (Rowling 309).

On the other hand, the attachment to a particular House within the school seems to account for those altering and building characteristics and consequently allows for the House to be equated with family, which is what Rowling has in mind as well when she refers to Gryffindor as Harry's "family within Hogwarts" (Rowling 114). Students belonging to the same House, such as Gryffindor, have character traits in common, but also cooperate and co-exist in a way that only together they can achieve success, such as that of winning the House Cup. Harry finds support and love in his friends. Through them, he learns what it means to care about someone deeply. Harry learns how to give, how to sacrifice himself for others, all with the help of his friends. Ron and Hermione are the people in whom Harry can confide, and the three of them together share the same beliefs and attitudes. The three of them work together to achieve their common goals, even if they are the wrong ones. Harry's identity is more built by people whom he has met at school than the people who raised him. This is clearly visible through his behavior at the end of the novel where he is able to express his appreciation

of and care for his friends. Unlike his selfish relatives who always gave him the bare minimum, Harry is selfless and ready to risk his life for the greater good.

In conclusion, in J.K. Rowling's novel *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, one can discover the family that fits the characteristics of the dictionary-defined family. However, there is much more to family than just being the unity of constituents. Family is a complex unified structure that shares beliefs and values. It is crucial in building a person and his/her personality. What is interesting is that the protagonist of Rowling's novel has received those additional aspects of family influence through non-familial social relationships as Harry builds his identity and character through his House and friends. Rowling's novel consequently offers a new definition of family. For Harry, family is not a unity of parents and children; for him, family is Gryffindor, Ron, Hermione and many more.

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Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone: Does Sorting Do You Good?

Mirna Krasnić

One of the first things the students who arrive at Hogwarts are subjected to is being sorted into the Houses. The Sorting Ceremony is an important event and it is as old as Hogwarts itself. The ceremony has changed over the years but the purpose of it has remained the same – to sort students into their Houses. The ceremony is now conducted by the Sorting Hat; in the past, the Hogwarts founders themselves conducted it. It is crucial that the students are sorted into appropriate Houses because the sorting will in a way determine their future. The aim of this paper is thus to discuss how the sorting affects the identity of students at Hogwarts.

There were four founders of Hogwarts: two witches and two wizards. They were friends and had an idea to establish the world's biggest and best wizarding school. Each of them founded a House that nurtured different skills and traits and their House was a kind of reflection of their personality and character. Each of the Houses bore the surnames of their respective founder.

Godric Gryffindor was the founder of Gryffindor House. His physical appearance and the etymology of his name describe Gryffindor House itself well. His first name comes from Anglo-Saxon and means "he who rules well" (*Harry Potter Wiki*), referring to the traits that a good ruler should have such as bravery, determination, unselfishness, kind heart, and humility – all the traits that Gryffindor House encourages. His last name is based on the word Griffin, which refers to a half-lion creature, symbolizing strength and thus being the symbol of Gryffindor House as well. When it comes to his appearance, he is described as a tall, strong man with long red hair and beard – the right kind of appearance that describes a powerful king (*Harry Potter Wiki*). Students that are chosen to be in Gryffindor House should not only be brave because too much bravery can become madness, but they should also know when to step back. True Gryffindors should also account for their actions and act accordingly, they have to be kind-hearted and ready to help others. There are many examples of true Gryffindors but if we have to name one it would be Minerva McGonagall. She is brave, fearless, emphatic, strict when necessary, and, most important of all, she would do anything to protect her students and Hogwarts. Harry, Ron, and Hermione have all the traits required to be a Gryffindor. Hermione is intelligent, dedicated, and resourceful.

Ron is kind, sometimes fearful, but always there to help his friends. Harry is the bravest student of his generation.

There are three other Houses beside Gryffindor, one of them being Hufflepuff. The founder of this House was Helga Hufflepuff. She was a kind and warm woman. She considered loyalty, patience, and hard-work the most important things that make a good wizard and a good person. One of the most prominent Hufflepuffs is Cedric Diggory, one of the Triwizard champions. Helga Hufflepuff's best friend was Rowena Ravenclaw who was the founder of Ravenclaw House. She sought intelligence and creativity in her students. A great example of a Ravenclaw is Garrick Ollivander, for his skills and ambition led him to be the world's greatest wand maker.

The last of the four was infamous Salazar Slytherin. He was Godric Gryffindor's best friend. He is described as cunning, determined, and ambitious. Those were all good traits, yet he had one that was unforgiving: he demanded that only Pure-Blood wizards attend Hogwarts. Other founders did not support Salazar's views so he left Hogwarts full of malice and swore that one day when his heir appears, he would take revenge on Hogwarts (*Harry Potter Wiki*). It is unfortunate that almost every Slytherin student shares Salazar's point of view. Draco Malfoy proves to be a real Slytherin from the very first moment we are introduced to him in the novel. For example, he makes fun of Ron's robe: "My father told me all the Weasleys have red hair, freckles, and more children than they can afford . . . You'll soon find out some wizarding families are much better than others, Potter. You don't want to go making friends with the wrong sort" (Rowling 108).

The House you are sorted into will be like your family through the years and you can always rely on your House mates. Each year the House Cup is given to the House with the most points and you earn points by doing good deeds, obeying the rules, and playing Quidditch against other Houses. The House Cup encourages students to be competitive and to do their best. The Houses are valuable because they help you improve your qualities, gain some new ones, and, most importantly, they teach you how to be part of the team. For instance, at the beginning of the school year, Hermione was an obedient know-it-all but little by little she learned that sometimes you have to disobey the rules for the greater good. Ron and Harry would often criticize her for studying so hard but eventually they realized that if Hermione was not so clever, they may not have been alive anymore. Neville Longbottom was clumsy and afraid but in order to save Gryffindor from losing points he stood up to Harry, Ron, and Hermione, for which he was later rewarded: "'There are all kinds of courage,' said Dumbledore, smiling. 'It takes a great deal of bravery to stand up to our enemies, but just

as much to stand up to our friends. I therefore award ten points to Mr. Neville Longbottom'" (Rowling 306).

In conclusion, we can agree that the Houses do you good and that they help you to improve skills, which will help you later in life. Yet, being irrevocably sorted into one House only has its disadvantages as well. When in a particular House, you improve the skills that you already have, and you cannot learn many new ones because all your House mates are quite similar. A diversity would allow for acquiring many more good qualities. If there were no Houses, the Slytherin students may be more accepting because they would not spend time only with people who are vicious and who discriminate against others.

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You Are What House You Are in

Anna Maria Lovrić

As a new student approaches the new life in the school of wizardry, s/he is to be sorted into one of the four Hogwarts Houses – Gryffindor, Slytherin, Hufflepuff or Ravenclaw. The philosophy of being a member of a certain House is that all students are sorted into a House according to what of their characteristic qualities prevail. The House they end up in is chosen by the Sorting Hat at the Sorting Ceremony. The aim of this paper is thus to show that a student is what House s/he is in.

The students who are to be sorted into the Houses are numerous and such are their attitudes toward the Sorting Ceremony. It seems that Harry is rather clueless about the whole dividing-into-Houses process, unlike others who have either educated themselves about it (Hermione), or learned about the ceremony from their siblings (Ron), or have a strong conviction where they want to be, like Draco Malfoy whose ancestors have always been in Slytherin and who wishes to be one as well:

> "Know what house you'll be in yet?"
> "No," said Harry, feeling more stupid by the minute.
> "Well, no one really knows until they get there, do they, but I know I'll be in Slytherin, all our family have been…"
> "Mmm," said Harry, wishing he could say something a bit more interesting.
> (Rowling 77-78)

Harry later gathers some knowledge on what each House represents and, like the other two protagonists, Ron and Hermione, wishes he could be part of Gryffindor: "I've been asking around, and I hope I'm in Gryffindor, it sounds by far the best" (Rowling 106). Gryffindor values bravery, honor, and strength of will and Harry, Ron, and Hermione all possess these characteristics, even to the point of rebellion. Unlike the intelligent Ravenclaws and loyal Hufflepuffs who are also popular, Slytherins are Hogwarts's most notorious students – heroic but abusive of power: "Harry gripped the edges of the stool and thought, *Not Slytherin, not Slytherin*" (Rowling 121). The antagonist of the series – He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named or Voldemort – was in Slytherin as well. It is believed that all wizards who have belonged to this House have exploited their abilities and gone bad: "There's not a single witch or wizard who went bad who wasn't in Slytherin. You-Know-Who was one" (Rowling 80). Slytherins gained their notoriety as they did not show much affection for the other Houses, especially Gryffindor.

It is at the Sorting Ceremony that the Sorting Hat explores the minds, thoughts, and preferences of future Hogwarts students and decides where they will spend the rest of their school days. Nervous and shaking, Harry clearly does not want to be in Slytherin, and the Sorting Hat, seeing his strong wish to prove himself, sorts him into Gryffindor as it did Hermione and Ron. Draco Malfoy's expectations to be a Slytherin are easily and quickly fulfilled.

The rivalry between students is thus strengthened by sorting them into different Houses. They are in different rooms, have separate dormitories, and battle each other in Quidditch, which supports the distinctions between the young wizards and forms their character, their virtues, and flaws. Annually, the House Cup is given to the House earning the most points, supporting the competition between the Houses and wizards. In the competition, they show their true selves and accentuate the ideals the Sorting Hat found in them. Not only do students engage in competitive activities but they also have to excel at school and behavior as all these elements reflect on the achievements and image of their House. This means that all their ups are their respective House's wins and that all their downs are their House's losses. Each House member has to show team spirit because the selfishness and carelessness of only one person could destroy the entire House: "Don't you *care* about Gryffindor, do you *only* care about yourselves, *I* don't want Slytherin to win the House Cup, and you'll lose all the points I got from Professor McGonagall for knowing about Switching Spells" (Rowling 155). There is also peer pressure, or pressure on the children overall, at Hogwarts as they do not get to choose which House they feel they belong to – the Sorting Hat chooses the House for them. Another point to prove that the Houses reflect the students' character can be found in Draco's behavior as it perfectly fits the behavior and actions of a selfish, arrogant, and evil Slytherin:

> Malfoy had been even more unpleasant than usual since the Quidditch match. Disgusted that the Slytherins had lost, he had tried to get everyone laughing at how a wide-mouthed tree frog would be replacing Harry as Seeker next. Then he'd realized that nobody found this funny, because they were all so impressed at the way Harry had managed to stay on his bucking broomstick. So Malfoy, jealous and angry, had gone back to taunting Harry about having no proper family. (Rowling 195)

Furthermore, Harry's sorting into Gryffindor also proves not to be a mistake at all as he shows nerve and is very courageous: "'I'm going to play,' he told Ron and Hermione. 'If I don't, all the Slytherins will think I'm just too scared to face Snape. I'll show them . . . it'll really wipe the smiles off their faces if we win'" (Rowling 221). The influence of the House on a wizard or a witch is enormous.

For instance, at the beginning, Ron was fearful and in his brothers' shadow, but later he acquired the bravery and confidence of a real Gryffindor:

> "That's chess!" snapped Ron. "You've got to make some sacrifices! I'll make my move and she'll take me – that leaves you free to checkmate the king, Harry!" . . .
> "Do you want to stop Snape or not?"
> "Ron –"
> "Look, if you don't hurry up, he'll already have the Stone!" . . .
> "Ready?" Ron called, his face pale but determined. "Here I go – now, don't hang around once you've won." (Rowling 283)

Yet, for some, their most valuable qualities are not as emphasized as they would have been if they had been sorted into the House cherishing their most pronounced quality. For instance, Hermione's intelligence would have been more admired in Ravenclaw, the House of the smartest wizards and witches.

Overall, the Sorting Hat does examine the student's personality and determines where each individual spirit belongs. The Houses create a feeling of family and a home away from home because of the positive features they share. Through others, students learn about themselves and identify with their House and, in return, their House grants them support. Certain wizards and witches differ from others, which is why the similar are grouped to empower the best qualities they have.

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House and Prejudice in *Harry Potter*: The Case of Slytherin

Valentina Markasović

The famous fantasy novel series written by J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter*, is set in an elaborately crafted magical world that is not too unlike our own. The protagonists of the novels, Harry Potter and his friends, attend Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. The students of Hogwarts are sorted into four Houses – Slytherin, Gryffindor, Ravenclaw, or Hufflepuff – according to their character traits by the Sorting Hat in the Sorting Ceremony. This paper will explicate how being sorted into a House conditions students to have prejudices against the Houses other than his or her own. This will be done by focusing on the matter of Slytherin House, as it can be presented almost as the common enemy of the other three Houses. However, the paper will concentrate on the relationship between Gryffindor and Slytherin, as the prejudices here are most pronounced, due to Harry speaking from the point of view of a Gryffindor. The paper will show how the prejudice shapes the opinions of students as they grow up to be fully-fledged Wizards; that is, how the Houses, due to this prejudice, may be misinterpreted as the only tool of identification. To provide an adult perspective on the problematic of House prejudice, the opinions of several older members of the Wizarding society will also be taken into account.

It has already been stated that Harry, the main character of the novels, is a Gryffindor. As such, he is opposed to characters like Draco Malfoy and Tom Marvolo Riddle, both of whom are members of Slytherin. To explain why these two Houses clash the most often, the history of Hogwarts must be looked into. The cause of the Gryffindor-Slytherin rivalry lies in the fact that the four founders, after whom the Houses are named, began to quarrel amongst themselves soon after establishing the House system. Salazar Slytherin's views, in particular, widened the gap between him and his colleagues:

> A rift began to grow between Slytherin and the others. Slytherin wished to be more selective about the students admitted to Hogwarts. He believed that magical learning should be kept within all-magic families. He disliked taking students of Muggle parentage, believing them to be untrustworthy. After a while, there was a serious argument on the subject between Slytherin and Gryffindor, and Slytherin left the school. (Rowling, *Chamber of Secrets* 150)

This argument from the past still influences the behavior of present-day students. Harry himself starts off by exhibiting extreme intolerance towards Slytherins: "Perhaps it was Harry's imagination, after all he'd heard about Slyther-

in, but he thought they looked like an unpleasant lot" (Rowling, *Sorcerer's Stone* 119). Whether consciously or not, Harry is blatantly prejudiced; he founds his opinions not on facts, but on what he "had heard." Furthermore, in a grave case of generalization, he proceeds to describe the whole House as "stinking Slytherin" (Rowling, *Sorcerer's Stone* 218). He is also rather expressive in his opposition to Hogwarts being represented by a Slytherin in the Triwizard Tournament, without giving any specific reason for deeming the whole Slytherin student body unworthy of that honor: "We can't have a Slytherin champion!" (Rowling, *Goblet of Fire* 261). This mode of biased behavior is discernible in his classmates as well: Ron mockingly says that if their Polyjuice Potion has "got bits of Slytherins in it," it cannot taste good (Rowling, *Chamber of Secrets* 175). In the same novel, Lee Jordan volubly argues: "Isn't it *obvious* all this stuff's coming from Slytherin? The *Heir* of Slytherin, the *monster* of Slytherin — why don't they just chuck all the Slytherins out?" (Rowling, *Chamber of Secrets* 258). It later proves to be a good thing the administration did not heed Lee's advice, since it is in fact a Gryffindor (Ginny Weasley) who opened the Chamber of Secrets and not any current Slytherin student (as Voldemort's apparition that possessed Ginny can hardly be considered a student). The last, and perhaps the most distasteful, example is what happens to Malcolm Baddock during his Sorting Ceremony. After being sorted into Slytherin, this eleven-year-old boy is met with hisses from Fred and George Weasley (Rowling, *Goblet of Fire* 178) – an act that is not far from outright bullying.

As the plot progresses and Harry gradually grows up, a peculiar phenomenon is to be observed. He begins to recognize more and more that the Gryffindors' – and his own – contempt against the Slytherins was to a great extent formed due to preconceptions. He begins to get into conflicts with people other than Slytherins; the examples would be Ernie Macmillan and Justin Finch-Fletchley of Ravenclaw (Rowling, *Goblet of Fire* 293). That is not to say that Harry is willing to change his standpoint easily. When at the beginning of Harry's fifth year the Sorting Hat reminds the students about the importance of House unity, Harry and Ron are both disturbed by the mere idea of getting "matey with the Slytherins," whereas Hermione – who is always presented as the most reasonable of the trio – is the only one more open-minded about the matter (Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix* 223).

As he matures, Harry realizes that "Gryffindor and Slytherin students loathed each other on principle" (Rowling, *Half-Blood Prince* 143). What is more, he even begins to doubt his own perspective: "The idea that [Godric] Gryffindor might have stolen the sword was unpleasant to him: He had always been proud to be a Gryffindor; Gryffindor had been the champion of Muggle-borns, the wizard

who had clashed with the pureblood-loving Slytherin" (Rowling, *Deathly Hallows* 507). It can be said that with age, Harry grows to be more level-headed and not to judge the Slytherins too harshly. He sees that not everything is black-and-white and that one's identity does not depend wholly on their Hogwarts House.

The students are not the only ones affected by the House system. The teaching staff at Hogwarts is also entangled with it since most of them attended Hogwarts themselves. Each House has a Professor appointed to it as its head. The Head of Gryffindor, Minerva McGonagall, is shown to be extremely strict and utterly unbiased in her behavior towards students, regardless of their House affiliation. She makes it a point to explain the House system in an objective manner: "Each House has its own noble history and each has produced outstanding witches and wizards" (Rowling, *Sorcerer's Stone* 114). As opposed to her, Severus Snape, who is responsible for the Slytherins, is shown to unabashedly favor his own students and discriminate the Gryffindors. This largely stems from his own Hogwarts experience, where he both exhibited and was subjected to House prejudice. On their first train ride to the boarding school, Severus Snape and Lily Evans are confronted by James Potter and Sirius Black; in the scene, James proclaims that he would rather leave school than be placed in Slytherin (Rowling, *Deathly Hallows* 671), after which Snape remarks that all Gryffindors are "brawny rather than brainy" (Rowling, *Deathly Hallows* 672). It must be noted that Snape's unprofessional behavior towards the Gryffindors is also shaped by his personal history with James Potter, and his regrets about Neville not being picked as the Chosen One (which would have saved Lily Potter from her demise). The professor who succeeded Snape in his position is Horace Slughorn, who is less burdened with prejudice; on the contrary, he acknowledges its existence and urges Harry not to be swayed into disliking him because of his Slytherin roots: "'I was Head of Slytherin,' said Slughorn. 'Oh, now,' he went on quickly, seeing the expression on Harry's face and wagging a stubby finger at him, 'don't go holding that against me!'" (Rowling, *Half-Blood Prince* 70). This instance shows that the older generations are well aware that the prejudices are still existent and they – or at least McGonagall and Slughorn – condemn it. Unfortunately, not all adults in the *Harry Potter* series are of the same belief. During the Battle of Hogwarts in the final novel, the Slytherins are, along with other students who do not want to fight, evacuated from the school grounds. However, Dumbledore's surviving sibling, Aberforth, expresses his dissatisfaction with such a move from a strategic point of view: "And it never occurred to any of you to keep a few Slytherins hostage? There are kids of Death Eaters you've just sent to safety. Wouldn't it have been a bit smarter to keep 'em here?" (Rowling, *Deathly Hallows* 622). The case of Aberforth Dumbledore proves that the prejudice based on the House identity

runs deep and can have grave consequences – it is crucial to see that an adult Wizard is considering keeping (possibly underage) students, who have personally done nothing wrong, as hostages, based on their belonging to a specific House, or a certain family. It is fruitful to observe how differently the adult Wizards perceive the House system – even though they, too, have personal connections to a specific House, they see merits in every one of them. If they do have prejudice, it is caused by their personal problems and character traits.

The importance of the adults' opinions on the Houses and how they should (not) completely overtake one's identity lies in the fact that the grown-ups often serve as role-models to the children they get in contact with. Rubeus Hagrid, the first wizard Harry properly meets, wastes no time in planting his own preconceptions into Harry's impressionable mind. Hagrid states that "[t]here's not a single witch or wizard who went bad who wasn't in Slytherin" (Rowling, *Sorcerer's Stone* 80). Not only is this straight-out false (one needs only to look at the character of Peter Pettigrew, a Gryffindor), but this description of Slytherin overlooks all the other characteristics of this House's members. J.K. Rowling's official website dedicated to the world of Harry Potter, *Pottermore,* supplies a more impartial view: "Slytherin produces more than its share of Dark wizards, but also turns out leaders who are proud, ambitious and cunning" ("Hogwarts houses: Slytherin"). Having been exposed to Hagrid's unflattering stance almost immediately upon entering the Wizarding world, Harry needs several years to get rid of his own prejudice. By the end of the novel series, it is clear he has abandoned his old way of thinking. When his own son expresses his concerns about being sorted into Slytherin, Harry actually defends the Slytherins by saying they, too, can be brave, which is repeatedly established to be a distinctly Gryffindor characteristic: "you were named for two headmasters of Hogwarts. One of them was a Slytherin and he was probably the bravest man I ever knew" (Rowling, *Deathly Hallows* 758). Had Hagrid not besmirched Slytherin's reputation, had Harry had the same support as Albus Severus, he may not have been so quick to discard the idea of joining Slytherin.

To summarize, it can be said that the students tend to think that the Hogwarts House identity is the *de facto* identity that defines an individual. The case of prejudice against Slytherin is specific because the other Houses – most notably Gryffindors – hold the sins of Salazar Slytherin against the new generations. The Slytherins, not all of whom may believe in blood purity, suffer from collective blame laid upon them by others. Naturally, this creates hostile behavior against those who sneer upon Slytherin values (tradition, ambition, pride), which are not negative *per se*; thus begins a vicious circle that can only be broken if the students of Hogwarts accept the fact that one cannot be identified solely on the

basis of House membership. Throughout the novels, the idea of House tolerance and unity is slowly introduced and then propagated. Most of the opinions Harry himself has are based on prejudice. However, over time he starts to tolerate or even like some Slytherin members. In that way, he learns a valuable lesson – it is necessary to see past one's House if one wants to really be able to get to know a person.

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Lions, Serpents, Eagles, and Badgers: The House as an Identity Formation Tool in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*

Matko Marković

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone is a ground-breaking fantasy novel written by J.K. Rowling and published in 1997 that has since managed to capture the imagination of young adult readers and the older population alike all over the globe. Harry Potter can today be viewed as a true global phenomenon and probably the embodiment of popular fiction worldwide. It has quite simply shattered records in sale, spawned six more sequels, as well as film adaptations that have been successful in their own way. The first volume in the series lays the foundations and introduces the readers to the characters of Harry, Hermione, and Ron as well as to the magical world of Hogwarts and to the plethora of other charismatic positive characters and the epitomes of evil like Voldemort and his Death Eaters. The novels have helped raise an entire generation and define the true values of life such as friendship, the unyielding belief in the good, and the discovery of one's true potential and destiny. As a basis for this afore-mentioned discovery, every incoming pupil is put forth to the Sorting Hat, which then proceeds to "evaluate" the pupil and according to his/her emotions and natural-born talents, puts him/her in the Hogwarts House s/he belongs the best. This coincides with the notion of identity, which this paper will examine, as the Houses are the first overt markers of identity that continue to define the characters throughout the novels.

