Chapter V: Manipulation of the Real in J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*

*Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* is the first book of Rowling’s hepatlogy. In this series she creates a magical world of wizards in which the adventures occur in a magical school which substitutes a real school. In this chapter I will show how Rowling manipulates the real for a distorted version of it to create fantasy. I will demonstrate how the author becomes the accomplice of the child and what techniques the author adopts to create the world of the ‘para-real’. *Harry Potter* was conceived in a train compartment and its first drafts were composed in the cafes of Edinburgh. *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, will hence forth be referred to as to as *Harry Potter Book I* in this chapter. The novel starts in a very normal drawing room situation but the very first sentence has an air of something fishy, something not so normal. Rowling introduces a domestic situation in which Harry Potter is introduced to the reader:

> Mr and Mrs Dursley, of Number 4, Pfizer Drive were proud to say that they were perfectly normal; thank you very much. They were the last people you’d expect to be involved in anything strange or mysterious, because they just didn’t hold with such nonsense. (*Harry Potter Book I, 7*)

This is a very innocuous introduction as such but the reader would at once get engrossed and enquire, what is being referred to as ‘such nonsense’, and what are the ‘strange or mysterious’ things that are being talked of. The reader of course does not understand now that the concepts of normal and real would be often distorted in this novel. Hints are being dropped, when for example it is mentioned “Mrs. Dursley had a sister like that…those people in cloaks.” (*Harry Potter Book I, 9*)

The phrase ‘like that’ raises anticipations in the readers’ mind. Almost out of nowhere, Albus Dumbledore and Prof Mc Gonagall meet at Pfizer Drive and talk of, among other things ‘sherbet lemon’ which is a ‘muggle sweet.’ The word ‘muggle’ works as a shock. The readers
surely have not heard of such a word. Many of Rowling’s words deviate from real normative references. Fantasy refers to ‘normal’ not on deviation but on paradigmatically similar issues. There are questions galore and the element of fantasy has just started creeping in. The term ‘muggle’ would strike the reader first. This is one of the many instances in which Rowling uses a term which has no semantic existence. Rowling works upon the colloquial use of the word ‘mug’ meaning a dunce or a fool. Such language games as Wittgenstein suggests are very intricately imbued within the possibilities of the language and in this case aid in creating the fantasy by tweaking normal semantic possibilities. At the very beginning Rowling uses the trope of inducing wonder to initiate the fantasy. Dumbledore suggests, “Scars can come in useful. I have one myself above my left knee which is a perfect map of the London Underground.” (Harry Potter Book I, 14) This comes as a surprise, as the reader does not know about the significance of ‘scars’ or for that matter the fact that Dumbledore is the Headmaster of a school named Hogwarts which is a school for wizards. The assertion serves more purposes than one. First it intentionally compels the reader to compare between the two scars of Harry Potter and Dumbledore and forces him to wonder how a scar can be useful. Secondly, Rowling plays with the normative ideas of reality by distorting our sense of reality or in other words manipulating the child’s notion of the real and continues to drop hints. According to Professor Mc Gonagall that she “couldn’t find two people who are less like [them]” (Harry Potter Book I, 15). The stress is more on ‘like.’Dumbledore is here to ‘keep’ Harry in the custody of the Dursleys and one Hagrid is being waited for. More questions flock to the mind and one wonders what Prof Mc Gonagall means by ‘them’. At the very outset words like ‘us ‘and ‘them’ create two

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paradigmatically different worlds for the readers.’. Here it is to be considered that the likes of Dumbledore and Prof Mc Gonagall look at this ‘muggle’ world from perspectives entirely their own and this is the most remarkable aspect of the narrative. Dumbledore takes Harry to the Dursleys and leaves. The identities of Dumbledore, Prof Mc Gonagall and Hagrid as magical people are not revealed yet as a part of the narrative strategy. Rowling takes the story a good ten years forward, as these ten years are not at all relevant in the context of the story. Only the reader knows that Harry Potter is no ordinary child. He is special, but does not have a special life with the Dursleys until ‘the letters from no one’ start coming addressed to Harry Potter;

To H. Potter
The Cupboard under the Stair.
4 Pivet Drive
Little Whinging
Surrey (Harry Potter Book I, 30)

The address itself is quite interesting. A ‘cupboard under the stair’ was the location in the Dursley home in which Harry was confined. More so, many such places have special relevance for children. Rowling supplies more details about the letter. Such details would soon become a hallmark of this amazing text start pouring in. The details of the envelope arise our curiosity;

“… the envelope was thick and heavy, made of yellowish parchment, and the address was written in emerald blue ink… Harry saw a purple wax seal bearing a coat of arms, a lion, an eagle, a badger and a snake surrounding a large letter ‘H’ (Harry Potter Book I 30).

Harry cannot read this letter as his relatives intervene and the curiosity of