As mentioned before, upon entry in the Hogwarts collective family, each new pupil is put into one of the following Houses: Gryffindor, Slytherin, Hufflepuff, and Ravenclaw. Each of these four Houses exhibits certain traits instilled in the mottos of the House and visible in each of the House's creators, who sought individuals of these certain traits to be put in their House. Right from the start, it is visible that those Houses seek a certain kind of individual, an individual who possesses a certain kind of personality and certain kinds of traits that complement the values their creators set forth. Upon placement, the individuals meet with other pupils who do not necessarily share the same visible interests, but rather complement each other in terms of knowledge, courage, intelligence, good-naturedness, or vileness. The Houses are devices for building camaraderie, friendship, a sense of togetherness, and, most obviously, devices for building the identities of the pupils exhibited through their own aspirations and capabilities.

Gryffindor, the House founded by Godric Gryffindor, is the House in which the principal heroes – Harry, Hermione, and Ron – are put in. The main traits Godric Gryffindor sought in his students are courage above all, honor, and wisdom. He wanted to find those most inspiring members of the wizarding world and mold them into honorable and courageous individuals that always try to act for the greater good and for the benefit of wizards and Muggles alike. The House is portrayed as the most compact and tightly-knit of the four, a place in which all members work equally together and in their mutual interest, sharing a sense of safety, trust, and most importantly, family. It can be said that Harry, upon his admittance to Gryffindor House, truly found the family he yearned for so desperately in the likes of his helpful and trustworthy friends, and other members of the Gryffindor family who ran the Hogwarts school, such as Minerva McGonagall and Albus Dumbledore. McGonagall and Dumbledore have always exhibited unconditional love for both Gryffindors and members of the other Houses, whom they treated with utmost respect and dignity. It is no wonder then that it was Gryffindor that in fact moulded Harry into a heroic representative of the good in the struggle against the evil.

Ravenclaw, founded by Rowena Ravenclaw, believes that the most defining traits, and the most important ones, are knowledge and intelligence. Ravenclaw members are the most exceptional students of the school, as well as the most rational and most driven towards success. Unlike Gryffindors, Ravenclaws are defined by their success, and their pursuit of academics and magical knowledge separates them from the rest of the school. Although the protagonists do not really have any contact with the members of Ravenclaw until later volumes, when Harry meets Cho Chang and Luna Lovegood, there is always a sort of mystery surrounding Ravenclaw as a place of habitat, since they do seem somewhat distant from the whole novel series, apart from the aforementioned characters.

Hufflepuff, on the other hand, is a sort of black sheep amongst the four Houses. The main traits Hufflepuff exhibits are tolerance, kindness, intelligence, which goes along with the fact they take in absolutely everybody, with little attention paid to the blood status of the wizards entering the House. Either Muggle-born or pure-blood, Hufflepuff accepts everybody and gives the same attention to everyone. Often ridiculed for that and for being probably the most eccentric of the Houses, Hufflepuff, alongside Gryffindor, is the House that most explicitly emphasizes unity and friendship, which in turn makes their members the most compassionate and loyal, similar to Gryffindor. Their selflessness has produced many students who play pivotal parts in the later novels and their members are the ones who truly embody what it means to be part of Hogwarts.

Slytherin is considered to be the most antagonistic House of the school, the House that (over)emphasizes pure-blood and the materialistic side of the wizarding world. Unlike other Houses, which to an extent work together, Slytherin almost exclusively chooses to distance themselves and to portray themselves higher than everyone else. It is no wonder then that the primary antagonists of the series, Draco Malfoy and Voldemort, originate from this House. Characterized by the almost hierarchical relationships to both housemates and the rest of the school, the members of Slytherin deliberately emphasize their pure-blood and social status in relation to other Houses, perhaps most visible in the remark Malfoy hands out to Ron Weasley, mocking him for his old robe and ginger, non-aristocratic hair: "My father told me all the Weasleys have red hair, freckles, and more children than they can afford . . . You'll soon find out some wizarding families are much better than others, Potter. You don't want to go making friends with the wrong sort" (Rowling 108). Even though Slytherin sometimes exhibits a sense of unity with other Houses, mostly they will look out only for themselves and this is present even in the way schoolmates behave towards one another, without any respect or common goals. It is, therefore, not surprising that these hierarchical and, speaking in a wizarding context, racist remarks towards Muggles are the basis for Death Eaters, who in the later novels pan out to be the offspring of none other than the Slytherin House in Hogwarts. In these terms, the Slytherin House builds an antagonistic and overtly narcissistic view of self, visible in the afore-mentioned characters of Draco Malfoy and Voldemort, who despite all of their magical prowess have never experienced the positive aspects other Houses shared among their members, leading to their evil and flawed character traits.

To sum up, all of the Houses in Hogwarts offer certain paths towards building a future identity for each of their pupils, which is rooted in the House's motto and the traits visible in their founding fathers. Even though they differ in motivation and the final goal, each of them provides a sense of community in their own way, never mind it being a strictly rational habitat, or an elitist one. For young children entering the school, their Houses are truly their homes and a support system and according to the quality of that support system and values that are being instilled in them by those exact Houses, those young children will become fully-formed persons with a defined identity, no matter what that identity may turn out to be.

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Houses and Identity in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*

Merzlota

There are four Houses at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, each named after a wizard/witch who was its founder. The four Houses are: Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw, and Slytherin. What is interesting about the Houses is that young wizards and witches are sorted into them with the help of the Sorting Hat. Each of the Houses represents a specific set of traits that they seek in their students. This paper is going to explore how the specific traits of the Houses reflect on the wizards and how they can be seen as a tool of identity formation in the world of *Harry Potter*. Firstly, each House will be described, then the Sorting Ceremony will briefly be mentioned, and finally some arguments will be offered as to why the Houses are considered to be the tools of identification. It is important to note that this topic is discussed only with respect to the first novel in the *Harry Potter* series.

The first House to be mentioned in the song recited by the Sorting Hat is Gryffindor:

> *You might belong in Gryffindor,*
> *Where dwell the brave at heart,*
> *Their daring, nerve, and chivalry*
> *Set Gryffindors apart*. (Rowling 118).

Here it can be seen that the House of Gryffindor especially values bravery and chivalry. The next one is Hufflepuff:

> *You might belong in Hufflepuff,*
> *Where they are just and loyal,*
> *Those patient Hufflepuffs are true*
> *And unafraid of toil*. (Rowling 118)

Here they value friendliness, loyalty, and humbleness the most. After Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw is described:

> *Or yet in wise old Ravenclaw,*
> *If you've a ready mind,*
> *Where those of wit and learning,*
> *Will always find their kind*. (Rowling 118)

In the House of Ravenclaw, intelligence, wisdom, and creativity are of value. And last, but not least, there is the House of Slytherin:

Or perhaps in Slytherin
You'll make your real friends,
Those cunning folk use any means
To achieve their ends. (Rowling 118)

It is evident here that students belonging to Slytherin are cunning, ambitious, and tend towards keeping the wizarding world "pure," meaning they are not fond of half-bloods or anyone who does not have pure wizard blood in them. This is best depicted when Draco speaks to Harry just before they are to enter the Great Hall: "You'll soon find out some wizarding families are much better than others, Potter. You don't want to go making friends with the wrong sort. I can help you there" (Rowling 108).

Moreover, there is the Sorting Ceremony, which is the first step in getting introduced to the students' future homes. This statement is exemplified as follows:

> The start-of-term banquet will begin shortly, but before you take your seats in the Great Hall, you will be sorted into your Houses. The Sorting is a very important ceremony because, while you are here, your House will be something like your family within Hogwarts. (Rowling 114)

Additionally, the Sorting Ceremony allows the students to easily fit into a new environment. This is not to say that everything is served on the wizard's or witch's plate by being sorted into a House, it is just a means of helping them integrate better into an already new and hectic world, full of adventures, misfortunes, and learning about oneself.

Likewise, being a part of some House helps create friendships, as well as some hostility towards other members of the rivalling Houses. Although there are some minor setbacks at the beginning with befriending Hermione, Ron and Harry get on like a house on fire. In other words, in the first novel the Houses serve as a way of finding people who think similarly. As far as rivalry is concerned, this is best shown through Draco and Harry: "Malfoy had been even more unpleasant than usual since the Quidditch match. Disgusted that the Slytherins had lost, he had tried to get everyone laughing at how a wide-mouthed tree frog would be replacing Harry as Seeker next" (Rowling 195). Naturally, as this is the first time for the young wizards and witches to be in this kind of school, they search for the people with whom they will get along instantly.

What is equally important, this story begins when the main characters are around eleven years old. This is barely entering the teenage years, which are usually filled with a lot of confusion, searching for oneself, and experiencing peer pressure at its finest. That is the time when people search for themselves in other

people or places, for example: "Harry was very relieved to find out that he wasn't miles behind everyone else. Lots of people had come from Muggle families and, like him, hadn't had any idea that they were witches and wizards" (Rowling 134). Here the pupils have only a vague picture of themselves and in which direction they would like to go, which is why Harry compares himself to others. He wants to "comfort" himself and find a place where no uncertainty exists. Similarly, as opposed to Harry, Ron, and Hermione, there are Draco, Crabbe, and Goyle (all three of them fellow Slytherins) who also find each other in the hopes of making this process of integration easier.

Another key point is that the traces of their identity can be seen through their behaviour that mirrors the traits of the Houses. Malfoy has already been elaborated upon in the rows above. Now is the time to show some traits of the trio that is in alignment with Gryffindor. The examples are as follows: firstly, Ron, who, despite behaving cowardly most of the time, shows great sacrifice and adaptability in the time of need: "'First – to Mr. Ronald Weasley . . . for the best-played game of chess Hogwarts has seen in many years'" (Rowling 305). Secondly, Hermione who shows great intelligence: "'to Miss Hermione Granger . . . for the use of cool logic in the face of fire'" (Rowling 305). Thirdly, Harry who shows one of the most important traits of Gryffindors and that is "pure nerve and outstanding courage" (Rowling 306). Since the first novel is more of an introduction to the wizarding world, the complex relations between other people are not extensively elaborated on.

In the light of mentioning the tools that help wizards and witches develop their identities, there are a couple that were not mentioned. Those are the wand and the Mirror of Erised. The wand refers to one's status and the Mirror of Erised "shows us nothing more or less than the deepest, most desperate desire of our hearts" (Rowling 213). The Mirror shows a person's heart desires. However, Dumbledore warns Harry that "it does not do to dwell on dreams and forget to live" (Rowling 214), meaning that many have lost their way thinking what is shown in the mirror is real. These words of wisdom should help greatly along with all other tools that help the main characters grow as persons.

All things considered, the Houses, which the reader is introduced to in the first novel of the *Harry Potter* series, are a tool of identification in a way that helps young students cope with the new environment and changes. They are barely entering their teenage years and are only beginning to grasp what the world is like. Having a sense of belonging helps greatly in situations like these since it reassures the characters that they are not being left out or alone. Even when talking about teenagers in general, it could be asserted that their greatest

fear is a sense of not belonging anywhere. Thus, in real life, they also search for their "Houses" and identities through various social circles and groups.

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The Importance of the Houses in Hogwarts

Andrea Nikoloso

Although *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, and for that matter – all the *Harry Potter* novels, is considered to be a children's book, it addresses more important issues than it seems at first glance. It is, in fact, a very complex novel that can be re-read multiple times and new pieces of information, as well as the new aspects of looking at things, can come up. The aim of this paper is to explain why the chosen House plays a central role in the characters' identity formation in the mentioned novel.

One of the main points why the chosen House is a kind of representation of someone's identity is pretty clear as each House has its "standards," that is, the type of personality traits that it looks for in students. When the Sorting Hat is placed on a student's head, it can read his/her mind and therefore see what kind of a person this student is. This means that the Sorting Hat can reliably put students in a specific house, based on their abilities, desires, and aspirations in life:

> "Difficult. Very difficult. Plenty of courage, I see. Not a bad mind either. There's talent, oh my goodness, yes – and a nice thirst to prove yourself, now that's interesting… So where shall I put you?"
> Harry gripped the edges of the stool and thought, *Not Slytherin, not Slytherin*.
> "Not Slytherin, eh?" said the small voice. "Are you sure? You could be great, you know, it's all here in your head, and Slytherin will help you on the way to greatness, no doubt about that – no?" (Rowling 121)

For example, Harry Potter was placed in Gryffindor because its, and Harry's, main trait is courage. Throughout *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, and all the *Harry Potter* novels for that matter, we can see that the Sorting Hat was right, and that Gryffindor really did fit Harry's personality. Anyone who has at least some kind of knowledge about Hogwarts can be sure that, if you are put in Gryffindor, you are sure to be brave, courageous, and daring. Another example of a true Gryffindor is Neville Longbottom. In the beginning, Neville appears to be afraid of anything and anyone and too shy to do anything remotely brave. Later, he changes and we can see the real side of Neville when he acts when it is most needed. He stands up to his friends to warn them of the danger they are rushing into, which is something even Dumbledore acknowledges as the special type of bravery, which not a lot of people have in them.

Another point for the House being the representation of someone's identity can be found in the similarity of character traits that its members share: being in one of the Houses and hanging out with the people who are also there, you develop your identity and personality in accordance with theirs:

> The start-of-term banquet will begin shortly, but before you take your seats in the Great Hall, you will be sorted into your houses. The Sorting is a very important ceremony because, while you are here, your house will be something like your family within Hogwarts. You will have classes with the rest of your House, sleep in your House dormitory, and spend free time in your House common room. (Rowling 114)

As you are similar to people in a way that you have similar personality traits, it is almost certain that you will get along and that you will develop together through all the years you ought to spend at Hogwarts. Harry exemplifies this as well. His friends, whom he finds in his House, help him through all of his problems, be that school stuff or more complex ones, such as dealing with Voldemort. This argument stands as, later in life, Harry stays friends with the same people and they continue to help him through his entire schooling as well as with the whole drama he had with Voldemort, which also includes problems with his identity. Those same friends help Harry to stay on the right track when he feels lost. They are always there to help him and that is also the big part of his personality as he is thankful for friends like them.

Lastly, the House in which each student is put means a lot in one's development because, in contrast to other Houses, you can see what else you can be but also learn what you do not want to be. For example, Harry learnt that he did not want to go to Slytherin because they have all been considered evil. This has been proved throughout the novel(s), and Harry was right not to want to go there. From that point of view, even though it might be a little strange, you can tell what kind of a person you do not want to become and you learn and do stuff that will take you the other way, which is a way you find to be right. Harry, for instance, is ambitious, yet he refuses to be ambitious in the way that Slytherin House comprehends it and that is aspiring to something bad, using the dark instead of the good magic.

In conclusion, we can see that being placed in a certain House, be it Gryffindor, Slytherin, Ravenclaw or Hufflepuff, is of the greatest importance in the narrative space of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* and, by extension, the *Harry Potter* series. Although at first the sorting procedure might seem trivial, it is actually of vital importance and affects the students in the ways that they are not even aware of. Being placed in the proper House can do wonders to some-

one's personality: it can help an individual to develop his or her personality in the right way and it can help him or her to reach a full potential.

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The Evolution of a Lion: The House as an Identity Formation Tool in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*

Lucija Novokmet

Being in Harry Potter's skin surely was not an easy job as his family made his life horrible every single day. Imagine living in a cupboard under the stairs and your closest ones telling you who you are and that you would be – nobody. It is very difficult to rise above that and to know who you are, let alone to know who you are supposed to be: "At school, Harry had no one. Everybody knew that Dudley's gang hated that odd Harry Potter in his baggy old clothes and broken glasses" (Rowling 30). At the beginning of the novel, Harry Potter has been presented as a peculiar little boy no one seems to understand and a person no one ever wants to get close to. However, the sad, lost boy, who did not know better, would soon evolve into someone new, confident, and worthy, all because of the new place that has made him feel like he belongs and with the help of Gryffindor House – his new home. The aim of this paper is thus to show how Gryffindor House helped Harry develop into a person he has always wanted to be.

Minerva McGonagall's utterance that "the Sorting is a very important ceremony because, while you are here, your House will be something like your family within Hogwarts" (Rowling 114) represents the new chapter of Harry's and every first-year student's life. Not only will their future Houses represent their families, but they will also help them grow and shape them into different and more mature persons. Even though every character's personality, especially Harry's, is yet to be developed throughout the novels, there are some qualities of every one of them that led them to become a member of that particular House – no matter if it was Gryffindor, Slytherin, Hufflepuff, or Ravenclaw – there is a place for every person to belong. Although Harry was insecure in his new surroundings, he managed to handle the Sorting Ceremony well: "You could be great, you know, it's all here in your head, and Slytherin will help you on the way to greatness, no doubt about that – no? Well, if you're sure – better be GRYFFINDOR" (Rowling 121). Harry's sorting moment is very important because of two things. To start with, for the first time he felt connected and being in the House that his parents were part of means a lot and places a great deal of awareness on his own history and identity. Secondly, his ability to act courageously and to ask to be part of the House that he felt he should be in, even in spite of fear, only confirms that Gryffindor is to become his proper family. Regardless of the fact that there is a long way for his identity to develop, he had a strong foundation considering the

fact that even though he was bullied his whole childhood, he was brave and kind, so it is no wonder that the act of becoming part of that particular House only drew his qualities out on the surface and helped him evolve into a more complex person. For example, Harry is brave at heart even though he is not fully aware of it, just as the Sorting Hat sings: "*You might belong in Gryffindor, / Where dwell the brave at heart*" (Rowling 118). From that moment on, Harry's everyday life changes a lot. He no longer feels like an outsider and like he is not wanted at all. He has made very close friends and by being surrounded by Gryffindor members his own world started to take shape. He feels more welcome at Hogwarts and more accepted by his friends as he chooses to stay at Hogwarts rather than to go home for Christmas:

> After a meal of turkey sandwiches, crumpets, trifle, and Christmas cake, everyone felt too full and sleepy to do much before bed except sit and watch Percy chase Fred and George all over Gryffindor Tower because they'd stolen his prefect badge. (Rowling 204)

Even though Harry learns that he is a very famous wizard in this magical world, his sense of belonging grows even stronger by becoming the youngest Gryffindor Quidditch seeker. Maybe for the first time in his life Harry was proud of himself because his team depended on him and there was a great chance that they would win: "This is the best team Gryffindor's had in years. We're going to win. I know it" (Rowling 185). Harry was that one essential piece they were missing but they were also a piece in the puzzle that he was missing as well. For the first time, he was not sent into his "room" under the stairs for doing something bad but was praised for being the best he could be and that was because he simply existed. His new surroundings thus nourish his thinking and his personality. Gryffindor House represents a lot of things, it gives Harry a sense of belonging, and it is a place he can always come back to. It consists of people, his friends, and colleagues, who are there for him and always there to welcome him into their company. It represents the qualities that Harry and all his fellow students possess. It gives Harry a sense of unity and it helps shape the old little Harry into a slightly bigger one, the one that has come close to understand himself, his place in the world, and the fact that now he knows a little bit better who he is and who he is supposed to be.

Rowling does not literally point this out, but very quickly we learn that the most loving House at Hogwarts is Gryffindor House, the one Harry belongs to. If he was sorted into some other House, he would be a completely different person, sitting at the different table with different friends. Throughout his first year, Harry embraced all that he was, kindness and courage were always inside of him

but now it has become evident that he is all those things for sure. In addition, not only has he learned that he is a wizard and not any kind of wizard but a very famous one, but he also got his worth acknowledged. He has learned that he is a lot of things, but most of all brave and daring. With Gryffindor winning the House Cup, we can see Harry's triumph of being more self-aware and we can see the peak of his transformation. Not only did "the green hangings [become] scarlet and the silver became gold; the huge Slytherin serpent vanished and a towering Gryffindor lion took its place" (Rowling 306) but Harry has transformed into a lion, a Gryffindor one, as well. After coming into the unknown and facing all kinds of danger in spite of fear, little Harry started his path toward becoming a more and more well-rounded person than he has ever been.

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The Extent and Limitations of the House as the Identity Formation Tool in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*

Matea Peček

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone, written by J.K. Rowling, is a novel that has affected many generations of teenagers; it contains likeable characters whom teens can relate to. There are several Houses in Hogwarts to which witches and wizards belong according to their temperament and personal characteristics. The division begins with the Sorting Ceremony and throughout the rest of their education at Hogwarts the students must live and associate with their fellow housemates. Be it Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Slytherin or Ravenclaw, these Houses serve as a tool of identity formation and for the overall sorting of different people together according to the characteristics they share. The aim of this paper is thus to examine the extent and limitations of the Hogwarts Houses as an identity formation tool in the novel.

Almost every teenager needs to feel accepted and, moreover, liked by the people surrounding them. Groups of young adolescents are always divided by different styles, which can be seen in various subcultures, because people like to spend time with people with similar interests as theirs. To be accepted by a social group, people need to fit in; that is, they need to look or act in a certain way. It is in the human psyche to act or eventually start acting like the people they spend most time with. The same goes for the students of Hogwarts – there are different groups of different people who fit together because they have the same personal characteristics. In *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, students who come to Hogwarts are very young; the experiences they have to face are new to them and, therefore, usually confusing and frightening. Young people such as the novel's characters are just beginning to form their identities at that stage in life and their housemates play a big role in it. New experiences are then easier to overcome with similar people by their side. Family also plays a big role in identity formation because family members should support each other and one feels the most comfortable inside their family community. The Houses in Hogwarts are like big family communities, the members of every House live together – they share dormitories, dining tables, are divided into separate sport groups, and their whole education is spent together. As Professor McGonagall suggests: "The Sorting is a very important ceremony because, while you are here, your House will be something like your family within Hogwarts" (Rowling 114). The decision

of who belongs where is left to the Sorting Hat, a magical object that senses one's temperament and puts students into the proper group, which forms their identity later on. This can be seen as a guiding hand in their new lives and the challenges they will need to face; by reading each person's temperament, the Sorting Hat decides where they will fit in, or achieve the most. Therefore, the students conform inside their groups and there is no need for them to try and find new friends on their first day of school because their Houses represent their social groups and new families to which they immediately belong and nobody is left alone or marginalized. Over time, students begin to adopt the characteristics of their Houses – the House of Gryffindor is said to contain brave people, Ravenclaw intelligent, Hufflepuff loyal and hardworking, and Slytherin ambitious. The Sorting Hat sees a potential for developing some of these characteristics in every individual and the rest is on them. Students can then associate with their housemates who share a similar path of personality development and form a collective identity – which they present in themselves. There is, so to say, a seed in every person, and that seed is the indicator of the personality someone will develop – the Sorting Hat can see that seed and consequently put the student in a community with the same potential, but it also sees one's deepest wishes. Even if a person possesses a certain type of seed in themselves, they can wish to become a different person through time. This can be seen at the Sorting Ceremony when the Sorting Hat reads both Harry's temperament and wishes and decides to put him in Gryffindor; although this decision did not follow Harry's temperament and the personality he could have developed, it obeyed his wishes and pushed him forward to become the person he wishes to be by choosing a different path: "Not Slytherin, eh? . . . Are you sure? You could be great, you know, it's all here in your head, and Slytherin will help you on the way to greatness, no doubt about that – no? Well, if you're sure – better be GRYFFINDOR" (Rowling 121).

The Houses promote a certain behavior, but they also promote the development of a strong self-esteem. Different tasks, if accomplished properly, bring different amounts of points, which students collectively earn for their Houses. This leads to competitiveness between the Houses and the students begin to glorify them in the spirit of competition. The example of competition is best expressed by Quidditch, a team sport where every House has its team that competes against other Houses. Every Quidditch game boosts the team spirit – every House roots for their team and becomes strongly united. All of that helps the students in the acceptance of their groups and awakes the pride they hold to be part of them.

Even though the Houses support and lead the students to become the people they have the potential to become, they also limit the development of their char-

acteristics and, therefore, their identities. By putting them into different social groups, they do not get the chance to spend time with people different from themselves. This limits the opportunity to witness and possibly adopt different behaviors from theirs.

The Houses at Hogwarts present different communities based on the characteristics their members possess. By joining a certain House, students begin to adopt the behavior of the people surrounding them, who hold the same identity development potential as themselves – all of that helps in forming a collective identity, which students represent proudly. Nevertheless, this kind of separating people can lead to their acceptance of only one pattern for their own identity development, because of the exposure to only that pattern, which is shared inside of a certain group. Therefore, the Houses in the *Harry Potter* series are tools for the formation of identity, for every House has its own values and characteristics, which differ from the other ones.

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An In-depth Analysis of Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson* Series

Petra Sršić

Historia magistra vitae is a famous maxim by Cicero, meaning history (is) the teacher of life, especially if its scope is widened to include stories told by generations and ultimately written down and saved from oblivion. These myths and legends have taught multitudes of people the ways and values of life and they may always be reinterpreted based on the current circumstances. An exceptional example of literary reinterpretation is Rick Riordan's fantasy series *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*, featuring five volumes about the protagonist, Percy, and his two best friends, Annabeth and Grover. Based on Greek mythology, the characters are presented as the offspring of the Greek gods and the numerous challenges they face throughout the series are more or less related to those myths and legends. This mythological background enables Riordan to weave a complex tapestry of magic and reality while simultaneously stressing the issues the contemporary society is struggling with. The purpose of this paper is to point out how those problems are represented in the series and, consequently, to demonstrate why it is an important and beneficial read.

As previously mentioned, the plot is centered on the adventures of the three main characters. The composition of their group and their characterization is reminiscent of that of the *Harry Potter* series. Namely, the protagonist starts out as a twelve-year-old boy who lives in New York and struggles with his awful stepfather Smelly Gabe. He is also diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and dyslexia, which makes it really hard for him to fit into society. His life abruptly changes after a chain of events, initiated by being attacked by his math teacher – a fury, resulting in his mother's kidnapping and his discovery of his true origin – that he is the son of Poseidon. At the beginning of the novel, Percy is hurriedly whisked off to a place called Camp Half-Blood, a kind of camp where the offspring of gods get sorted into their cabins based on their Olympian parentage and where they learn to utilize their particular set of skills. It is, likewise, a safe haven for the offspring of gods – demigods as they are called, who should eventually find their way to Half-Blood Camp because there are monsters lurking and searching for them. Such encounters regularly end in the demigod's demise due to the monsters' zeal to hurt them. Percy is brought there by his friend Grover who turns out to be his satyr protector – half man, half goat. There he meets Annabeth, the daughter of Athena, an intelligent and capable girl with whom he gradually forms a relationship, which progresses into a romantic one. The readers are, unfortunately, forced to wait until the last

novel for their love to blossom. At the beginning of each novel, the trio gathers in Camp Half-Blood after a year spent in the normal world school. They are assigned a quest of some sort by the camp's director Mr. D, who is in fact the god Dionysus, and the centaur Chiron, their tutor, who long ago also instructed Heracles. The quest always proves to be very dangerous and life-threatening, but the heroes manage to perform their duty successfully, no matter the price.

Other than being based on Greek mythology and, therefore, extremely educational, the story's appeal emanates from the brilliant merging of the mythological and normal world, so let us explain how this is done. To begin with, the series is set in the United States and Percy initially wonders how it is possible for the Greek gods to be there as he knows they should be in Greece. Chiron provides him with an answer: "Well now, there's Mount Olympus in Greece. And then there's the home of the gods, the convergence point of their powers, which did indeed used to be on Mount Olympus. It's still called Mount Olympus, out of respect to the old ways, but the palace moves, Percy, just as the gods do" (Riordan, *The Lightning Thief* 72). He elaborates this by stating that "The gods move with the heart of the West" (Riordan, *The Lightning Thief* 72), which is now obviously the United States. Furthermore, "Western civilization" is considered a living force. The sole existence of the gods is presented as being tied to that collective consciousness so tightly that they could not possibly fade, not unless all of Western civilization was obliterated. They simply move wherever the flame is brightest (Riordan, *The Lightning Thief* 73).

The magical world is carefully embedded in the contemporary United States. Many important mythological sights are interspersed across the country based on the author's inclination. The Garden of the Hesperides is located in San Francisco along with the Titan headquarters (Riordan, *The Titan's Curse* 641). The Underworld, where the trio travels in the first novel, is hidden in the streets of Los Angeles: "We stood in the shadows of Valencia Boulevard, looking up at gold letters etched in black marble: DOA RECORDING STUDIOS. Underneath, stencilled on the glass doors: NO SOLICITORS. NO LOITERING. NO LIVING (Riordan, *The Lightning Thief* 283). The author's act of locating the entrance to the Underworld in a recording studio may be said to reflect his attitude towards the Hollywood movie industry. That is further confirmed by the description of the people sitting inside. They are, naturally, dead and awaiting their afterlife: "Nobody moved, or talked, or did much of anything. Out of the corner of my eye, I could see them all just fine, but if I focused on any one of them in particular, they started looking . . . transparent. I could see right through their bodies" (Riordan, *The Lightning Thief* 284). Riordan may be referring to the Hollywood actors whose lives are so often made transparent by the media and who own

their success to public opinion, which consequently makes their actions meaningless and similar to those in the quote. Lastly, it is necessary to point out the location of Mount Olympus, which is placed above the Empire State Building in New York (Riordan, *The Sea of Monsters* 51). The mountain top accommodates a resplendent ancient Greek city and Percy wonders "How could something like that be anchored above the Empire State Building, in plain sight of millions of people, and not get noticed?" (Riordan, *The Lightning Thief* 338). The answer lies in Riordan's brilliant use of the mist – the device that divides Percy's world from the normal world. Annabeth explains this phenomenon to Percy in the following way: "Mortals don't have good eyes . . . Their brains can only process what they see through the Mist" (Riordan, *The Lightning Thief* 162), meaning that the mist distorts human perception, disabling them from really experiencing the world around them.

Embedded in the adventures of the protagonists, serious issues related to certain characteristics of the modern society are discussed. Namely, the treatment of children afflicted with medical disorders, the propagation of the cult of beauty, and ecocriticism. In creating the characters of demigods, Riordan differentiates them from normal children by means of ADHD and dyslexia, which all demigods have. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, or ADHD, is a mental disorder characterized by difficulty maintaining attention, excessive activity, or difficulty controlling behavior inappropriate for a person's age. Dyslexia is a reading disorder characterized by trouble with reading despite normal intelligence. Usually children and people afflicted with those disorders are misunderstood and treated badly by the society trying to forcefully make them improve or is judgmental based on their difficulties in their studies or work. Riordan thus transforms these disorders into qualities that help and often save demigods in their development and fighting against monsters:

> The letters float off the page when you read, right? That's because your mind is hardwired for ancient Greek. And the ADHD – you're impulsive, can't sit still in the classroom. That's your battlefield reflexes. In a real fight, they'd keep you alive. As for the attention problems, that's because you see too much, Percy, not too little. Your senses are better than a regular mortal's. Of course the teachers want you medicated. Most of them are monsters. They don't want you seeing them for what they are. (Riordan, *The Lightning Thief* 88)

The professors identified with monsters may be connected to professors who lack patience and understanding to work with those students in real life. Percy complains that he has ADHD and dyslexia, like most half-bloods, so he has never done well in regular schools even before they kicked him out (Riordan, *The Sea of Monsters* 5). By portraying these disorders in a positive way, Riordan demon-

strates that it is possible to turn them into qualities that will help children in some form of activity other than education.

In the second volume, *The Sea of Monsters*, Percy and Annabeth end up stranded on the island of Circe, the sorceress from Homer's Odyssey. In the novel, she is the owner of a spa resort and she offers them makeovers because they are surely not happy the way they are and tries to convince them that they will be able to unlock their true self only if they improve (Riordan, *The Sea of Monsters* 103). This is reminiscent of the contemporary media and market's views on beauty. Magazine headlines often feature advice on how to improve one's demeanor to resemble the models featured on the billboards. Similarly, Circe states that Percy needs serious help to unlock his potential, the first step of that being to admit that he is not happy the way he is and that he should give up control and trust her judgement (Riordan, *The Sea of Monsters* 104). This echoes the media's policy of propagating their ways and products as the only ones that can "help" people or that they even need "help" in the first place. Furthermore, it may serve as a warning and a lesson for insecure children and teenagers that striving for beauty in an unhealthy or easy way is likely to be harmful and have the opposite effect and that true beauty must come, first and foremost, from the inside.

Another important issue the series reflects on are ecocriticism and the raising awareness about nature protection. Percy's best friend, the satyr Grover, is resolutely searching for Pan, the god of nature and wildlife, who went into seclusion due to the changing environmental circumstances. He manages to find him in the fourth volume of the series, *The Battle of the Labyrinth*, in a beautiful underground cave. He is old and frail and lives there because the cave is "one of the last wild places. My realm above is gone . . . Only pockets remain. Tiny pieces of life" (Riordan, *The Battle of the Labyrinth* 297). His weakness is directly associated with the condition of nature, which worsens every day. Even Annabeth, whose dream is to become an architect, acknowledges that "[t]his is the most beautiful place . . . It's better than any building ever designed" (Riordan, *The Battle of the Labyrinth* 297) and, therefore, accentuates that nature is far more beautiful and important than anything manmade. The message Riordan passes to his readers comes directly from Pan who declares: "The wild, my dear Grover, is so small now, so shattered, that no god can save it. My realm is gone . . . The only salvation you must make yourself . . . each of you must take up my calling (*The Battle of the Labyrinth* 298). It is mankind's duty to preserve and cherish nature through their contributions, however small they might be.

To conclude, the series, albeit belonging to the popular fiction genre, deals with and emphasizes important problems of contemporary society. Embedded

in the magical world where gods and monsters are a reality, the series' messages are strong and meaningful. Riordan fights to improve the treatment of children afflicted with medical disorders and the preservation of nature by raising awareness and emphasizing individual responsibility and the need to create a better world. He reflects on the contemporary propagation of the cult of beauty by teaching readers that true beauty comes from the heart and there are more important things to strive for. Even before closely examining this fantasy series and discovering just how many issues it deals with, I have come to love it for its simplistic and witty language and its brilliant yet imperfect characters and would strongly recommend it to anyone in search of a good quality read.

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Forging Identity in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*

Tomislav Stojanović

In the *Harry Potter* series, the four Houses of Gryffindor, Slytherin, Ravenclaw, and Hufflepuff play a key role as each House represents a different set of beliefs and qualities. Gryffindor cherishes bravery, daring, and chivalry. Hufflepuff values hard-work, dedication, and loyalty. Ravenclaw focuses on knowledge, intelligence, and wit. Slytherin values ambition and resourcefulness. Focusing on those qualities and traits, the Sorting Hat, which is an enchanted object, puts students into the House that suits them the best. It contains the intelligence of the four founders; it can speak and look into the wearers' head and see their capabilities and character. The Sorting Hat can also read the thoughts of the person wearing it. The question, however, is how reliable the Sorting Hat actually is as there are some students who definitely do not match the Houses they were put into. The aim of this paper would thus be to see whether the Sorting Hat's decisions were right and why.

There were, for example, difficulties in sorting Harry, Hermione, and Ron into a suitable House because all of them have a mixture of characteristics that could be applied to multiple Houses, but eventually some characteristics were stronger than the others. The Sorting Hat has difficulties choosing whether to put Harry in Gryffindor or Slytherin as Harry is courageous, intelligent, and ambitious at the same time: "'Hmm,' said a small voice in his ear. 'Difficult. Very difficult. Plenty of courage, I see. Not a bad mind either. There's talent, oh my goodness, yes – and a nice thirst to prove yourself, now that's interesting'" (Rowling 121). Yet, courage prevails when Harry begs "*Not Slytherin*, *not Slytherin*" (Rowling 121) even though the Sorting Hat questions his decision: "'Not Slytherin, eh?' said the small voice. 'Are you sure?'" (Rowling 121). The Sorting Hat also recognizes that Harry's aversion to Slytherin, and his wish to be placed into Gryffindor, is connected to his desire to be like his parents and to avenge their death. Harry also stands out through his loyalty to his friends and his modesty. In general, Harry is a courageous and selfless person, which is shown many times throughout the novel, one of the examples being when he jumps in front of a troll during a fight to save his friend: "Harry then did something that was both very brave and very stupid: He took a great running leap and managed to fasten his arms around the troll's neck from behind. The troll couldn't feel Harry hanging there, but even a troll will notice if you stick a long bit wood up its nose" (Rowling 176). Another great example can be found near the end of the novel when Harry, before facing Voldemort, tries to convince his friends to let him go alone to con-

front him: "'If you want to go back, I won't blame you,' he said. 'You can take the Cloak, I won't need it now'" (Rowling 275). The afore-mentioned examples and the many more left unmentioned here show that Harry is a selfless and courageous person because, even though he is just a young wizard at that point in the novel, he is willing to sacrifice himself for the greater good in the fight against Voldemort and because he is concerned with the needs of others as he is always willing to help his Gryffindor fellow classmates when they are in trouble.

One of those Gryffindor fellow classmates whom Harry always helps is Ron Weasley, his best friend at Hogwarts. At the very beginning of the novel, they make friends when Harry happily shares his sweets with Ron: "'Go on, have a pasty,' said Harry, who had never had anything to share before or, indeed, anyone to share it with. It was a nice feeling, sitting there with Ron, eating their way through all Harry's pasties, cakes, and candies" (Rowling 102). Ron has always been in the shadow of his friends and family as his friends and siblings are more successful than him at Hogwarts. He is a mediocre student at best. The reader's first impression is thus that Ron is more suited for Hufflepuff than Gryffindor. Yet, first impressions are often proved to be wrong and this applies to Ron as well. The Sorting Hat recognizes that Ron's strongest characteristics are his loyalty and selflessness but also his bravery. We can witness his loyalty when he tries to settle things with Malfoy after he insulted his family and friends. Another example would be when he lies to Madame Pomfrey: Malfoy "kept threatening to tell her what really bit me – I've told her it was a dog, but I don't think she believes me – I shouldn't have hit him at the Quidditch match" (Rowling 238). Lastly, even though Ron is an arachnophobe, he still goes into the Forbidden Forest where he interacts with giant spiders because he knows that they possess the key information that could help them save Hagrid. This is something totally different from the scared, wimpy Ron we are introduced to at the beginning. Nevertheless, Ron's most important characteristic is his selflessness, best visible when he sacrifices himself in a chess match so that Harry could stand a chance to stop Voldemort: "'Yes ...' said Ron softly, 'it's the only way . . . I've got to be taken'" (Rowling 283). Even though he is just a little boy, he sees that there is something bigger than him – the greater good and he is ready to sacrifice his own life for it, so that Harry can continue to stop Voldemort.

The third member of their little group is Hermione Granger: a very clever girl, one of the best students at Hogwarts, very gifted at spells, very hard-working, and sometimes bossy. Unfortunately, because of those traits she is often considered to be annoying: "Whatever House I'm in, I hope she's not in it" (Rowling 106). As Hermione's greatest quality is her intelligence, it is hard to comprehend that she ended up in Gryffindor and not in Ravenclaw. Yet, we learn afterwards

why she was sorted there. Her intelligence helps her to decide which potion Harry needs to drink and also saves all three of them from the Devil's Snare. This is not the only example of her friendship, courage, and loyalty – the qualities that Gryffindor values the most. Hermione also proves her loyalty and courage when she lies to Professor McGonagall about the troll. The incident with the troll in the girl's bathroom with Harry and Ron reveals her willingness to take the blame if it will strengthen her friendship with them: "I went looking for the troll because I – I thought I could deal with it on my own – you know, because I've read all about them" (Rowling 177). All of those examples demonstrate that Hermione values friendship, loyalty, and courage the most and this is the reason why she was sorted into Gryffindor: "Books! And cleverness! There are more important things – friendship and bravery and – oh Harry – be *careful*!" (Rowling 287).

All in all, we can say that the one thing Harry, Ron, and Hermione value the most is their friendship. All of them depend on each other and they are ready to risk their lives for each other. The strength and importance of their friendship is best depicted by their sharing of the Invisibility Cloak:

> "But will it cover all three of us?" said Ron.
> "All – all three of us?"
> "Oh, come off it, you don't think we'd let you go alone?"
> "Of course not," said Hermione briskly. "How do you think you'd get to the Stone without us?" (Rowling 271).

Their friendship is the backbone of everything because it helps them overcome their challenges and, eventually, it helps Harry to defeat Voldemort. In the end, all three of them have fully deserved to be placed in Gryffindor because the characteristics (friendship-chivalry, heroism-courage) they possess, show, and, most importantly, develop are the ones Gryffindor House represents and stands for.

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Did You Just Assume My House?

Dragutin Šimić

People from different cultures around the world show a certain need to distinguish themselves from others. They realize that not everyone is alike and that there are certain groups or types of people. For instance, Galen, an ancient Greek physician, said that there were four different personalities: sanguine, choleric, melancholic, phlegmatic and, therefore, four types of people. In the magical world of *Harry Potter*, all wizards and witches are divided into four Houses of Hogwarts. Depending on their character and qualities, young students are sorted into one of the Houses they remain part of even after their graduation. Even though there are a few exceptions, that kind of identity forming is permanent and unchangeable, one could even say fixed. The aim of this paper is thus to discuss how the identities of Hogwarts students are formed and what role the Hogwarts Houses have in this process.

In order to understand the process of identity formation in the *Harry Potter* series, it has to be taken into consideration that the whole population with magical powers is a minority, maybe even a marginalized one. People belonging to that group are more connected to each other, but also aware of the fact that their best chance of survival is by placing every individual into a group, depending on his/her characteristics, which brings stability to their society. This kind of classification is done at Hogwarts where young wizards and witches' identity is being formed by others, starting by the Sorting Hat. The Sorting Ceremony is held just before the start of the first year of education at Hogwarts and it is followed by a lavish feast. The magical item is put on the students' heads after which it shouts the House the student should belong to. Prior to that, the Hat usually sings a song where it presents those factions and their virtues:

> *You might belong in Gryffindor,*
> *Where dwell the brave at heart,*
> *Their daring, nerve, and chivalry*
> *Set Gryffindor apart.* (Rowling 118)

It could be argued that the Houses' traditional values and virtues resemble stereotypes, for example all Gryffindors are considered to be brave and courageous, people belonging to Slytherin are cunning and malicious, Ravenclaws are intelligent, and Hufflepuffs are seen as benign and weak. These beliefs are supported by the Sorting Hat's song. However, sorting students is not always easy. For instance, Harry's sorting took a while since he had virtues that could put him

in every House. His identity as a wizard had not been formed yet since he had found out about his abilities only a few months earlier. He did know some stories about the House system, most importantly the stereotypes regarding Slytherins. The Sorting Hat took Harry's wish into consideration and let him be part of Gryffindor. It can therefore be concluded that the process of identity formation can be affected by one's free will, even though that is a rarity. In most cases, wizards are sorted into the Houses according to their personality that cannot be chosen but is given by nature. Draco Malfoy's sorting took only a few seconds: "Malfoy swaggered forward when his name was called and got his wish at once: the hat had barely touched his head when it screamed, 'SLYTHERIN!'" (Rowling 120). Malfoy's personality is obvious from his very first appearance in the novel: he is ambitious and sharp-tongued and he has been raised to be like that since his parents and ancestors were all Slytherins as well. This contributes to the belief that the wizard's identity is often inherited and stays unchanged their whole life. The Sorting Ceremony itself is a kind of initiation rite; it can be compared to baptism in Christianity where newly christened people become part of the community and receive a new name. Similarly, Hogwarts students are given an identity that is cherished and celebrated by the whole institution. They are expected to contribute to their factions and fight for them, which is exemplified by Quidditch matches, the result of which is the enhanced feeling of belonging. The Houses are supposed to be like their families as Professor McGonagall announces: "while you are here, your House will be something like your family within Hogwarts" (Rowling 114) and it is within the family that most individuals develop their identity. Nevertheless, the identity does not necessarily have to be fixed. A gradual change in personality can, for example, be noticed in Neville Longbottom. At the beginning of the novel series, he was presented as an outcast in Gryffindor because he was not the bravest and was inept for most things, which changes over the course of the novels. With time, he finds his courage and becomes a true member of his House. Here we can see the transformation from being too yellow to a hero who saves the day by killing Voldemort's serpent.

Harry, Ron, and Hermione are the prime examples of Gryffindor valor and their identity as such hardly changes. They possess the same qualities before the Sorting Ceremony, so their placement into the House of the brave has only affirmed and stabilized their identity. It needs to be mentioned that they do not exhibit only the qualities of Gryffindor; Hermione, for example, could have been a Ravenclaw as well, due to her intellect and lucidity. However, her ability to use that intellect and be brave in times of distress proves that she is a Gryffindor through and through. The presence of different values in students of Hogwarts proves that the boundaries between members of different Houses are not that

strict. It is logical to conclude that most pupils are benevolent – traditionally the trait of Hufflepuffs. Also, many of them would perform great acts of courage if their loved ones were in danger. Therefore, the Houses do not have to be the ultimate tool of forming one's identity.

To conclude, one of the most famous works of fantasy nowadays has presented a type of division of people of similar characters into groups. The group you are assigned to has a huge impact on your further development as a person. The values of the Houses of Hogwarts are also promoted among students so that some of them become stereotypes. As mentioned above, differences between the members of the Houses are not that strict because it is possible for a student to have characteristics of all Houses. Yet, one of those traits is prominent and according to it students get sorted into one of the Houses.

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The House of Gryffindor as a Means in Shaping Harry's Personality in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*

Sara Tišljar

What forms the identity of a person? Many would agree that upbringing and surrounding play a crucial role in shaping a person's identity. The aim of this paper will be to try to prove that Gryffindor House shaped Harry into a strong and brave person, enabling him to serve as a role model for many young readers. Growing up, children need someone to look up to and J. K. Rowling did her part by creating a boy with whom many can identify. Although Harry grew up in a mean Muggle family, he has turned out to be the best wizard of all times by joining Gryffindor. So, the message behind this is that we are capable of anything. We should not blame our past for our failures, rather we should focus on the future in order to reach our full potential.

To start with, a few facts about Harry's childhood should be provided. He grew up living in a closet beneath the stairs in his aunt and uncle's house because his parents were killed by Lord Voldemort. "Perhaps it had something to do with living in a dark cupboard, but Harry had always been small and skinny for his age. He looked even smaller and skinnier than he really was because all he had to wear were old clothes of Dudley's, and Dudley was about four times bigger than he was" (Rowling 20). Harry was constantly oppressed by his family. He was neglected in every possible way and even his physical description does not sound like that of a hero: "Harry had a thin face, knobbly knees, black hair, and bright green eyes. He wore round glasses held together with a lot of Scotch tape because of all the times Dudley had punched him on the nose" (Rowling 20). Yet, what stands out in this plain and weak appearance is Harry's scar: "The only thing Harry liked about his own appearance was a very thin scar on his forehead that was shaped like a bolt of lightning" (Rowling 20).

When students arrive at Hogwarts, they join one of four Houses: "The four Houses are called Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw, and Slytherin. Each House has its own noble history, and each has produced outstanding witches and wizards" (Rowling 118). In addition, each House has certain characteristics by which they choose the members that fit in the best. The Sorting Hat sings all the features and the ones that characterize Gryffindor are:

> *You might belong in Gryffindor,*
> *Where dwell the brave at heart,*
> *Their daring, nerve, and chivalry*

Set Gryffindors apart. (Rowling 118).

Students thus have to possess a certain set of inborn characteristics that will be central for the formation of their identity in an appropriate House. Throughout the novel, there are various events that demonstrate Harry's courage and confirm that Gryffindor's rules and principles contributed to guiding Harry in the right direction. Harry finally has a proper role model and he is able to reach his full potential in his real family of Gryffindor: "Harry could hardly believe it when he realized that he'd already been at Hogwarts two months. The castle felt more like home than Privet Drive ever had" (Rowling 170). Taking into consideration that home is the place where you learn almost everything you need to know about life and community that helps you to fulfil your goals and reach your full potential, it is no wonder Harry feels that way about Hogwarts. According to Professor McGonagall, "your House will be something like your family within Hogwarts" (Rowling 114). And indeed, it has been. Harry's biggest wish is to have family and seeing them in the Mirror of Erised proves that: "It shows us nothing more or less than the deepest, most desperate desire of our hearts. You, who have never known your family, see them standing around you" (Rowling 213). Hogwarts has provided Harry with the best family he could have: his friends. His long-lasting wish has finally been fulfilled.

From the day he was born, Harry was destined to become one of the greatest wizards of all times. Even as a child, he showed the significant amount of courage both by surviving the evil curse cast by Lord Voldemort: "it didn't work on you, an' that's why yer famous, Harry. No one ever lived after he decided ter kill 'em, no one except you, an' he'd killed some o' the best witches an' wizards of the age – the McKinnons, the Bones, the Prewetts – an' you was only a baby, an' you lived" (Rowling 55-56), and by confronting him again in Hogwarts: "'I always value bravery.... Yes, boy, your parents were brave.... I killed your father first, and he put up a courageous fight... but your mother needn't have died... she was trying to protect you.... Now give me the Stone, unless you want her to have died in vain" (Rowling 294). The examples of courage become even more prominent after Harry's arrival to Hogwarts. To start with, he defeats the troll: "Harry then did something that was both very brave and very stupid: He took a great running leap and managed to fasten his arms around the troll's neck from behind" (Rowling 108). It is possible to say that this event proves that it takes a certain amount of stupidity in order to be brave. In addition, it takes a lot of bravery to break the rules after Madam Hooch said: "None of you is to move while I take this boy to the hospital wing! You leave those brooms where they are or you'll be out of Hogwarts before you can say 'Quidditch'" (Rowling 147). Despite Madam Hooch's warning, Harry gets up on the broom and chases Malfoy in order to get

Neville's Remembrall back: "he stretched out his hand – a foot from the ground he caught it, just in time to pull his broom straight, and he toppled gently onto the grass with the Remembrall clutched safely in his fist" (Rowling 145).

To conclude, each House in Hogwarts plays a crucial part in the upbringing of students. The Sorting Hat made the right choice by putting Harry in Gryffindor House, because it only enhanced Harry's bravery and provided him with a pleasant environment where he could finally be happy and fulfilled.

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SCIENCE
FICTION

CHAPTER 2: **SCIENCE FICTION**

Although resounding names like Johann Kepler, Voltaire, and Jonathan Swift are sometimes listed as having authored works of science fiction, a later date of origin is commonly attributed to this genre. Science fiction can be said to have stemmed from Gothic fiction, with Mary Shelley as its pioneer. In her 1818 novel *Frankenstein*, Shelley utilizes Gothic violence and fear but combines them with a scientific backdrop – the knowledge, experimentation, and desire to progress make it possible for Victor Frankenstein to artificially create a living being (Roberts 39-44). For some time, science fiction remained marginalized, embedded in other genres.

It was in the second half of the nineteenth century that science fiction began to expand into a more extensive genre. Jules Verne and his novel *20,000 lieues sous les mers* (1870) was one of the greatest influences on the development of the genre. Another was H. G. Wells, with works such as *The Time Machine* (1895) and *The War of the Worlds* (1898), whom Patrick Parrinder calls "the pivotal figure in the evolution of scientific romance into modern science fiction" (qtd. in Roberts 45). Over the next century, science fiction writers published popular periodicals that featured short stories, which helped to "formularize genre templates" (Stableford 27). The magazine era, which lasted approximately from 1926 and 1960, was the main contributor in turning science fiction into a genre in its own right (Attebery 32). This period overlaps with the era dubbed the Golden Age, the late 1930s and 1940s, when writers like Isaac Asimov, Theodore Sturgeon, Robert Heinlein, and A. E. Van Vogt published their works (Roberts 56).

As it developed, science fiction sprouted numerous subgenres: hard science fiction, steampunk, cyberpunk, space opera, time travel – to name only a few. In works belonging to these subgenres, technology is a prominent, if not the principal, component of the plot narrative. "[A] piece of SF technology, say a ray-gun, a spaceship, a time-machine or a matter-transporter, provides a direct, material embodiment of alterity" (Roberts 110-11), that is, technology is a realized product of progress in the narrative, sending a signal to the readers that the plot takes place in a world different than their own (Jones 163). Technological inventions are integral to the story and drive the plot forward, like the cold-pac does in Philip K. Dick's *Ubik*, a novel about people with psionic abilities. In his essay, "Time in Philip K. Dick's *Ubik*," Tomislav Kazimić explores how advanced technology and people's abilities converge to create a distorted reality and timeline.

Another popular subgenre of science fiction is dystopia, in which authors hypothesize how society, during its development, could take a turn for the worse; they present a future in which "the problems have been magnified or extended

into a grim dystopia" (Leonard 253). However, these stories are not devoid of connection to the readers' world – they draw inspiration from current political, social, and economic situations. These situations, often amplified or radicalized, are integrated into the storyline, making the fictional narrative speak about the existing problems. Dora Rešicki's essay on different levels of social division present in Veronica Roth's *Divergent* looks into separation among teens, which is often found in the real world. In line with this, Mario Paradžiković's essay, "Teen Subculture in Veronica Roth's *Divergent,*" discusses how high-school stereotypes are mirrored in Roth's dystopian society. Ira Rešetar's essay, on the one hand, explores the *Divergent* protagonist's, Tris Prior's, quest for identity in the dystopian society she inhabits. On the other hand, the essays by Ivan Benković, Robert Đujić, and Nikola Foršek attempt to convince the reader why science fiction, or to be more specific *The World of Warcraft*, *Red Rising*, and *Altered Carbon*, is a valuable reading material designed both to entertain and educate.

It can be said that science fiction unites imagination and science into one, to create an immersive world that sounds plausible and real enough to prompt the readers into thinking about alternatives and advancements that could occur in the real world. Today's readership may find that the technological and social evolutions – or devolutions – proposed by science fiction writers are no longer as unimaginable as they might have been at the advent of the genre.

Valentina Markasović

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Morally Gray Characters and Events in *The World of Warcraft*

Ivan Benković

Written by several authors, the *World of Warcraft* novel series began to attract masses in the early 2000s. Moreover, popularized by the corresponding video game franchise "Warcraft" by Blizzard Entertainment, the storyline got an additional boost. In 2016, it reached its peak with the release of the first movie *Warcraft*. The original trilogy was published by Richard A. Knaak. Later, other authors filled in the backstory and created more sequels. By creating characters with several layers to them, the authors opened the plot to interpretation from several points of view. The aim of this paper is to explicate and elaborate on the chosen, morally gray, main characters and events in *The World of Warcraft* series and to show why they make the novels such a good read.

Firstly, the character who is the reason for all conflicts that ensue has to be accounted for. He has had many names – the Last Guardian, the Prophet, the Oracle, yet most people know him just as Medivh. Medivh was the last protector of a distant world known as Azeroth who, even though he gave his all to protect Azeroth, was eventually destined to betray it. His destiny will be explicated as being morally gray due to his inner conflicts, which occurred when he fought the corrupted spirit within him. His mother, Aegwynn, was the Guardian before Medivh. She fought Sargeras, the Demon Lord, and defeated him. Before disappearing, however, Sargeras put his essence into Aegwynn's body so when she gave birth to Medivh, his destiny was already sealed. Against his will, Medivh began to search for a way to destroy the world he swore to protect, and he eventually succeeded. Moreover, he built a portal that connected Azeroth to the world of Orcs and with that he also paved the way for the demons of the Burning Legion to enter Azeroth. When his betrayal was discovered, he was swiftly killed by the ones closest to him. Medivh is the prime example of a character that is morally gray because his true nature is good: when the invasion of demons occurred, he protected Azeroth with his life. On the other hand, he also doomed Azeroth because of the corrupted thoughts planted into his mind, which caused the invasion in the first place. In the end, as a final act of redemption, he reappeared as a mysterious prophet during the Third War to help the mortals to defeat the Legion.

Secondly, the major event that unfolded, the First War between humans and orcs, also shows elements of moral ambiguity. Medivh sent a vision of Azeroth and all its riches to the orc warlock Gul'dan who was a prophet of the demons.

He spoke to all the orcs about Azeroth and offered them demon blood to drink, promising them great power in battle. Yet, they did not know that they would all become mindless thralls. The orcs, left with no choice because their world was dying, started building the portal. They rushed to Azeroth where they started mindlessly advancing to the human capital. Here the morally gray event occurs because the orcs were mind-controlled, had no choice, and were just being used. On the other hand, there were some orcs who were not corrupted and just wanted to settle the land. Although they attempted to establish a peaceful way of life, they were killed or enslaved by the humans that reacted from fear. The greatest quality of *The World of Warcraft* is the ability to portray neither side as completely evil or completely good. Eventually, the harm had already been done after the orcs destroyed the human city of Stormwind. The humans were then forced to retreat, but the non-corrupted orcs that witnessed this madness, led by Ogrim Doomhammer, fought the Warchief of the orcs and defeated him. Moreover, they searched for Gul'dan to bring him to justice. In brief, the orcs did massacre the humans led by a desire to find a place they can call home, but they also stopped the madness. The humans, on the other hand, were just protecting themselves, but if they had offered help or even some land to the orcs, peace would surely have ensued. Unfortunately, in the end, the seed of hatred was sown that is to last till the End Times.

Thirdly, one of the most notorious characters in *The World of Warcraft* storyline, Illidan Stormrage and his actions have to be accounted for. Even in his two most common nicknames "The Betrayer" and "The Chosen One," we can see the duality of his character that promises a morally gray storyline. Born a night elf and brother to Malfurion who was known as the greatest Druid of all times, Illidan creates the second Well of Eternity after the first one was destroyed. Illidan preserved some water from the Well during the First War against the demons by siding with them. He knew that in order to create a new well he had to make such a decision. This decision is gray because when creating the new Well of Eternity to preserve the life essence of Azeroth, he also heralded the next invasion for which he would be locked up for ten thousand years. When he finished serving his sentence, the inevitable second invasion happened. Illidan was freed from prison because the world needed all the help it could get in order to prevail against the demons. Another instance or proof of his morally gray character is what happened next. Illidan searched for the skull of Gul'dan to absorb its demonic power in order to turn himself into a demon. With this act, Illidan forfeited his soul forever, signing a pact with the devil, so to say, just to be able to protect the ones that cast him away ten thousand years ago.

Finally, the last morally gray character whose actions will be analyzed is Arthas Menethil, the most beloved character of *The World of Warcraft* and also known as the Lich King. Arthas Menethil, the Crown Prince of Lorderon and the Knight of the Silver Hand, is the heir to the throne of the Kingdome of Man. He was trained as a paladin, a warrior that wields the power of the light in order to smite all evil. When the scourge of the undead was plaguing the land, Arthas had to make the toughest decision of them all – to purge the city together with non-infected humans or to let the plague of the undead spread. To defeat the ruler of the undead, he took upon himself the cursed runeblade Frostmourne and even though he was successful his soul was lost forever due to it. Arthas became the Lich King knowing that someone had to hold the scourge at bay. The evils he committed were, however, caused by the corruption, which was upon his soul. Yet, he redeemed himself as a morally gray character by raising the insanely powerful warriors, known as the Death Knights, and training them. Moreover, their task was to eventually defeat Arthas and finally set him free from the curse. Finally, Arthas will forever be remembered as a man willing to do everything, from giving up his soul, killing an entire city, and committing other atrocities just for the greater good, making him the ultimate case of a morally gray character.

All in all, the capturing world of *The World of Warcraft* is not just a mainstream product but rather a philosophically based storyline. Many can argue in favor of either side with respect to a particular character and never reach a conclusion. It is a story that keeps on giving and will proceed to be expanded. Moreover, one can approach the story from multiple mediums, video games, novels, and movies. This multiverse that follows the same storyline is what causes such appeal to all generations.

Pierce Brown's *Red Rising*: The Next Big Thing

Robert Đujić

Red Rising is a science fiction saga currently consisting of five novels: *Red Rising*, *Golden Son*, *Morning Star*, *Iron Gold*, and *Dark Age*. The first three novels form the first trilogy, beginning with the titular *Red Rising*, which sets the tone of the entire journey and the rich world the story takes place in. *Red Rising* was Brown's first take on writing, and it proved to be a great success as within weeks of its publication it topped *The New York Time*'s best-seller list (Gaudette). This only worked in favor of the newly established writer as sales plummeted afterwards. As for Brown, this is what the official site has to say about him:

> Pierce Brown is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *Red Rising*, *Golden Son*, *Morning Star*, and *Iron Gold*. His work has been published in thirty-three languages and thirty-five territories. He spent his childhood building forts and setting traps for cousins in the woods of six states and the deserts of two. Graduating from college in 2010, he fancied the idea of continuing his studies at Hogwarts. Unfortunately, he doesn't have a magical bone in his body . . . Now he lives in Los Angeles, where he scribbles tales of spaceships, wizards, ghouls, and most things old or bizarre. ("About the Author")

This paper will deal with the story of the *Red Rising* saga, the elements of popular culture, and science fiction to try to convince the reader to give the novels a chance. Although the books are already extremely popular, a TV adaptation is in development, hence the title "The Next Big Thing" as it is believed that the show will attract numerous new fans to the series.

The timeline of *Red Rising* is set seven hundred years into the future. Mankind has reached the edges of the Solar System and has colonized and terraformed every inhabitable planet and orbiting moon, except for the gas giants. However, at the beginning of the trilogy, we can see that the terraforming of Mars is progressing slowly and that it will be many more years before the people of the Red caste can inhabit its surface. The Red caste is a caste of miners toiling in the underground cave systems of Mars, extracting a rich mineral called Helium three, which is used in the terraforming process. There are other castes as well that form the Society. The Society is divided into high colors, mid colors and low colors. The Reds are at the very bottom of the hierarchy, serving as toilers and miners. The protagonist of the series, Darrow, is a member of the Red caste. He is 16 years old in the first novel and works as a Helldiver, a miner adept at

operating the machinery necessary to extract Helium three. He lives with his family and wife Eo and has never seen the surface of Mars:

> Darrow is a miner and a Red, a member of the lowest caste in the color-coded society of the future. Like his fellow Reds, he digs all day, believing that he and his people are making the surface of the planet liveable for future generations. Darrow has never seen the sky. Yet he spends his life willingly, knowing that his blood and sweat will one day result in a better future for his children. ("*Red Rising*")

There are many more castes in the Society, such as for instance the Browns, who work as engineers, the Obsidian caste, who are genetically engineered for war or the Silver caste that is comprised of merchants and entrepreneurs. At the top of hierarchy are the Golds, the descendants of ancient conquerors who fought against the nations of Earth and brought stability to the human race. They are almost seen as living gods and are genetically engineered to have a muscular constitution, to be taller, to have denser bones, golden eyes and hair, and are bred from their birth to be rulers and warlords. Darrow's wife Eo is hanged by the Golds for breaking a rule of the Society. She led Darrow to an abandoned facility where they saw holographic images of what the surface of Mars would look like after it was terraformed. Eo believed that even though the Reds were slaves, they should be able to enjoy the fruits of their labor as well. Darrow was also to be executed but was saved by his uncle who is a member of a secret group fighting to overthrow the cruel caste system. They are called the Sons of Ares and they reveal a shocking truth to Darrow: the surface of Mars has been terraformed for centuries and a prospering society has been living on its surface. Having found out the truth, he sets out to undermine the Society from within and bring it to its knees, and in the process, fulfil his late wife's dream.

The story depicted so far is but the tip of an iceberg. It can already be seen from what was described that the *Red Rising* saga has extremely strong science fiction elements. It is set in a futuristic, dystopian setting. The characters of the series use advanced technology, ranging from shape-shifting swords to ranged, energy-based weaponry that can be mounted on a hand. Besides that, the Society is advanced in other fields of research, such as biology and genetic engineering as they can create creatures from the earliest of human myths. The Society has also engineered every member of the society to have physical features in accordance with their caste, thus the Reds have red eyes and red hair, the Golds gold eyes and gold hair, etc. There are also instances of space travel and whole parts of the novels are dedicated to enormous space battles, with warships of different sizes clashing around the Solar System. *Red Rising* also introduces a government trying to control every aspect of the lives of its members, which is a feature of dystopian science-fiction.

It is also clear that *Red Rising* is a popular fiction saga as it has been made for mass production and mass consumption. It has gained a lot of popularity since its debut and has been translated into many languages. It has a diverse cast of characters with whom the readers can identify. The plot is formulaic but still unique and offers the unexpected plot twists, which keep the readers on their toes. The novels also offer emotional satisfaction as they have great endings and the reader wishes to know what will happen next.

Red Rising also offers possibilities for further research, such as the class struggle present in the story:

> it focuses its sights on the horrors of class inequality and physical labour. While Katniss Everdeen kills in order for her country to find peace, *Red Rising*'s Darrow is motivated by his society's corrupt caste system, which placed him and his murdered young wife on the bottom rung from birth. (Gaudette)

Another can be found in character development:

> Darrow isn't perfect. Though he is way more mature than the Golds he is surrounded by, he makes mistakes that are both big and small. Learning from each one to help him grow. In the beginning, he is ruled by his emotions. By the end, he is no longer a "sheep in wolfs clothing," but a wolf, a warrior, and a leader. (Cook)

In conclusion, science-fiction buffs (and casual readers as well) should give the *Red Rising* saga a try. It has all the characteristics that make science fiction such an enjoyable genre, along with well-developed characters for whom the reader cares for. It is evident that *Red Rising* is here to stay and that it is really going to be "the Next Big Thing."

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Richard K. Morgan's *Altered Carbon* as a Prime Example of Science Fiction Noir

Nikola Foršek

Throughout literature's rich history, many authors have shared enough similarities in their style, motifs, and themes for academic researchers to be able to put them under a same denominator, that is, to put forth a set of clear boundaries, sharing enough common characteristics for a single period in literature's history to be differentiated from all other periods. In the most recent period, a postmodern one, these clear boundaries are becoming fuzzier and fuzzier, with characteristics overlapping in many different ways – including the realm of literary genres. In postmodern literature, and especially in popular literature, genre blending has now become fairly prevalent. The cyberpunk novel *Altered Carbon* (2002) by the British author Richard K. Morgan is no exception. While the general aesthetics of the novel clearly indicates it being a cyberpunk sci-fi novel, its major plot points and the narrative thread that connects them point towards it being classified as a hardboiled/noir crime fiction novel as well. With this specific blend of genres in mind, this essay will attempt to exemplify why the novel works well as sci-fi noir novel.

Cyberpunk

In his preface to the cyberpunk anthology *Mirrorshades* (1986), Bruce Sterling gives a rather broad and a straight-forward definition of the Cyberpunk movement – he defines it as "an integration of technology and the Eighties counterculture" (xii). To see what exactly that means, and to extract some general motifs of the genre, it will do good here to compare it with a general tone of its own subgenres that have emerged later on; most notably, steampunk and dieselpunk. The prefixes steam- and diesel- should give an inkling of what the world-building and the atmosphere of the subgenres are: in steampunk, the technologies and the ambience of the Victorian era are taken and "thrown into" a futuristic time setting, whereas in dieselpunk, the notion is basically the same, but encapsulated by a tone of the World War II era. This is exactly what, too, is denoted by the prefix cyber- and the root punk of "cyberpunk" – the progressive technology that had just begun emerging in the Eighties, coupled with the "punkesque" culture of it, put into a futuristic setting. Some defining features of the aesthetics of cyperpunk would, therefore, be things associated with a rapidly growing information industry, such as computerization of pretty much any aspect of human

life (including bodies), hacking, virtual reality, large, bright, neon cities, flying cars, skyscrapers, interstellar traveling (it also has some elements usually associated with space opera – the only defining feature is that cyberpunk usually does not depict such travels). Yet, the genre also puts social problems and inequities in the forefront, depicting various fights against those illnesses of the corrupt future societies.

Hard-Boiled Crime Fiction

Basing his description on Hammett's stories, Horsley (2005) describes what the typical protagonist of hard-boiled crime fiction is like:

> In the tradition that begins in the 1920s with Hammett's contributions to *Black Mask* magazine, the investigator is no longer detached and immune from danger. The hard-boiled private eye's self-conscious toughness and his aggressive involvement in his city's criminal milieu give him a very direct investment in the world he investigates. . . . In addition to private eyes of all descriptions, its central characters include downtrodden victims, "wrong men," small-time crooks, outlaws, psychopathic lawmen, and other killers. (67-68)

Furthermore, a typical hard-boiled crime novel's setting is described:

> Though hard-boiled fiction is by no means invariably urban, it is the big city that most regularly threatens a protagonist's sense of a discrete self, his powers of understanding, and his physical safety. . . . Confronted with the urban nightmare and the "world gone wrong," hard-boiled private eyes are not, on the whole, reluctant to draw their guns. (Horsley 71-72)

Lastly, an explanation is given about how the genre of noir and hard-boiled crime fiction overlap:

> Literary like cinematic noir is characterized by its stress on the subjective point of view, by the shifting roles of the protagonist, and by the ill-fated relationship between the protagonist and society, generating the themes of alienation and entrapment. The noir thriller overlaps to a significant extent with hard-boiled fiction, but they are not coterminous. (Horsley 115)

Sci-fi Noir

Schwartz (2002) explains the shift towards science fiction within the realm of crime fiction in the following way:

> The calculated confusions and cultural substitutions that now characterize our lives were chronicled by artists who were postmodern before we had the word

> (Thomas Pynchon or Donald Fagen and Walter Becker, for example); they are now one of the mainstays of Carl Hiaasen's fiction. The logical next step in the depiction of setting, of course, is to move toward science fiction and depict alien space as real. Many of our most distinguished crime writers are already there. One thinks, for example, of Joe R. Lansdale, Neal Barrett Jr., and, quintessentially, Jonathan Lethem. (97)

While discussing how the now iconic *Blade Runner* fits into the mold of sci-fi noir, Doll and Faller manage to extract some general motifs of the genre blend (most of them are visual cues and moods, but can also be applied to a literary text):

1) The flying vehicles such as police air-cars and advertising blimps;
2) A futuristic cityscape and congested streets implying over-population;
3) An advanced technology as a part of everyday life.

Altered Carbon as Science-Fiction Noir

How is the afore-discussed theoretical background applicable to Morgan's *Altered Carbon*? To explain this, it would be best to start with the main narrative framework. The story follows Takeshi Kovacs, the novel's protagonist, as he attempts to solve the murder of Laurens Bancroft, for which the latter has hired him personally. The fact that the main element of the story is the element of detection serves to prove that this novel is, in essence, a detective novel. In the attempts to solve the murder, he also gets help from Lieutenant Ortega, giving the story a police-procedural spin.

The protagonist himself, Takeshi, is an ex-member of the so called "Envoy Corps." In the universe of *Altered Carbon*, the Corps is a prime example of the very thing denoted by the title. Biologically altered humans, they are perfect killing machines, chemically induced to feel no emotion, to be on constant alert, and to adapt to any situation. To see why Takeshi is a great specimen of a hard-boiled protagonist, we will rely on what he himself says:

> When they make an Envoy, do you want to know what they do? They burn out every evolved violence limitation instinct in the human psyche. Submission signal recognition, pecking order dynamics, pack loyalties. It all goes, tuned out a neuron at a time; and they replace it with a conscious will to harm. (Morgan 217)

The setting of the novel is obviously futuristic, set in the twenty fifth century, wherein San Francisco has been "remodeled" into a rather decadent Bay City:

> From the massive insubstantial holofronts along the antique buildings to the street traders with their catalogue broadcast sets nestling on shoulders like clumsy mechanical hawks or outsize tumours, everyone was selling something. Cars pulled in and out from the kerbside and supple bodies braced against them, leaning in to negotiate the way they've probably been doing as long as there've been cars to do it against. Shreds of steam and smoke drifted from food barrows. The limo was sound- and broadcast-proofed, but you could sense the noises through the glass, corner-pitch sales chants and modulated music carrying consumer-urge subsonics. (Morgan 52)

San Francisco of the future, as imagined by Morgan, is a hectic place, full of neon and bright advertising; the streets swarm with illegal activities and are occupied mostly by arms dealers whose activities thus highlight the use of technology in everyday life of *Altered Carbon*:

> "And what exactly is sir looking for in this sleeve?"
>
> I shrugged. "Something subtle. Something not. Projectile weapons. And a blade. The heavy one needs to be something like the Smith."
>
> The mandroid became quite still. I could almost hear the whirring of data retrieval. I wondered briefly how a machine like this had come to wind up here. It had clearly not been designed for the job. On Harlan's World, you don't see many mandroids. They're expensive to build, compared to a synthetic, or even a clone, and most jobs that require a human form are better done by those organic alternatives. (Morgan 119)

The humans of *Altered Carbon* are transhumans – the whole premise for the futuristic setting of the novel is the concept of "stack technology" – the technology that has allowed people to digitalize their consciousness and transfer them between various bodies, thus enabling them to virtually live forever. Not only are the humans augmented but almost every aspect of human life is – Takeshi gets his augmented weaponry from an android.

Conclusion

Some of the main premises and the general "aura" of this novel show it is a cyberpunk novel: from various types of technology, through human augmentation, all the way to the descriptions of the setting – the decadent Bay City. However, its protagonists, as well as its narrative framework, indicate that it is also a hard-boiled crime novel. Looking at the novel that way, it can be put under the category of a sci-fi noir novel.

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Time in Philip K. Dick's *Ubik*

Tomislav Kazimić

Philip K. Dick was a science fiction writer, born in Chicago in 1928. He published 44 novels and 121 short stories. The recognition and well-deserved appreciation of his works mostly came after his death in 1982 when some of his novels and short stories began to be adapted into films or were used as a major inspiration to film makers. The most successful and famous film adaptations would be *Total Recall* (Gopnik) and Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (Gopnik). Other films that were inspired by Philip K. Dick literary works are the *Matrix* series (Gopnik) and Terry Gilliam's *Brazil* (Gopnik).

The themes of Philip K. Dick's works are philosophical in nature. Drawing from his own knowledge of metaphysics and various scientific concepts, he interlinks various fields of human interest and uses them as a plot device in his fiction. In his works, reader can stumble across various scientific, theological, and philosophical references, so it is only natural that he put a strong emphasis on many contemporary and relevant existential questions. These questions often play with the potential consequences of technology, the problem of comprehending human nature, alien and unexplainable phenomena, and the contemplation of the small divide between fantasy and reality. Written in 1969, *Ubik* plays a special role in the author's contemplation of certain scientific and philosophical ideas. In this paper, we will emphasize some of these ideas, especially those related to the novel's conception of time. Time and, consequently, the perception of reality are used as fantastic elements in the novel, but are also its main topics of speculation, which the author articulated through the main characters and the prism of famous metaphysical concepts. Some of them, which are directly mentioned and defined in the novel, will be discussed in this essay.

The premise of the novel

To further discuss the conceptions of time and reality, we will first provide the initial scenario from which the plot further develops. The main character of the novel is Joe Chip who works under the leadership of Glen Runciter. Glen Runciter founded the "Runciter Associates" (Dick 3), "an agency of 'anti-psis' that stops telepaths" (Jordison). The rival organization of Runciter's "Prudence Organization" (Dick 8) is an organization consisting of "PSIs" (Dick 58), people gifted with various psionic abilities that range from precognition to telepathy.

The purpose of their organization is infiltration, espionage, and assassination. These two companies are in direct conflict, always trying to stay one step ahead of the other. The plot of the novel starts to complicate after Ray Hollis manages to ambush and incapacitate Joe Chip and twelve other members of the Prudence Organization, including a nineteen-year-old girl named Pat Conley, who possesses a peculiar psionic ability. The members of the organization were put in a "cold-pac" (Dick 4), best described as the state of "half-life" (Dick 4) where the essence, soul, substance, consciousness, or scientifically – the essential brain function of the subject, are preserved in a dimension that is basically a double of the ordinary one. A person can be kept in this state for a limited period of time after suffering from a fatal wound or illness. The subject in this state is conscious and can be communicated with from the "outside," which is by general consensus perceived as the basic reality. What the subjects experience, or more specifically Joe Chip and other unlucky characters in the novel, is a domain of reality that operates under slightly different principles, that is filled with various anomalies related to time and entities toying with the characters and the reader. These components of the story and the properties of characters' experiences complicate the plot and make a clear and rational interpretation of the novel impossible. The story was written as if it was meant to stay open-ended and obscure reality itself, so if the novel is "not carefully read, the reader might think there is correct right direction" ("Plausible New Ending"). However, we will adopt a certain line of interpretation for the sake of coherent representation of time and its interesting aspects.

Time and Pat Conley

In *Ubik*, time is used as a plot device to constantly manipulate the perception of the characters and the experience they have of their surroundings. The metaphysics and the interesting conceptions of time are displayed in two different types. The first type is displayed through the character of Pat Conley and her "anti-precog" (Dick 27) ability; the second in the "regressive" (Dick 124) time anomalies attributed to the half-life dimension itself. These two are at first glance interspersed. The precise relation between the two, if any, is nearly impossible to define. Like the readers, the characters of the novel are constantly trying to pinpoint the correct source of time anomalies; their theories oscillate between the two afore-mentioned conceptions as they are left to rationalize and cope with the desperate circumstances in general. In the first phase of the story, the pre-half-life phase, we are introduced to Pat Conley. She possesses an ability connected to "time reversion" (Dick 179), which she describes as not "strictly

speaking time travelling" (Dick 179). This means that she is able to deconstruct the fragments or the whole timeline together with the matter contained in it, reverse the flow of time, and consequently negate events that happened up to the present. This is the passage that exemplifies the effects of the ability on a micro scale:

> I spent a month trying to will the damn statue back into one piece; in my mind I kept going back to before it broke, imagining what it had looked like . . . which was awful. And then one morning when I got up – I even dreamed about it at night – there it stood. As it used to be . . . But neither of my parents noticed anything. It seemed perfectly normal to them that the statue was in one piece; they thought it had always been in one piece. I was the only one who remembered. (Dick 27)

Yet, her abilities are not limited to reversal. After reversing the timeline to a certain point, Pat Conley can arbitrarily construct it and seemingly forward the time in a preferred way to a preferred point in the timeline, be that the initial present or the newly constructed future. These changes, no matter how innumerable or minute as shown by the previous quote, affect the perception and obstruct the memory of others. One of the characters manages to feel the anomaly and concludes: "Someone, Miss Spanish said, just now moved us, all of us, into another world. We inhabited it, lived in it, as citizens of it, and then a vast, all-encompassing spiritual agency restored us to this, our rightful universe" (Dick 55). To this, Joe Chip responded that it was "Pat Conley. Who just joined the firm today" (Dick 55). If the characters are not warned of the timeline manipulation by Pat Conley, the change will most likely go unnoticed as she will be the only one that is always fully aware of those changes and their scope. This leaves everyone around her extremely helpless in the swirls of her own will. In the last chapters of the novel, we discover that Pat Conley is in actuality an agent that was sent by Ray Hollis to sabotage the Prudence Organization, so it cannot be said with absolute certainty to what extent and how many times throughout the novel she uses her terrifying ability against other characters. This especially becomes unclear when she and other characters end up together in the half-life state where they become aware that there are other principles and factors besides Pat Conley that influenced their experience of time and reality.

Time of the half-life

This leads to the second type of time anomaly that is experienced by the characters, primarily in the half-life state. All the characters experience the gradual regress of time, reality, and their health during their stay in the cold-pac. When they were initially put into the cold-pac, they were experiencing their usual ver-

sion of 1991, which for reasons unknown at the time gradually began to regress to 1938. As the plot develops, their surroundings regress more and more from its original state of 1991. For example, they first notice the regression of "cigarettes" (Dick 99), "money" (Dick 99), "cream and coffee" (Dick 99), which became stale, antiquated or moldy. This regress also proportionally influenced the memory of the characters, which enabled them to recall information otherwise unknown to them. An example of this is when Joe Chip successfully drives a "surface vehicle" (Dick 136) – the "1939 LaSalle automobile" (Dick 136), even if he has never seen that type of a vehicle before. A couple of explanations are offered by the characters. The most elaborative and important explanation is that of Joe Chip. He tries to use Plato's *Theory of Forms* to interpret the regression. Joe Chip concludes that they have not actually moved backwards but that "for some reason – for one of several possible reasons – reality has receded; it's lost its underlying support and it's ebbed back to previous forms. Forms it took fifty-three years ago" (Dick 150). In other words, because reality, or what they perceive as reality in the half life, lost the energy to move forward and further develop its forms, it had to regress to maintain itself. He also concludes that the "past is latent" and that it "is submerged, but still there, capable of rising to the surface once the later imprinting unfortunately – and against the ordinary experience – vanished" (Dick 129), thus revealing the previous phases of reality and of material things contained in it. Towards the end of the novel, we also find out that the half-life dimension is under the control of a malignant entity that goes by the name of Jory. He is able to create worlds but only under already established rules or "natural atavisms" (Dick 196). His main purpose in the half-life is to devour people's remnants that keep them alive in the cold-pac. This consequently gives him strength to create realities inside the half-life. Joe Chip thus concludes that the reality regressed because it was Jory's first time that "he has created a world this diverse, for so many people at once" (Dick 196) and that the depletion of his energy was the primary cause of regression.

Conclusion

In this essay, we tried to discuss the element of time as it is used by Philip K. Dick. In *Ubik*, time is in a close relation to the characters' own experience of their surroundings and is essential for the story development. As mentioned before, this makes the novel somewhat difficult to grasp and interpret in a way that would seem completely correct, but for the purposes of this essay we followed a coherent line of story development. This conservative approach we deemed best because it could provide the most convincing results in a short essay. The two dif-

ferent types of time have some principles in common. For example, Pat Conley, like Jory in the half life, can manipulate time and reality but only within the limits of predetermined universal principles. This implies that Philip K. Dick formulated this novel on clear premises that were inspired by historical philosophical systems. Most likely Plato's or philosophical traditions related to Platonic line of thought. The second influence that is mentioned in the story is *Bardo Thodol*, also called *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. This book is essential for understanding the story in its full extent, but it was purposely left out in this essay because its significance to the topic of time was minor. Various ideas and mixtures of ideas present in *Ubik* are definitely the product of an innovative mind that was able to combine philosophy and science fiction to an absolute degree. Most authors that do this limit themselves to only one philosophical discipline such as politics or ethics. With his approach, Philip K. Dick, on the contrary, manages to avoid one-dimensionality and creates a novel that is meant to be reread carefully to reveal its full value.

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Teen Subculture in Veronica Roth's *Divergent*

Mario Paradžiković

The turbulence of growth and emotion that is called the teenage period has long been a topic of debate among many. In this period, children start absorbing the society they live in at an exponential rate, changing into fully-fledged members of it. Naturally, this change brings with it both the common virtues we associate with growing up as well as the short-comings. Understandably, this leads to a conflict between a child's wondrous ideals and an adult's disillusionment with the reality that falls short. The emotional turmoil brought about by this process has motivated many a writer to curry to his/her audience, trying to offer them both entertainment as well as the occasional life-lesson. In the novel *Divergent* by Veronica Roth, much like in other teen tales, this is done by putting teen characters in situations where one might expect to find an adult. The aim of this paper is thus to discuss the stereotypes present in *Divergent*'s teen subculture as the novel, by dealing with the issue of ideological segregation in an allegorical and easy to understand fashion, calls upon many, admittedly stereotypical, groups in order to engage its readers.

When one thinks about teenagers, they will undoubtedly come to high-school as a focal point. While its intention is to be a place of learning, it is also a miniature representation of the broader world; students are expected to juggle their responsibilities at the same time as they are trying to find some sort of joy or meaning in their lives. It is then unsurprising that they would group together with like-minded individuals in order to achieve those goals. Much like in the broader world, these groups will put their needs first and treat their own views as acceptable and correct ones. *Divergent* takes this concept and builds an entire world around a radicalized version of it. In this way, the miniature representation of the broader world is taken and made into a world of its own. The five main factions of *Divergent* – Abnegation, Amity, Candor, Erudite, and Dauntless – represent the five main ideals teenagers are expected to strive towards. It is thus important to note the difference in desirability between these ideals when it comes to teenagers.

When it comes to Abnegation, it represents the ideal of charity and responsibility; as these traits are acquired later in life, this faction is not very appealing to teenagers. This is demonstrated by the fact that both of the Abnegation teenage protagonists actually leave it. While not all teenagers are selfish or irresponsible, it should be said that all of them seek excitement and pleasure. This is evident

in the labelling of Abnegation members as "stiffs" by other factions. Focusing every effort to put everybody else before oneself takes a lot of discipline and understanding. "Faction customs dictate even idle behavior and supersede individual preference" (Roth 9). Looking at it as a whole, Abnegation represents the kindness all teenagers possess to some degree, but they cannot achieve it due to their own desires and lack of experience.

Amity, however, is much more appealing for a young person to seek out. Namely, looking at the fact that all teenagers crave acceptance and support, Amity provides exactly these things. It practices peaceful repose and mutual kinship: "Those who blamed aggression formed Amity . . . They are dressed comfortably, in red or yellow. Everytime I see them, they seem kind, loving, free" (Roth 42). It could be said that this faction represents the ideal for a reserved, introverted individual, struggling to push themselves forward.

Candor is the bastion of all things truthful and honest. Compared to the previous two factions, this one is much more confident. When applying this to a teen subculture, one can say that this represents the headstrong, if a bit naive, teenager who stubbornly refuses to partake in the little white lies that pervade the adult world. "It must require bravery to be honest all the time" (Roth 62). Considering how important trust is to not just a teenager but any person, the existence of this faction is unsurprising. In the environment teens find themselves in, the constant whirl of drama and rumour, honesty is something that is in great need for one to develop.

For the individuals looking to advance their intellect, there is always Erudite. This faction houses anyone who seeks to improve themselves and their society through knowledge. "I imagine books jammed between the dresser and the wall, books under his mattress. The Erudite thirst for knowledge filling all the hidden places in his room" (Roth 52). Erudite creates a slightly different situation; namely, the faction that represents learning and advancement is the main antagonist of this novel. When one looks at teen subcultures, a lot of them are focused on their own company as escapism from duties. Even among "nerd" stereotypes, they do not study for the sake of improving themselves but rather for the grades. Keeping that in mind, it could be said that the establishment of Erudite as the villains serves to cater to teenagers' usual aversion to schoolwork. While this is a simplistic understanding, it would be one of the many ways in which the novel taps into teen subcultures.

Finally, we have the focal point of *Divergent*, the Dauntless faction. In many ways, the Dauntless faction is the strongest representative of adolescence and

teen life. It is, by far, the most physical of the factions, which naturally agrees with the increased hormone production any adolescent goes through. It is even primal in its nature, featuring many violent customs as cornerstones of their ideology. Through reading about these practices, the readers are offered a sort of release for their frustration, being able to put themselves in the position of the characters and able to have their own fantasies. It does not simply cater to the "jock" stereotype, but to anyone willing to stand up for what they think they should.

Divergent puts three of these factions into the spotlight and binds all of them with the singular theme of corruption. Within Erudite, we see the corruption of knowledge into a lust for power; within Dauntless, we see the urge to protect being twisted into exerting force over others, and within Abnegation, we see keeping up appearances to stay in one's current position. All three of these corruptions lead to the same end: seeking more influence: "He doesn't need to say anything else. I know what he means. Maybe Dauntless was formed with good intentions, with the right ideals and the right goals. But it has strayed far from them. And the same is true of Erudite, I realize" (Roth 206). This transition serves both as reinforcement of the theme that the human mind cannot be railed into only one position, but also as motivation for the reader to re-examine their surroundings and the groups they find themselves part of.

Through creating massive representations of ideals in the form of factions, *Divergent* caters to the teen demographics that pay attention to them. Much like many other teen novels, it takes the issues of growing up and puts them into outlandish circumstances. In this way, it takes the reader away from these issues, offering relief, but inevitably gets them to think about them, offering learning. While the main goal cannot be disputed as anything other than pure entertainment, the novel does put forth enough issues in order to make its demographic question the society they find themselves in.

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The Quest for Identity in Veronica Roth's *Divergent*: Take Pride in the Qualities That Set You Apart

Ira Rešetar

Veronica Roth is a novelist and a short story writer who is recognized all around the world for her *Divergent* trilogy. The first part of the trilogy, simply titled *Divergent,* Roth wrote during the winter break when studying at Northwestern University. When she wrote it, she was still in her early twenties when the experience of adolescence is most essential in shaping one's identity. As well as Roth, Tris, the main character of *Divergent*, also experiences adolescence while struggling to find her real, true identity. Thus, the aim of this paper is (1) to examine Tris's surroundings and the circumstances that helped her find her true identity and become the kind of person she always knew she already was, and (2) to help us better understand the entire process of one becoming his/her true self.

The lead character of Veronica Roth's *Divergent* is Beatrice (Tris) Prior who grows up in a dystopian society where every individual must belong to one of the five factions sooner rather than later. Each of the factions is known for its special traits. All individuals have the birth-given right to be part of one of the factions, but at the age of sixteen one must take the Aptitude test to see what other traits s/he may possess. Depending on those newly discovered qualities within themselves, they can either make the transfer to a different faction or decide to stay in their original faction. The five factions are Abnegation, Erudite, Dauntless, Candor, and Amity. If the Aptitude test showcases the lack of competence to belong to one of the factions, one becomes Factionless. Very similar to the society we live in, if one does not fulfil the expectations that their community puts upon them, one will most probably become homeless, or as in the case of *Divergent*, Factionless. From her birth, Tris belonged to Abnegation, the faction known for its selflessness and caring attitude. She was raised to put others' needs before her own and in a way forget about herself and her needs. Her faction is also not allowed to wear clothes of bright colors or anything that would bring attention to them. They are only allowed to wear gray clothes. Unlike her brother Caleb, Tris has always felt that she is not like others in Abnegation and that there is more to her than just helping others. As she turns sixteen, she begins to question life around her and the core values of the society, which she lives in: "I sneak a look at my reflection when she isn't paying attention – not for the sake of vanity, but out of curiosity" (Roth 7). Like every other Abnegation member, Tris

is not allowed to stare at herself too much in the mirror since that is considered to be vain and futile to the society. Since her faction does not allow focusing on oneself, Tris, in her sixteen years of life, still does not know what she likes or dislikes. She does not know her deepest wishes and desires. The only thing she does know is that there is more to her and that she is destined for great things. Her assumptions come true when she takes the Aptitude test, which shows that she is not only selfless but also fearless and intelligent: "'My conclusion,' she explains, 'is that you display equal aptitude for Abnegation, Dauntless, and Erudite. People who get this kind of result are…' She looks over her shoulder like she expects someone to appear behind her. '…are called …Divergent'" (Roth 29). That is when Tris begins to question herself and goes on a quest for her identity. As "our identity is something we uniquely possess[,] it is what distinguishes us from other people" (Buckingham 5). This is the time of her adolescent life when she is not sure where she belongs and does not know with whom she should assimilate, whether if it is her family and whole Abnegation or some other faction that she should possibly transfer to: "On these mornings when my brother makes breakfast, and my father's hand skims my hair as he reads the newspaper, and my mother hums as she clears the table – it is on these mornings that I feel guiltiest for wanting to leave them" (Roth 9). Like all teenagers of her age, Tris experiences difficulties when trying to make the right choice. Eventually, she decides to make the transfer to Dauntless where she tries to find out whether to be bold, brave, and fearless is her real destiny. As she goes through the different stages of Dauntless initiation, she encounters many obstacles that make her question her Dauntless identity. Considering that not many are Divergent and that Divergent are deemed to be a threat to society, Tris has to hide the fact she is one of them and pretend to be only Dauntless. While she is faced with many dangerous people and situations, she realizes that she must use all the skills of Dauntless, Erudite, and Abnegation in order to survive. When she discovers that her mother Natalie as well as Tobias are also Divergent, it helps her to be courageous and to accept her destiny. In the end, Tris learns that she must rise above all the preconceptions she made about herself and the factions she "must" belong to. She chooses never to stop rediscovering her identity.

To conclude, we must not forget the fact that Beatrice is only sixteen when she has to decide what she will do and be for the rest of her life. Teenage years are the years in which a person is still exploring the world and oneself. It is very hard to make such important decisions at such a young age. Thus, it is really up for discussion whether the decisions made at such a young age are good or not. We must take into consideration that people search for their identity throughout their entire lives and it depends on the person whether s/he is going to get

to know his/her true self at sixteen or at fifty. The feelings that a person feels and the experiences s/he experiences shape him/her and his/her identity. We, like Tris, must not settle and stop the process of discovering and fulfilling our potentials. Also, the most important thing is to remember that we are all a little bit Divergent and no society can tell us otherwise.

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The Divisions in Teen Society in Veronica Roth's *Divergent*

Dora Rešicki

Veronica Roth's novel *Divergent* is the first novel of a dystopian trilogy that is mostly read by teens and young adults. The novel is written from the perspective of Beatrice Prior, a 16-year-old girl who tries to find her way in a world strictly divided into five factions – Abnegation, Dauntless, Amity, Candor, and Erudite. Given that the novel is written from a teen's perspective, the reader is mostly acquainted with the teen subculture of this society. The aim of this paper is to show that in the *Divergent* world teens find themselves oppressed by the norms of their factions and that one of the most important traits of their subculture is division. Teens in this society thus seem to be constantly divided – first into their birth factions, then according to their aptitude test results, and ultimately, into smaller groups, or cliques, within their own factions.

Teens are firstly restricted to their birth faction and they do not socialize with the members of other factions. This can be seen from the description of the cafeteria in Beatrice's school, where teens sit exclusively with other members of their factions, behaving according to the customs of their faction. This illustrates the oppressive nature of this regime because these "customs dictate even idle behavior and supersede individual preference" (Roth 9). The Abnegation members are expected to sit quietly, the Amity members "sit in a circle on the cafeteria floor, playing some kind of hand-slapping game involving a rhyming song" (Roth 9), the Candor members are having a discussion, the Erudite members read books and newspapers, and the Dauntless members appear to be cheerful, "laughing and shouting and playing cards" (Roth 9). So, the teens act like they are programmed because no one is allowed to "defy the norms of their factions" (Roth 9). This division lasts until they reach sixteen, when it is time for them to take the aptitude test to find out which faction suits them best.

However, the aptitude test contributes to the further division of teens. Not only will they still be divided according to the faction they choose, but another division also appears – the one between those whose results are conclusive and those whose results are inconclusive. Those with conclusive results are considered to be ordinary because, according to the test, they show aptitude for one faction only. Those with inconclusive results, like Beatrice, show aptitude for more than one faction, which is called Divergence. Moreover, Divergence is considered dangerous and Beatrice gets clear instructions not to mention the fact that she is Divergent to anyone. So, this time the teens find themselves divided

into two groups – the ordinary ones, who pose no threat to the regime, and the Divergent ones, who need to keep their Divergence a secret in order to stay alive.

The next division is visible in the Dauntless faction, which Beatrice chooses to be her new faction. In order to become a full member of this faction, all teens must go through the initiation process. The initiation process is again divided, with a special program for those who are, like Beatrice, transferring from another faction, and for those who were born into the Dauntless faction. Although Beatrice does socialize with those who are Dauntless-born, it is presented as an exception because, normally, that is not the case. Beatrice even describes the Dauntless-born initiates as "a pack of dogs" (Roth 211) and she fears they will reject her if she behaves the wrong way, which makes this pack mentality visible again.

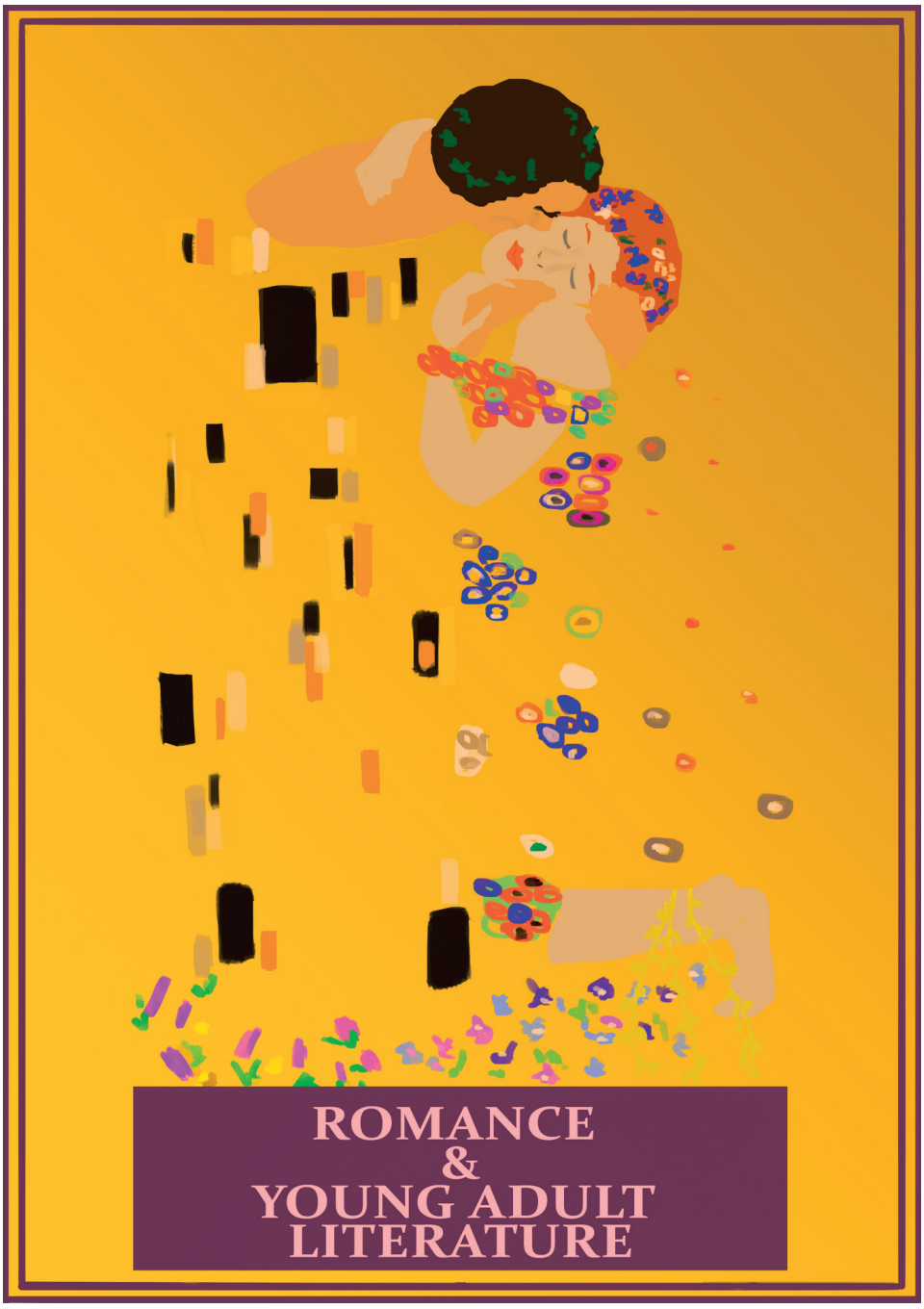
Moreover, the initiates who transferred to the Dauntless faction are again divided into smaller groups. Beatrice quickly befriends Christina, who transferred from Candor, and Will, who transferred from Erudite. They stand out as a group of their own for almost the whole of the initiation process. Their rivals are the bullies who formed their own group – Peter, Molly, and Drew, all transfers from Candor. They are depicted as the typical bullies, "inseparable since they crawled out of the womb" (Roth 92), who prey on the weak. In this case, that was Beatrice, who was considered weak due to her lack of physical strength and her Abnegation background. Beatrice even gets physically assaulted by them when she starts to improve her performance in the initiation process. Christina and Will, on the other hand, mostly serve as Beatrice's protectors. The one character who finds himself between those two groups is Al. Even though he spends most of his time with Beatrice, Christina, and Will at first, he ultimately succumbs to peer pressure and joins the bullies to take part in the previously mentioned physical assault on Beatrice. His guilt ultimately leads him to suicide, which emphasizes the dystopian atmosphere of the novel. As for the other initiates, perhaps the ones who are also worth mentioning are Edward and Myra, the only couple who came together to the Dauntless faction. When Edward gets assaulted and decides to leave the initiation, Myra leaves with him although this means they will both become factionless. All these characters show that teens in the *Divergent* world are always grouped and then divided and that they share the fear of being left alone. If one does find himself alone and loses this sense of belonging, it can even, like in Al's case, lead to suicide.

In conclusion, the *Divergent* society forces teens to develop a pack mentality and uses fear to achieve that. The faction system is established as a grand institution, which brings order and a sense of community. If one fails to adapt to the

rules of a certain faction, one would be lost because to "live factionless is not just to live in poverty and discomfort; it is to live divorced from society, separated from the most important thing in life: community" (Roth 20). Moreover, the importance of factions is emphasized by the slogan "*Faction before blood*" (Roth 43), which means that your faction, i.e. the group you chose, is even more important than your family. Therefore, teens learn to live divided their entire lives, so, naturally, this need for dividing into smaller groups continues even after they choose their own faction. This society presents division through factions as the only regime conducive for a well-functioning society, which extremely oppresses teens, making them believe that they always need to be a part of just one particular "pack" in order to survive.

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ROMANCE
&
YOUNG ADULT
LITERATURE

CHAPTER 3: **ROMANCE AND YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE**

Romance is a popular fiction genre that celebrates the development of a love relationship between one man and one woman, promising them a happily ever after ending after a number of obstacles, complications, and misunderstandings they have to overcome. In her *A Natural History of the Romance Novel*, Pamela Regis states that romance is the most popular, yet least critically respected literary genre. The critical rejection of romance mostly stems from the 1960s wave of feminism (Regis 3). Such a negative critical response induced shame in women who were reading romances, which is why they would cover a romance novel if they were to read it in public (Regis xi). Regis also points out that

> [t]his lack of respect results, in part, from a lack of understanding, both of the heroine herself and of the genre in which she appears. The heroine appeals largely to a female audience. The romance is the most female of popular genres. Nearly all of the writers or readers are women. (xii)

In the preface to her study, Regis also mentions Jane Tompkins's astute cultural observation that "stories about men . . . function as stories about all people," which forces "women . . . at an early age to identify with male heroes" (qtd. in Regis xii). Romance challenges this notion by placing a woman at the center, thus allowing the reader to identify with a heroine.

Another genre of popular fiction that often includes the romance element in its plot and characterization is Young Adult Literature. Written for readers between 12 and 25, featuring the protagonist in the same age group, and addressing the themes such as the quest for identity, family issues, and romantic relationships, Young Adult Literature offers the reader much to identify with. One of the points of identification is the characters' romantic involvement, with or without a happily ever after.

According to Alice Trupe, contemporary Young Adult Literature is a comparatively new field. Scholars usually consider S. E. Hinton's *The Outsiders* (1967) as the first Young Adult novel, which the author wrote when she was seventeen because she wanted to read fiction with characters who were "both tough and vulnerable, who faced real social and emotional problems, who had economic worries and life choices to make, in a well-plotted, exciting narrative" (Trupe vii). Antero Garcia, however, asserts that "the genre has too often been marginalized and even demonized. For YA, the turning point was the somewhat unexpected popularity of YA novels among teens and adults, notably the popularity of the *Twilight* series and then *The Hunger Games* trilogy" (xi). Although critics occa-

sionally perceive Young Adult Literature as a form of superficial entertainment, it has been growing more popular in adult readers' circles as well and has been embraced even by literary critics. Garcia assumes that this has occurred because Young Adult novels are easy to relate to because they "speak to the greater human condition, and not just to the specific teen experience" (xi).

This chapter introduces Andrej Labudić's views on reading stereotypes across gender lines in Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* and Ana Vukelić's discussion of the same novel through the lens of its female characters as potential feminists and empowered women. Tea Grgurić, Veronika Petanjak, and Katarina Stojković analyze Fielding's novel as well but from another perspective: if, how, and why woman's self-definition depends on body images imposed by mass media and fashion/beauty industry. Mirna Bognar, on the other hand, analyzes John Green's *Looking for Alaska,* which portrays typical social and emotional problems the teen culture faces in such novels and points out that this novel exhibits one of the major themes in Young Adult novels – the confrontation with emotional problems and emotional disturbance, which sometimes may lead to suicide.

Mirna Bognar

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The Labyrinth of Suffering and Other Important Themes in John Green's *Looking for Alaska*

Mirna Bognar

Looking for *Alaska* was written in 2005 by John Green, who made his debut with this novel, which was awarded the Printz Award in 2006. The story is set in Birmingham, a town in Alabama, where John Green attended the Culver Creek boarding school, the same one his characters attend in *Looking for Alaska*. Although the story is a fictional one, there are lots of biographical details to it. The appeal of this book, however, lies in the fact that this is not an ordinary cliché boy-meets-girl story. The aim of this paper is to prove that *Looking for Alaska*, on the contrary, deals with important things in life such as love, loss, and, of course as all coming of age novels do, the quest for identity, or self-discovery.

The story revolves around two characters: Miles Halter, also known as Pudge (Green 10), and Alaska Young, "the hottest girl in all of human history" (Green 10) according to Pudge. Miles is a rather awkward young man. He is intelligent but somewhat deprived of social graces. He is nicknamed Pudge because he is tall and skinny. He also has a weird interest in memorizing famous last words. One of Pudge's favorites is a sentence uttered by Francois Rabelais on his deathbed: "I go to seek a great perhaps" (Green 6). As he enrolls in high school, he decides to seek his great perhaps – to find adventure and no longer be perceived as geeky and weird. Alaska Young helps him find adventure and, in a way, turns his life upside down. The famous last words mentioned throughout the novel are not there to make Pudge sound pretentious or smart, but to guide us through the novel and possibly to reflect on Pudge's growth. Pudge quotes many famous people but he particularly likes prominent literary figures, like Henrik Ibsen, Leo Tolstoy, and E. A. Poe. As already mentioned, this novel does not deal with trivial and mundane things: even though Green's characters play truant, drink strawberry wine, and smoke cheap cigarettes while hiding from the principal, they do not represent the stereotypical teenage culture. Nevertheless, they are easy to identify with since they are trying to figure out how to "get out of this labyrinth of suffering" (Green 34).

At the beginning of the novel, Alaska says: "You spend your whole life stuck in the labyrinth, thinking about how you'll escape it one day, and how awesome it will be, and imagining that future keeps you going, but you never do it, you just use the future to escape the present" (Green 23). She believes that people use the future as some kind of remedy, that it is easier to fantasize than to deal

with the tragedy of newness. The sad reality is that sometimes the things we dream about do not come true, or as John Green poetically puts it: "The world is not a wish-granting factory" (Green 182). As pessimistic as it may sound, not everyone's dreams come true. Alaska's answer to the question of getting out of the labyrinth was "straight and fast" (Green 63), literally meaning that she plans to commit suicide. As we approach the novel's end, Pudge realizes that the only way out of the labyrinth of suffering is to forgive, which, in a way, makes sense. We all have personal struggles with ourselves, but maybe, just maybe, we can be happy/happier once we have forgiven ourselves for being weird and different, or for hurting someone, for not liking our parents, or for harming ourselves. Maybe once we have forgiven others for breaking our hearts, disappointing us or just simply leaving, maybe then we can finally get out of the labyrinth of suffering, no matter what that labyrinth represents. Much like in the novel, in real life it also takes a lot of soul-searching, self-love, and courage to forgive both yourself and others. In the novel, John Green offers a few possible interpretations of the labyrinth. The labyrinth might also be perceived as the state of mind. In the case of Alaska, her choice was suicide because she perceived death as the only way out of the labyrinth, so no matter what, she could not see the labyrinth like Pudge, or like someone else did, because she was suffering deeply and hence saw no other option.

The concept of the labyrinth and the great perhaps are intricately connected. It is possible that by finding our great perhaps we can get out of the labyrinth and that the great perhaps is something different for everyone, something that drives us either deeper into the labyrinth or out of it. Maybe Alaska's was to feel happy and not to be depressed, but after she saw she could not achieve that, she decided to find her peace in death. It is oftentimes believed that suicide is an act of cowardice but it takes a lot of courage to stop yourself from being, to end yourself, especially when you have no idea what awaits you. And while everyone fears death greatly, how can it be an act of cowardice to kill oneself?

Looking for Alaska teaches us how to cope with the loss of our loved ones and how to forgive ourselves and others. The grief caused by Alaska's death changes Pudge and, according to Barb Dean, by investigating Alaska's death and the concept of the labyrinth of suffering, he experiences his "rite of passage" (31) and learns more about himself. Although *Looking for Alaska* may seem like a novel dealing only with death and loss, the theme of hope plays a major role in the novel. This is proven by the fact that Pudge finds the way out of the labyrinth through forgiveness and coping with heart-break and sorrow, even after the girl who changed his life, who changed him, ended her life and left him. Miles's fas-

cination with Alaska and his love for her is transparently illustrated in the following quote:

> I wanted so badly to lie down next to her on the couch, to wrap my arms around her and sleep. Not fuck, like in those movies. Not even have sex. Just sleep together in the most innocent sense of the phrase. But I lacked the courage and she had a boyfriend and I was gawky and she was gorgeous and I was hopelessly boring and she was endlessly fascinating. So I walked back to my room and collapsed on the bottom bunk, thinking that if people were rain, I was drizzle and she was hurricane. (Green 36)

Alaska's death, like a hurricane, caused a lot of damage. Even so, Pudge managed to find meaning in her death and not to lose hope.

Looking for Alaska is a novel worth reading because it is honest and mature. It will make you cry, laugh, fall in love with the characters, but it will also make you realize how important friends are and how profound an impact other people can have on your life. It will, among other things, show you that there is always hope and that you should, no matter what, fight your way out of your labyrinth of suffering.

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Bridget Jones's Diary and Woman's Self-Definition

Tea Grgurić

Bridget Jones's Diary is a novel by Helen Fielding, which is considered to be the beginning of the so-called chick lit. Reading the novel, we meet Bridget Jones, a thirty-something-year-old woman, single, working and living in the UK's capital. She is caught between her mother who believes Bridget will never get married (which does not stop her from trying to find her a husband at any occasion possible), her Singleton friends who are all convinced they will die alone, and her married friends who just make her feel bad about not being in a serious, committed relationship. It should also not be forgotten that even though she insists on being able to live a normal single woman's life, she does seek companionship, love, and tenderness. Bridget is, in a way, a big part of all of us, and by reading the novel, we all find ourselves thinking "I am Bridget Jones!." So, the aim of this paper is to explore the ways Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* approaches woman's self-definition and to connect it to the world we live in.

According to an unofficial definition, self-defining is "the process of knowing, understanding, appreciating, accepting and loving who you are as a unique, special individual along with a posture of resistance against those forces that threaten your identity" (Coleman), which is a process we see a lot of in the novel. Bridget is a self-proclaimed feminist, but she is having a lot of problems with following feminist postulates in her day-to-day life because of which she would not probably be considered a true feminist in today's world. Pulp feminism is something that would suit Bridget Jones better; it is a phenomenon that has emerged as a response to women's rather conflicting and confusing relationship with feminism. Pulp feminism appears to grant women liberation and rebellion by allowing them to lodge open complaints regarding restrictive patriarchal gender constructs (Lyons 11). Even at the beginning of the novel, we can see that Bridget is really being hard on herself. Her New Year's resolutions show us that she does not really think highly of herself, and even though some resolutions are good for her, e.g. to stop smoking or wasting money, most of the others, while not necessarily bad for her completely, are done for the wrong reasons. For example, she decides to stop buying exotic underwear because she is single and no one will see it while she forgets that she, as a feminist, should be buying the underwear for herself; and of course, she decides not to sulk about having no boyfriend but to develop inner poise and authority and sense of self as woman of substance, complete without boyfriend, as best way to obtain boyfriend (Field-

ing 10), which is so obviously wrong that it makes hardly any sense by any law of psychology or even basic logics.

By reading the novel, we learn that even though Bridget insists on not depending on men, her diary is mostly a commentary on her relationships with either Daniel Cleaver or Mark Darcy. What Bridget is doing wrong is that she is trying too hard to change herself, without accepting barely any of her traits, leading herself into a non-stopping misery. She concentrates only on the bad aspects of her life and the situations that make her unhappy while forgetting that she is the one insisting that things should go only the way she imagined them to go. For example, when Daniel announces his engagement, she gets upset and considers a facelift (!), while forgetting he has all of the characteristics of a man she had already decided she will never date: workaholic, commitment phobic, person with a girlfriend, misogynist, megalomaniac, chauvinist, emotional fuckwit, and pervert.

Nevertheless, even though Bridget does not fit into the definition of a perfect feminist, nor does she succeed in accepting herself in a manner that should be a sign of a successful self-defining experiment that she does on herself, her character is loved all around the world. And why is that so? Because, of course, we all do that. We all try to make ourselves seem better than we are, we all try to act very confidently (even if we feel as if we are going to faint), we try to look our best, we compare ourselves to others, and all of us do change, at least a little bit, because of our romantic interests. Of course, there are things we should try to improve, maybe widen our horizons, quit our bad habits, move on from lousy jobs and relationships, be more kind to the people around us, but at the end of the day, we are who we are. It is in human nature to always try and improve, we all want to be the best version of ourselves, but some things we just cannot change and, in a way, that is how it should be, otherwise we would all be the same.

In conclusion, Bridget is both a feminist and she succeeds in defining herself. Maybe she did not follow her own rules for living, maybe she did fall and fail on many occasions, but she succeeds. If you look at feminism as allowing women to be whatever they want to be, no matter whether it is being a successful businesswoman, a ground-breaking scientist or a housewife; and if women support other women in doing so much as fulfilling their dreams, maybe they (we) would start to be each other's support at last. Bridget got what she wanted the most. She quit her lousy job, she somewhat improved her relationship with her mother, and she finally started a normal, healthy relationship, and in the end, realized that she has had an excellent year's progress. It is all that mattered to her and she did, after all, succeed. In the end, acquiring the things in life that matter to us

and being happy and content is maybe a very simple way of living one's life, but it is the only thing that matters when we are old. We will all have Daniel Cleavers in our lives, we will all at one point of our lives be miserable and unfulfilled, and all of us will have problems at our workplace, with our parents and friends, all of us will think of ourselves as imperfect and full of flaws, but if and when we manage to get through all of that with our head up and our conscious clear, we will win. Society may not approve, but society is not living our lives. We are.

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The Perpetuation of Gender Stereotypes in Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*

Andrej Labudić

Throughout history, there were always groups who were subordinate to those that held positions of power. These marginalized groups were determined by various social factors, such as religion, ethnicity, social income, and finally gender. Representing a marginalized group as a whole, women had the misfortune to be in such an undesirable position in most civilizations and throughout a vast period of time. After centuries of silence, the feminist movement, the social movement fighting for the equality of genders, started to question established gender stereotypes attached to women and eventually achieved significant results. Gender stereotypes represented one of the main barriers to feminism, because they were deeply ingrained in society. One of the reasons stereotypes held this firm position, alongside politics, power relations, and culture, was the influence of contemporary works of fiction, which failed to challenge them and even corroborated them. These works perpetuated conservative beliefs and acted as opposition to other works of fiction that tried to show that gender inequality was not an inherent feature of society. Although the 21st century represents the time of relative gender equality, at least in the Western world, gender stereotypes are still widespread phenomena of our society. The thesis of this paper is that Helen Fielding, in her novel *Bridget Jones's Diary*, although probably unintentionally, corroborates various gender stereotypes, which makes her work a novel of female disempowerment rather than female empowerment.

One of the main arguments that speaks in favor of the thesis is the fact that the whole novel with its plot revolves around the notion that Bridget, the protagonist, can feel satisfied with her life, as a fulfilled individual, only by having a boyfriend, a man beside her. Already at the start of the novel, there is a significant emphasis on this notion. Seven out of thirty-three New Year's resolutions are concerned with her relationship with men. Obviously not being satisfied with her love history, she decides not to "have crushes on men" and "sulk about having no boyfriend" (Fielding 2) in order to "form functional relationship with responsible adult" (Fielding 3). More importantly, also on the first page of the novel, Bridget announces that she will "develop inner poise and authority and sense of self as a woman of substance, complete *without* boyfriend, as best way to obtain boyfriend" (Fielding 2). If we could erase the last part of the sentence, this would be a completely feminist notion. Nevertheless, by adding it at the

end and thus giving it the main emphasis in the sentence, Bridget admits that "sense of self as a woman of substance" and "being complete *without* boyfriend" serves primarily as means of obtaining a man. In other words, her individuality is of less importance than her love status. Of course, there is a possibility of a different interpretation, which would suggest that "obtaining a boyfriend" is only a consequence of her achieved completeness, but this seems unlikely due to the already mentioned sentence structure. Moreover, the last entry in the diary and the summary, serving as a conclusion, also suggest the importance of men for the overall success in the whole last year of Bridget's life. In the last entry, Bridget concludes that she has "finally realized the secret of happiness with men" (Fielding 307), now being able not only to obtain one, but also to keep him. In the summary, Bridget notes "Number of New Year Resolutions kept 1" and adds that this is "an excellent year's progress" (Fielding 310). Although she does not explicitly point out any resolution, the mention of "Nice boyfriends 1" (Fielding 310) just above it, suggests that the resolution kept is about her newly acquired boyfriend. Although she failed to achieve all the other resolutions – finding "new job with potential," becoming a responsible adult, more "confident" and "assertive" (Fielding 3), acquiring a healthier lifestyle – the mere fact that she now has a boyfriend makes her feel satisfied with the progress of the whole year. This confirms the notion that her happiness is almost exclusively dependent on having or not having a man.

Furthermore, besides the one that claims that women are dependent on men, some other gender stereotypes have a very prominent position in the novel. Firstly, there is a notion that women are obsessed with their weight. At the start of every entry, Bridget lists, among other parameters, her current weight, which has a significant impact on her self-confidence, and she also counts calories each day. By putting it at the first place in the entry, Fielding adds unnecessary weight to it. Moreover, various self-comments that are often attached to these numbers are examples of exaggeration of its importance. For example, she comments her weight as "terrifying slide into obesity – why? why?" (Fielding 17). Secondly, gender stereotype that says that women are obsessed with clothes is also clearly exemplified in the novel. Bridget often has major dilemmas when it comes to what to wear and spends a significant amount of time thinking about it. From 8.35 a.m. to 9.10 a.m. she dismissed "vast white cotton" pants, which were "too unattractive to contemplate, even for work," unsuitably small black lacy pair," which was "prickly but better than giant Mummy-pant horror," three pieces of "black opaque tights," one being "shrunk," other two having a "hole on back of leg" and a "hole only in toe" (Fielding 92). At the end, she finally chose to wear "the last pair of black opaque tights twisted into rope-like object" (Fielding 92).

Thirdly, Bridget is portrayed as being obsessed with her looks in general and as a woman who lacks self-confidence. This lack of self-confidence is a result of considering herself being "so unattractive" that "even a man who wears bumblebee socks thinks" she is "horrible" (Fielding 16). She falls in "unattractiveness crisis" asking herself "what's wrong with me?" (Fielding 27).

In conclusion, Helen Fielding presented Bridget Jones as a weak female character who is not able to achieve her happiness without the recognition from the outside world. By paying so much attention to her weight, her choice of clothes, her attractiveness, Bridget strives to complete the main goal of her life – finding a man. She seems unable to feel contented simply by developing her inner character and personality. By introducing all the enlisted stereotypes, Fielding portrays a character that cannot be a representative of an independent self-contained woman, but rather a prototypical attention seeker dependent on the perception and validation from others. From this perspective, it is hard to consider this novel as an example of female empowerment but rather as something completely opposite.

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The Influence of Mass Media and Fashion Industry on Bridget's View of a Woman in Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*

Veronika Petanjak

Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* is a worldwide bestseller published in 1996. The novel follows the life of the protagonist Bridget Jones through her diary entries. Her heart-to-heart entries about her family, work, friends, and love life show her struggling efforts to be a successful woman and to find a boyfriend. Her views on life are influenced by the world's idea of a perfect woman. This paper's focus will be on showing how mass media and the fashion industry alter Bridget's view of how a woman should look like and what she should strive for.

In the first place, fashion plays a huge role in Bridget's life. The fashion industry influences her greatly as she is obsessed with shopping. She thus often writes about different fashion brands:

> It was a disaster of a trip, anyway. The answer to shopping, I know, is simply to buy a few choice items from Nicole Farhi, Whistles and Joseph but the prices so terrify me that I go scuttling back to Warehouse and Miss Selfridge, rejoicing in a host of dresses at £34.99, get them stuck on my head, then buy things from Marks & Spencer because I don't have to try them on, and at least I've bought something. (Fielding 122)

Bridget describes here her shopping experiences, which are usually negative. She always buys something but is never satisfied with the way she looks or she knows that she will never wear what she bought. One of the reasons of her negative shopping experiences is the influence of fashion magazines that present the ideal woman's body through very thin models. Bridget constantly struggles with her image and does not feel confident when surrounded with those perfect girls: "There are always girls who know that they look fantastic in everything and dance around beaming, swinging their hair and doing model poses in the mirror saying, 'Does it make me look fat?' to their obligatory obese friend, who looks like a water buffalo in everything" (Fielding 122).

Besides shopping, Bridget is further obsessed with weight and counting calories. Her every diary entry begins with her weight and the calorie number. At one point, she decides to stop but quickly changes her mind: "9st (oh sod it, cannot break weighing habit of lifetime, particularly after pregnancy trauma – will get therapy of some kind in future), alcohol units 6 (hurrah!), cigarettes 25, calories 1895, Instants 3" (Fielding 120). Weight is thus a big issue for her as

she is again influenced by women's magazines that present skinny models as the ideal to strive for:

> All women are supposed to be striving for the perfect body of a supermodel and Bridget is no different. She knows how many calories are in everything she eats and she counts them almost every day. She uses a lot of time calculating the nutritional value of the things she eats and she knows by hart how many calories are in everything she eats. (Hjaltadóttir 38)

All her life Bridget has been trying to achieve the perfect weight as she is convinced that the scale shows when you are the most beautiful. She believes losing weight equals getting prettier. When she reaches her "ideal" weight, Bridget is overjoyed: "Today is a historic and joyous day. After eighteen years of trying to get down to 8st 7 I have finally achieved it. It is no trick of the scales, but confirmed by jeans. I am thin" (Fielding 105). Her joy, however, is short-lived because her friends do not find her new-achieved looks pretty at all. Realizing that her friends might be right shattered Bridget's dream of ideal body weight and proportions:

> Now I feel empty and bewildered – as if a rug has been pulled from under my feet. Eighteen years – wasted. Eighteen years of calorie- and fat-unit-based arithmetic. Eighteen years of buying long shirts and sweaters and leaving the room backwards in intimate situations to hide my bottom. Millions of cheesecakes and tiramisus, tens of millions of Emmenthal slices left uneaten. Eighteen years of struggle, sacrifice and endeavour – for what? Eighteen years and the result is 'tired and flat.' I feel like a scientist who discovers that his life's work has been a total mistake. (Fielding 107)

Finally, Bridget is convinced she should strive towards being an ideal woman even though she knows that she is not ideal: "Wise people will say Daniel should like me just as I am, but I am a child of *Cosmopolitan* culture, have been traumatized by super-models and too many quizzes and know that neither my personality nor my body is up to it if left to its own devices" (Fielding 59). The "ideal" woman according to Bridget is "someone that is thin, well groomed, has a career and a boyfriend (if not a husband). Bridget wants to be the 'ideal' women and she puts in a lot of effort in to taming her appearances and personality to become more like 'her'" (Hjaltadóttir 36). In addition, she feels pressure to find a boyfriend because she should not be alone at her age. Her mother is only amplifying that pressure because she is always trying to set Bridget up with someone: "They kept making me walk round with trays of gherkins and glasses of cream sherry in a desperate bid to throw me into Mark Darcy's path yet again" (Fielding 15).

In conclusion, Bridget Jones is immensely influenced by mass media and fashion industry. Both left a mark on how Bridget sees herself. Fashion is important to her because she is taught that she must look her best. Yet, exactly because of fashion industry, Bridget sees herself in a negative way, which only strengthens her desire to lose weight according to diet plans she finds in women's magazines. And all in an attempt to become an ideal woman as media and fashion portray her.

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Bridget Jones's Struggle with the Imposed Body Image in Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*

Katarina Stojković

Drawing on Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, modern day chick-lit *Bridget Jones's Diary* by Helen Fielding captures the clumsy romance adventures as well as the path to self-discovery and self-acceptance. The heroine, Bridget Jones, is not one to mince words even if they come out silly and not thought through. Whether it is a magazine that prescribes how to achieve the perfect body or her friends telling her how to behave in a relationship, Bridget Jones sets contradictory expectations reinforced by the media she consumes. On the one hand, she wants to be a successful, independent woman and, on the other, she wants to find her Prince Charming whom she can rely on. Her path to achieve the middle ground between set expectations is burdened by her struggle to accept her body and not see it as an obstacle to success. The aim of this paper is to show how imposed body image and body image struggle cloud Bridget's judgment by making her believe that perfect weight equals perfect life. Moreover, the paper will elaborate on Bridget's path to self-definition and self-acceptance catalyzed by romantic interests.

The wills and will nots at the beginning of Bridget's diary give an introduction to her physical and mental state, which can be described as expectations versus reality. Moreover, diary entries begin with counting the alcohol units drunk, cigarettes smoked, and calories consumed. These three seemingly irrelevant details are the culprits of Bridget's self-loathing. It is their repetitious occurrence that unveils Bridget's true state of mind that differs depending on how satisfied she is with their amounts. As many women have, Bridget found herself disabled by the expectations of society. Even though she has friends who encourage her to pursue her career regardless of success in the field of love, she is still deeply influenced by the body image goals imposed through all media outlets. She even calls herself "a child of Cosmopolitan culture" (Fielding 59) and considers herself to be "traumatized by super-models" (Fielding 59). On several accounts, Bridget has had sparks of motivation and positive reinforcement, but a sudden mishap in her professional or love life overwhelms any progress she has made. As an illustration, when she got the new job as a reporter and had a fireman's pole accident, all the enthusiasm and self-appreciation dissipated. Again, self-loathing and emotional negativity ensued, or as put by Bridget: "Oh God, I'm so depressed. I thought I'd found something I was good at for once and now it's all

ruined, and on top of everything else it is the horrible ruby wedding party on Saturday and I have nothing to wear. I'm no good at anything. Not men. Not social skills. Not work. Nothing" (Fielding 224). Someone as emotionally fragile as Bridget is believed to portray an anti-feminist character, as she embodies the everyday struggles of the less confident, self-deprecating women who fight not only with the society's image of themselves, but also with their own. Yet, is the feminist image of success and equality not just a fairy tale told to little girls? It appears that Bridget is a product of such a fairy tale believing that in order to succeed she must comply to a checklist prescribed by the society. Instead of empowering and encouraging her future undertakings, these stories create burdens and obstacles, making her believe that she cannot have one (career) without the other (love).

The form of a diary is much like an autobiography and it provides an outlet for Bridget to express her inner thoughts and frustrations. By recapitulating the events once more, Bridget unveils different layers of her subconsciousness best seen when interpreting past actions. Through writing, she gets to compare what was expected with what actually happened, providing room for self-reflection and self-criticism (Marsh 54). People need support systems whether from their family, friends, or love interests. Bridget grew up next to a frivolous mother who appears to resent her life choices. With no real role model in her family, she turns to actual models in women's magazines for inspiration. Even when she sees or hears from her mother, she speaks disparagingly of Bridget. As an illustration, during a phone call, her mother reflects upon the turkey curry buffet and explains how Mark Darcy would have had more interest if she had been more bright and cheerful rather than "looking like someone from Auschwitz" (Fielding 131). Such tough, rude love is not what Bridget needs from her mother as she has already had enough toughness and rudeness in other aspects of her life. Moreover, her mother's love escapade with another man only reinforced her shaky attitude towards love and marriage. Her mother is an example of a woman who led a traditional life having little to no time for herself. Later, she began to resent her close ones as if they are the ones guilty for the way she has lead her life. The suppression of her personal desires led to the said incident and opened a discussion whether women should ever get married. This debate occurs constantly in Bridget's mind and

> [w]hile the novel frequently challenges Bridget's sense that getting married is a panacea against life's insecurity, she nevertheless repeatedly, if irreverently, constructs herself in opposition to her married friends, family, and acquaintances, calling them the "smug marrieds" (as opposed to her, the "singleton"). This tendency to crave marriage and couplehood, even while being faced repeatedly with

> its frustrations and disappoint (and even while poking fun at oneself for romanticizing them at all), captures the spirit of the ironic postfeminist subjectivity that is indebted to, and often draws a certain strength from, the concept of marriage envy. (Leonard 58-59)

Once she is rid of a bad relationship and gains some self-confidence, Bridget happily adopts the title of the "singleton." On the other hand, when she finds herself surrounded by happily married, successful couples who are expecting, she wakes up and smells the coffee.

While being in a relationship with Daniel Cleaver, her guilty pleasure, Bridget is found to be motivated by her sexual desires. Yet, even they are diminished once she is stood up or mocked by Daniel himself. There is a sarcastic undertone to many things he said to Bridget like "telling [her that] nobody wants legs like a stick insect. They want a bottom they can park a bike in and balance a pint of beer on" (Fielding 159). As if to torment herself, she continues an unhealthy relationship that had no future from the start. Yet, this period of Bridget's life sheds some light on her female duties to keep her body ready for a "shag." As an example, Bridget provides an interesting metaphor as she lists all the things she "has" to do before a date:

> Completely exhausted by entire day of date-preparation. Being a woman is worse than being a farmer there is so much harvesting and crop spraying to be done: legs to be waxed, underarms shaved, eyebrows plucked, feet pumiced, skin exfoliated and moisturized, spots cleansed, roots dyed, eyelashes tinted, nails filed, cellulite massaged, stomach muscles exercised. The whole performance is so highly tuned you only need to neglect it for a few days for the whole thing to go to seed . . . Ugh, ugh. Is it any wonder girls have no confidence? (Fielding 30)

While many women farm their bodies regardless of their relationship status, it is apparent that for Bridget, a relationship is a requirement if she wants to take care of herself. Yet then again, once she breaks up and self-reflects, she once again finds herself in need of selfcare. The question is why, even when contradictions overlap, her body does not get the attention it requires. All in all, the idea that her body image is affected by those imposed in magazines falls short. Indeed, she feels debilitated by her weight, but such magazines also promote healthy lifestyle that certainly does not include alcohol and cigarettes. To conclude, Bridget is deflecting the fact that her lifestyle is unhealthy and that change must ensue, although the relationship with Mark Darcy only reinforced her beliefs that her ways are right. It is then that Bridget realises that perfect weight does not equal perfect life. While it is true when she says that underneath our clothes our body is covered in scales (Fielding 40), suggesting healthy lifestyle is not fat shaming. While Bridget Jones's character has been a beacon for thirty-something-year-old

women, she should not be read as a character that shows how all things end well. She should be judged for the errors of her ways and the ignorance in light of reality. Moreover, she should encourage women to stand up for themselves, avoid self-pity, and realize that the only person that can change one's life is oneself. Her story is not one of body shame, but one of body positivity and acceptance.

In brief, Bridget is a woman of many excuses, empty words, and few actions. By contradicting herself, she constantly spirals into a bad place. Even when she finally finds happiness, has somewhat successful career, and a promising love interest, it feels as if she did not find closure yet. She is a relatable character from several points of view but should not be considered a role model. Instead, one should learn from her mistakes, adopt a healthy way of living that has nothing to do with weight, and not prioritize a relationship over career if such relationship has no prospects in the future. Only then can one lead a self-actualized life and reach one's full potential.

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The Female Characters in Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* as Feminists and Empowered Women

Ana Vukelić

Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* inaugurated the genre of chick-lit, a type of contemporary romance focusing on both career and relationship issues its heroines experience and addressing, between the lines, the possibility of female power in the contemporary world. The main goal of this paper is thus to analyze the female characters in Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* in terms of their views on life and acts of feminism in order to see if they can truly be regarded as feminist characters or empowered women and whether this novel can be seen as a novel of female empowerment.

There are quite a few female characters in the novel, starting with the titular character Bridget Jones. Bridget is a typical single woman in her thirties, who, seeing some of her peers already married and with children, becomes worried about growing old alone. Throughout the novel, she is switching between these two attitudes: wanting to find her future husband and convincing herself that she does not need a man to be happy. Society, and especially her family and relatives, has a big influence on her view that she should be in a stable relationship at her age – they constantly put pressure on her by asking her about her love life. At the same time, Bridget strives towards feminist ideals, trying to be a feminist, but mostly at times when she is trying to make herself feel better after a date or a relationship gone bad: "Daniel will be back in the office today. I shall be poised and cool and remember that I am a woman of substance and do not need men in order to be complete, especially not him" (Fielding 43). Bridget has her insecurities, makes many mistakes, is obsessed with her weight and sometimes lacks self-confidence, but she is an empowered woman as she has a career and is an independent woman.

Another female character that strives towards feminist ideals is Bridget's friend Sharon. Sharon is much more outspoken than Bridget about the topic of feminism and is trying to live her life according to what she considers to be the feminist ideal. She is very critical towards men and often complains about them. Sharon has also very high expectations of feminism in future:

> In ten years ahead the same will come to pass with feminism. There won't be any men leaving their families and post-menopausal wives for young mistresses, or trying to chat women up by showing off in a patronizing way about all the other women without any niceness or commitment, because the young mistress

> and women will just turn and tell them to sod off and men won't get any sex or any women unless they learn how to behave properly instead of cluttering up the sea-bed of women with their SHITTY, SMUG, SELF-INDULGENT, BAHAVIOUR! (Fielding 126-27)

Giving speeches and observations like the one above is something Sharon does throughout the novel, giving advice to her friends about their relationships with men, trying to make them feel more confident and good about themselves, and not letting men treat them as if they are below them. This characteristic is what makes Sharon an empowered woman.

Bridget's mother Pam can also be viewed as an empowered woman. Already at the beginning of the novel, she announces that she is tired of the role of mother and housewife and decides to leave her husband and live her life more freely, worrying about herself and her own happiness for a change:

> Darling, it's merely a question of realizing, when your father retired, that I had spent thirty-five years without a break running his home and bringing up his children –" . . . – and that as far as he was concerned his lifetime's work was over and mine was still carrying on, which is exactly how I used to feel when you were little and it got to the weekends. You only get one life. I've just made a decision to change things a bit and spend what's left of mine looking after me for a change. (Fielding 53-54)

It cannot be said for certain whether this is the true reason for Pam leaving her husband or if she leaves him because she met Julio. Nevertheless, despite the fact that some of her actions are not really feminist, she can still be regarded as an empowered woman by the mere fact that she decides to take control of her own life and do whatever she wants, even if it includes doing some rather crazy things along the way.

To conclude, *Bridget Jones's Diary* can be seen as an example of a postfeminist novel. Postfeminism is a period when equality between the sexes has mostly already been achieved, which may suggest that the female characters in this novel do not need to be more feminist than they already are because there are almost no rights left to fight for, except for one major issue – sexism towards women, which is still present in everyday life. Sexism is also present in the novel and can mostly be seen in some of Daniel's comments. Even though the female characters in this novel may be more or less successful as feminists, they are all, at least to an extent, empowered women – they are independent, have their own careers, and make their own decisions. They make mistakes but they get up, which is something women can relate to when reading this novel. By making the

main character an imperfect, average woman with insecurities, Fielding sends the message that women do not have to be perfect but confident.

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MYSTERY

CHAPTER 4: **MYSTERY**

What much of mystery and detective fiction addresses, despite the period in which it is written or set, is "corruption, a canker spreading through individuals, families, and institutions" (Rollyson xx) in the form of crime. It, however, reassures the reader that this corruption is not a part of the social fabric but the doing of a corrupt individual. Even though marginalized at first, from the late 1960s onwards mystery and detective fiction were no longer regarded as "mere entertainment or as an inferior branch of literature" (Rollyson xvii). For instance, Raymond Chandler, a mystery fiction writer whose novels and short stories are now required reading in American schools, first wrote Hollywood scripts and published stories in pulp fiction magazines in the 1930s and 1940s (Rollyson xvii). Part of the reason even the best mystery and detective fiction was not critically acclaimed was due to its popularity as literary criticism associated the most valued pieces of literature with smaller circles of more cultivated readers (Rollyson xvii).

Agatha Christie, though, has enjoyed a wider acclaim in literary circles. Through her numerous works, Christie made a great contribution to creating the classic detective formula, in which we encounter murder and many suspects out of whom the perpetrator is finally revealed and s/he either dies or goes to prison (Rollyson 320). She has inspired some of the contributors in this volume as well. In this chapter, Tihana Jelić thus looks at how Christie incorporates theatrical elements in her *Murder on the Orient Express* while Tomislav Romolić discusses the use of stereotypes, clichés, and stock images attributed to Americans and America in the same novel as Christie's plot and characterization device.

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Theatricality in Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*

Tihana Jelić

Agatha Christie is one of the most popular crime fiction writers and in a few of her novels, including *Murder on the Orient Express*, she uses the character of Hercule Poirot, a Belgian detective, as the protagonist. Although crime fiction novels are mostly written according to a formula, *Murder on the Orient Express* contains theatrical elements, which leave readers in suspense throughout the whole novel. The aim of this paper is to depict theatrical elements in *Murder on the Orient Express* expressed through the plot, language, and characters.

Firstly, *Murder on the Orient Express* leaves the reader in suspense until the very end, when it is revealed who the real perpetrator is. Yet, in *Murder on the Orient Express*, the perpetrators are, in fact, twelve people, almost all the people aboard the train, excluding Poirot, M. Bouc, Dr. Constantine, a few of the staff members, and, surprisingly, Sonia Armstrong's sister Helena. Being twelve in number, they replicate the number of the English jury, which is "composed of twelve people – there were twelve passengers – Ratchett was stabbed twelve times" (Christie 338). Moreover, although they are, as M. Bouc asserts, "of all classes and nationalities" (Christie 38), it is later revealed that all passengers are connected by one goal – to pass their verdict on Ratchett, who is actually a murderer and kidnapper named Cassetti. Christie deceives the reader, revealing the characters' true identities and their connection towards the end of the novel, using the character of Hercule Poirot to deliver the truth. When revealing the true identity of the other passengers, Poirot often uses tag questions and yes-no questions, as he is already assured of the truth, and a similar question form can be found in many plays, especially in tragedies.

Furthermore, Mrs. Hubbard, actually the actress Linda Arden and the mother of the late Sonia Armstrong, behaves theatrically throughout the whole novel. When first seeing Ratchett, she says: "You know, I'm dead scared of that man . . . There's something *wrong* about that man" (Christie 22). As if she is playing one of her theatre roles, during the time of the crime, she acts distraught and hysterical after allegedly seeing a man in her cabin: "Then came voices – the conductor's, deferential, apologetic, and a woman's, insistent and voluble. Mrs. Hubbard" (Christie 54). Her theatrical behavior continues when being questioned by Poirot and she even mentions that her "sponge-bag was hanging on the door-handle" (Christie 135), dismissing the guilt from herself to appear innocent although she later discovers she made a mistake.

In addition, other characters play their roles as if they were in a theatre, trying to prove their innocence. They act according to their plan, which can represent a script. Most of them deny knowing about the Armstrong case and some of them even act offended when being questioned. Many of them try to deceive Poirot about their connection with the Armstrongs and they distance themselves from the United States. Yet, as Poirot concludes, "only in America . . . there might be a household composed of just such varied nationalities – an Italian chauffeur, an English governess, a Swedish nurse, a German lady's-maid, and so on" (Christie 332-33). After their carefully composed script falls apart and Poirot starts to reveal their true identities, they start telling the truth and, ultimately, confess planning the murder altogether.

During the interrogation, most of the passengers mention two people seen: a woman in a scarlet kimono with dragons on it and "a small dark man with a womanish voice" (Christie 213). Those two mysterious persons are later found out to be invented for the purpose of "the perfect crime" to bolster both the mysteriousness and theatricality in the novel. They are nowhere to be found in the train but later a scarlet kimono with dragons and Wagon Lit uniform eventually reappear. There are no footsteps in the snow and it is not known how the mysterious perpetrators got aboard the train. It seems as if those people simply vanished without a trace, which gives this train "stage-play" a supernatural, *deus ex machina*, touch and makes the reader/viewer curious about what will happen next.

To conclude, in Agatha Christie's novel *Murder on the Orient Express* theatricality is expressed through the plot, language, and especially through the characters and their own script used to dissuade Poirot that they are guilty. Their performance can be observed in their use of words and in dialogues between them and Hercule Poirot. Christie uses suspense to keep the reader alert and introduces an unlikely scenario, the one in which almost all the characters mentioned in the novel bear the guilt for the murder.

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The Portrayal of America in Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*

Tomislav Romolić

Murder on the Orient Express is one of the most famous works written by the British mystery writer Agatha Christie. The novel's protagonist is a Belgian detective and an ex-police officer Hercule Poirot, who can easily be compared to other famous fictional detectives, such as C. Auguste Dupin or Sherlock Holmes. Throughout the novel, Christie introduces a handful of characters traveling onboard the Orient Express, all having their own traits and personalities. More often than not, these characters showcase stereotypical behavior of various socio-economic groups and nationalities. It is even noted that the passengers are made up "of all classes, of all nationalities, of all ages" (Christie 38). One of the nationalities stereotypically portrayed in the novel are the Americans as well. While not obvious at first, Poirot later discovers that almost all the passengers have some sort of connection to the tragic Armstrong case that happened in the United States. Their connection to the Armstrong murder case was crucial for solving the murder of Lanfranco Cassetti aboard the train. The stereotypical portrayal of Americans and America and their relations toward others aboard the train will therefore be the key point of this essay.

Of all the passengers, only five are actually American – Samuel Ratchett, Mrs. Hubbard (whose real name is actually Linda Arden), Mr. Hardman, Hector MacQueen, and Antonio Foscarelli. Samuel Ratchett or Lanfranco Cassetti – the victim and the perpetrator – is the man who was involved in the kidnapping and murder of Daisy Armstrong but managed to escape the justice because of a legal technicality. Even though one could argue that Christie calls into question all judicial systems, Cassetti's case specifically criticizes the American law and judicial system as he was able to escape the American legal justice, largely due to his wealth and connections.

When it comes to other American characters, Hector MacQueen is Cassetti's secretary and the first American questioned by Poirot. While questioning him, Poirot finds out that Cassetti did not know any other languages. This could be interpreted as one of the first of many American stereotypical traits in the novel – their lack of willingness to learn foreign languages as they consider their mother tongue to be the world's language number one. There is then Mrs. Hubbard, one of the key characters of the entire novel, who is actually Linda Arden, the grandmother of the kidnapped and murdered Daisy Armstrong. Her char-

acter is again a walking American stereotype. Throughout the novel, she is almost always very loud and obnoxious. Her dislike of the European way of life and her boastfulness of American values reveal that she is an obvious stereotype of the upper class American woman. Her unfavorable attitude towards Europeans and "the East" in general is the first thing we hear upon her introduction in the novel. Her feeling of superiority over Europeans is shown when she says: "We've got to apply our Western ideals and teach the East to recognize them" (Christie 41). This kind of ignorant mentality is a classic stereotype Americans have of Europeans as the Americanization of European values has been a pervasive issue ever since World War One. Through the portrayal of Mrs. Hubbard, Christie perhaps wanted to express her thoughts on the American interwar culture, which during this period slowly started to pour into British culture, and to criticize the United States as an ignorant monoculture spreader.

Christie then introduces Cyrus Hardman. His fake identity as a travelling salesman is quickly debunked and he reveals his true identity – that of a detective hired by Cassetti to protect him. Described as large and flamboyant, his usage of American slang showcases his New York origin. Despite this, of all the Americans on the train, Hardman is perhaps less of a stereotype than the rest of them. Finally, there is Antonio Foscarelli, a naturalized Italian-American, who earns his living by working as a car salesman and an agent for Ford Motor Industries. Foscarelli might represent a caricature of the American Dream. He is a successful person and, like most Americans, he is loud and proud of being an American. In spite of his Americanness, a lot of his characteristics, however, boil down to his Italian heritage. For example, Mr. Bouc thinks of him as a possible perpetrator as "he is an Italian, and Italians use the knife! And they are great liars! I do not like Italians" (Christie 193). Bouc's depiction of Foscarelli as an unchanged Italian mafioso even though he is a naturalized American is a depiction of a stereotypical twentieth century American immigrant: despite his success in a foreign country, he is still judged by his heritage and not by his character and accomplishments.

The historical representation of the United States is also an important and unavoidable topic when it comes to evaluating Christie's illustration of the average American. During the interwar period, the United States continued to be a beacon of hope for many European emigrants. After the devastating World War One, many Europeans emigrated into the United States to find their place in the rising American economy, which came out mostly unscratched from the war. The stereotypical trait of economic immigration to the United States connects all the characters in the Daisy Armstrong case: they come from different parts of the world to find their American Dream in the United States and there is no coinci-

dence that an American kidnapping case involved so many diverse people. This also evokes the idea of the United States as the melting pot of many cultures, nationalities, ethnicities, races, and religions. Both stereotypical notions help Poirot to make connections among the passengers and solve the murder case.

Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express* is not only a detective novel but also an identity novel. It showcases the prejudices and judgements that everyone has. Agatha Christie realized that American culture was growing more and more universal and tried to stereotypically portray the average American in the way Europeans, or in her case the English, saw them. Because of this, we can say that the novel serves as a prime example of caricature portrayals and beliefs many hold towards different socio-economic groups and nationalities.

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HORROR

CHAPTER 5: **HORROR**

The genre of horror has had many contestants not only because of the genre's continuous evolving but also because of the "overlapping genre boundaries" (Spratford and Clausen 1). Horror has evolved from merely being an element in the work of science fiction or dark fantasy novels to its own genre. However, we still find horror fiction intertwined with fantasy and science fiction under the term speculative fiction, deuced by scholars to minimize its importance (Spratford and Clausen 1-2). Horror is also appealing to readers because it allows them "to face . . . [their] fears and defeat them, as well as provide[s] an escape from the horrors of real life" (Spratford and Clausen 2). It is also interesting to point out that "one of the most common errors that reader's advisors fall into when approaching horror readers is the misconception that horror is mostly a reading preference of teenage boys" (Spratford and Clausen 2) when, in reality, a large spectrum of readers regularly consumes horror novels.

Even though horror elements had previously been present in literature, the year of 1764 marks the birth of the horror genre when Horace Walpole published what is now considered the first Gothic novel – *The Castle of Otranto*. After 1764, a continuous stream of works characterized by "an emphasis on portraying the terrifying, a common insistence on archaic settings, a prominent use of the supernatural, the presence of highly stereotyped characters and the attempt to deploy and perfect techniques of literary suspense" (Spratford and Clausen 2) appeared. Some of the most prominent nineteenth century Gothic novel writers were John Polidori, Matthew Lewis, and Ann Radcliffe. In the early twentieth century, the most prominent horror writer was H. P. Lovecraft who almost completely disconnected himself from any human contact and only went outside "on warm summer nights under the cloak of darkness" (Spratford and Clausen 4). The 1970s inaugurated horror genre as we know it today. In 1974, Stephen King "made his debut with *Carrie* and with his many novels, short stories, nonfiction, and film versions he has thrilled audiences worldwide and become a household name" (Spratford and Clausen 6). Modern horror fiction has been greatly "influenced by the motion picture industry, to the extent that since the cinema's infancy, novels and films have shared themes and characters, producing a changed popular view of horror" (Spratford and Clausen 5).

The chapter on horror includes two essays. Helena Baotić's essay discusses the appeals of vampire fiction, one of the most popular horror fiction subgenres and virtually a publishing category in itself, by analyzing Richelle Mead's

Vampire Academy. Tihana Najdert's essay looks into toxic relationships in Stephen King's *Carrie* as a means of physical and mental destruction in the novel.

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In Defence of Popular Fiction: Why Should You Read the *Vampire Academy* Series?

Helena Baotić

In the last few decades, literary works of the popular fiction genre have become a dime a dozen. The market has become oversaturated with many titles – some good, some bad, some terrible. All of them follow the same formulas, their generic identities are always visible, there is no serious development of characters or plots, and they hold hardly any re-reading value. Yet still, people enjoy purchasing and reading these novels very much, maybe even more so than the high literature classics they were forced to read in school. Is therefore the constant trashing of popular fiction justified? Can some actually good titles worth reading be found there? The aim of this paper is to try to defend (and also, convince you to read) one such title – the *Vampire Academy* series.

Vampire Academy is a series of six novels by the American author Richelle Mead. It is a story about a seventeen/eighteen-year-old dhampir girl, Rose Hathaway, who is training to be the guardian of her best friend Lissa Dragomir, a Moroi vampire, with whom she has a one-sided psychic bond. While training at St. Vladimir's Academy, Rose finds herself caught in a forbidden romance with her instructor Dimitri Belikov, a fellow dhampir and another guardian of Lissa's, who teaches Rose how to fight Strigoi, the evil undead vampires who hunt Moroi. As it is obvious from that short summary, the series falls into the categories of young adult, fantasy, and romance, and it contains some elements of gothic horror. To some, this may just seem like another *Twilight*, or some other cheesy vampire romance story, but apart from the teen characters and, obviously, vampires, they are not similar, not even close.

What is likeable about the vampire lore in this series is that the author drew inspiration from Slavic vampire mythos, which is an unusual choice, since it is not presented in works of popular culture very often. Slavic mythology, in general, is quite underrated and underappreciated, and not very famous like Greek or Norse, for example. That is mainly because most of the old shrines and records were destroyed by invaders, and the foreign historians who wrote about the Slavs had different perspectives. In addition, the few records preserved are unorganized and give inconsistent and contradictory details, so in the end, there is still no complete and somewhat accurate book on the history of the Slavic religious beliefs and mythical figures.

Concerning vampires in the novel, three species are presented (with dhampirs being actually a hybrid species), albeit with some deviations from Slavic folklore. The Moroi are a race of peaceful, mortal vampires. Their ruler is a king or a queen, with many royal families holding high titles and positions in the vampire world. They can tolerate small amounts of sunlight, they have magical control over the elements, and they depend on drinking blood to survive. Dhampirs act as their guardians. As mentioned before, they are hybrids, meaning that they have one parent who is a vampire (Moroi) and the other is a human (or a female dhampir). They possess a vampire's strength, stamina, and reflexes; however, they do not need to drink blood and they can stay in the sunlight for as long as they want. Fit, intensely trained, lethal and ready to kill at any sign of danger, dhampirs employ their skills to protect Moroi from the much more powerful Strigoi – the evil vampires who prey upon them. Both dhampirs and Moroi can become Strigoi, either voluntarily or if they are bitten by one. Immortal, vicious, and extremely difficult to kill, Strigoi present a threat to the otherwise peaceful magical world, and other than romance, this conflict between the forces of good and evil is what drives the plot.

The vampire genre is ever-evolving. It has gone from telling tales of horrifying creatures of the night who sleep in coffins, turn to bats, and prey upon the blood of innocent maidens, to those of meek, tragic, misunderstood vampires who avoid human territories, but ironically, crave that forbidden fruit that is a human woman and despite their best efforts, fall in love with her. Many fans of the vampire genre are complaining about this course the genre has taken, because most of the vampire stories are now cheap and "spicy" romances with watered down versions of vampires, so they feel that the genre is losing those elements that made it good in the first place – the feeling of terror and dread. Mead, however, has decided to go back to the roots and bring back those "old-school" vampires, the ones that are actually threatening and deadly. Also, Mead's series is a good way to promote Slavic mythology, so some readers may become interested to learn more about it, expand their knowledge on vampires, and find out how different nations of the world see and explain these supernatural beings.

Apart from the bloodthirsty killer vampires, contributing to the Gothic feel is the atmosphere of the Academy's campus, whose buildings are described as "sprawling and gothic," having "elaborate, almost churchlike architecture, with high peaks and stone carvings" and yards decorated with "stone paths and enormous, century-old trees" (Mead 13). Moreover, the Academy itself is located in an equally unsettling and sublime area, "miles away from any real city," in a place where "overgrown forests ringed the perimeters . . . and during the day, you

could see mountains rising up in the distance" (Mead 14). This mood really helps the readers get immersed in the fantasy setting and feel scared and isolated.

Rose, the main character of the novel, is a strong female character, which is a characteristic of the romance genre heroine. Sarcastic, quick-witted, and stubborn, but also caring, gentle and loyal to her friends, she does her best to protect her friend Lissa and often knowingly puts herself in danger in order to save her or their friends when in trouble. Her job as a guardian is something sacred and she never questions or regrets her life choices: "Between her example and my life at the Academy, I believed wholeheartedly that it was a dhampir's job to protect Moroi. It was part of our heritage, *and* it was the only way we'd keep going. It was that simple" (Mead 51). As this is a series with a teenage protagonist, it is obvious that the story suffers from typical teenage drama and issues usually portrayed in Young Adult novels. Rose experiences personal growth and strives for independence, her relationship with her estranged mother is strained, she discovers her sexuality, experiences traumatic deaths of her friends, and so on. The "will-they, won't-they" relationship between her and Dimitri has all the tropes of romance stories: their first meeting is marked by the initial dislike of each other (or by Rose's dislike of Dimitri, at least). As they spend time together training, they grow to respect each other and eventually fall in love. Yet, Dimitri feels some reservations about officially dating Rose, because he is several years older than her and he fears it might interfere with his guardian duties, meaning that in the event of an attack, he would jump in to save her rather than Lissa. Of course, after going through many ordeals and the point of ritual death, they finally get together in the last volume, securing a happily-ever-after ending and providing satisfaction for the readers.

The supporting characters are interesting as well, all of them deal with their own issues and have their own stories to tell. They do not feel as merely "background" or "filler" characters, they are realistic and so appealing that they could get their own separate novels. The cliff-hanger endings can leave the readers somewhat frustrated (but then again, that is probably how they are supposed to make us feel), but they also make the readers look forward to the sequels. The only objection to the series is the fact that there is no overarching mastermind villain to connect the story in all six novels, like, for example, Rowling did with Voldemort in the *Harry Potter* series. Sure, the Strigoi and their more prominent leaders (and the occasional Moroi gone rogue) are considered villains and they do appear in all the titles, but it would have been more intriguing if there was some unexpected, unsuspecting character who turned out to be the villain all along. Nevertheless, that is only a small objection to an otherwise great series.

To conclude, I am not sure if this will be enough to convince anybody to read this series, since I have slightly veered off the topic and touched only upon a few highlights of the story, and many have already outgrown teenage-oriented novels and most likely do not read them anymore, but personally, I really enjoyed reading this series. I look forward to the days when I will have the time to read them all over again. Who knows, maybe now that I am older, I will have a new perspective on them and appreciate them for different reasons than I did back when I first read them.

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Toxic Relationships as the Source of Destruction in Stephen King's *Carrie*

Tihana Najdert

The novel is abundant with graphic descriptions of violence and the notion of psi powers being the source of all the evil, but upon closer inspection, the concern with social issues comes to prominence. Nearly every relationship in the novel exhibits signs of toxicity, with the exemption of the short interaction between the main protagonist, Carrieta White (Carrie from now on) and her prom date, Tommy Ross. The relationship between Carrie and her mother Margaret is beyond unhealthy, with Margaret's behavior barely resembling that of a mother. Carrie is a victim of her mother's religious fundamentalist beliefs, which directly causes her to be alienated and scrutinized by society on a daily basis. She wishes to discover herself outside the strict rules of behavior set by her mother, and with the onset of her menstruation gets the much needed courage to embark on a journey to discover her identity. Similarly, Susan Snell dreads the future in which she is a docile housewife, and finds a way out through manipulation of her boyfriend Tommy, which marks the second toxic relationship. Chris Hargensen and Billy Nolan are no exception to this occurrence; their turbulent relationship is blighted with recurring violence, usually followed by a passionate tryst. All these relationships impact Carrie, directly or indirectly, and cause a great turmoil in her already hectic life. The aim of this paper is thus to analyse the afore-mentioned relationships in detail to see how they impact Carrie and contribute to the destructive atmosphere of the novel.

The main culprit for discontent in Carrie's life is her mother Margaret whose "brutal oppression of her daughter strips Carrie of identity" (Dymond 4). Carrie has a "hate-love-dread feeling" (King 25) upon seeing her house, which is applicable to her feelings towards Margaret. Throughout the novel, she repeats the mantra that "only Momma was good" (King 42) and right and appears to have been brainwashed/bullied into thinking that everybody wants to do her harm, apart from her. Margaret's crimes range from mild physical to severe psychological; she forbids her to swim or shower with other girls in order not to get lustful thoughts, she often punishes her by confining her into a closet and not letting her out for hours, to the point where she "once fainted from the lack of food and the smell of her own waste" (King 57). Margaret is completely unsupportive of her daughter and upon hearing that she had been invited to prom silences her by throwing tea in her face. She is the main cause of Carrie's isolation and aliena-

tion, from the outdated clothes she forces her to wear to being scornful towards any social interaction she establishes. Once Carrie finally breaks off her mother's constraints (thanks to the newfound powers), Margaret is unable to control her, so she resorts to self-harm in order to induce a feeling of guilt in her daughter. Carrie is deeply affected by her mother's self-destructive behavior and she usually tiptoes around her; she is even afraid to move around the house and touch anything because "Momma's eyes were sharp" (King 39). There is no authority higher than Margaret's, "Momma was the minister, Carrie the congregation" (King 52). Margaret's behavior is in the end projected on Carrie and the victim becomes the perpetrator. She even adopts one of Momma's "pet phrases" – "It was time to teach them a lesson" (King 184). Margaret's influence on Carrie is so strong that even on the brink of death, she does not call out for God; instead, her last words are "momma i'm sorry" (King 230).

The second toxic relationship is that of Sue Snell and Tommy Ross. Sue Snell does not want to have an ordinary life and her "vision of becoming an unwitting slave to her husband, house, and children concludes in undeniable menace" (Dymond 18). She does not want to be subdued into a boring family life so she decides to take control and becomes the dominant party in her relationship with Tommy. Sue is the one pulling all the strings in their relationship, with Tommy abiding to her wishes blindly. She feels guilty for taking part in the bullying of Carrie White but sends Tommy in her stead to do the deed of redemption, instead of stepping up herself. She exhibits dominance over Tommy by making him take Carrie to the prom and stating that he did it "because he loved me and because it was what I wanted" (King 83). Upon realizing that she does not want to become a Stepford wife, she suddenly feels the need for being superior; when Tommy gives her advice about the situation with Carrie, she retaliates with "when did you start making all these big moral decisions . . . after you started fucking me?" (King 47). She is evidently passive aggressive and condescending towards Tommy, which makes their seemingly perfect relationship toxic.

Lastly, there are Chris Hargensen and Billy Nolan. Their relationship is on par with Margaret's behavior, the couple constantly being involved in some sort of bickering and physical violence. In the beginning, it seems that Chris is the one manipulating Billy who says that "he would have done murder for her, and more" (King 112), but as the story picks up, Billy seems to be the one holding the key. His entire character is contradictory and his feelings seesaw from "everything was for Chris and had been since the day she . . . made herself vulnerable to him" (King 112) to the blatant statement that he "woulda done it" to Chris, it being the incident of pouring blood over Carrie (King 212). Compared to the relationship of Sue and Tommy, Chris and Billy share a deeply distorted "romance," which is

toxic to the degree that they cannot even keep up the pretense of a good relationship. It is utterly perverted, as is evident on the occasion where "he slapped her" (King 211) and she retaliated by punching him and spitting in his face, the entire event being followed by sex. Their desire is fueled by violence, making their affair everything but romantic, which comes into prominence when Billy, upon realizing that he might be found guilty, quickly comes up with a plan of desertion that does not include Chris. Despite his violent behavior and loveless conduct, Chris still wants to escape with him, but it is stated that "he wouldn't, not any more" (King 217). The toxicity of their relationship indirectly caused the demise of the entire town and destroyed a great number of lives.

Toxic relationships are omnipresent in today's society and often go by unnoticed; even Tommy, who was the victim in the relationship, seems completely oblivious to his girlfriend's selfish manipulations. Those who are aware of the toxicity, like Carrie, require a great deal of courage to try and break loose from their captors. Toxic relationships are not limited to romantic relationships, they are found in families and friendships equally. Regardless of their origin, they cause massive destruction upon those who are included and those surrounding them. The amalgamation of several toxic relationships present in the novel thus caused the downfall of Chamberlain as well as its inhabitants.

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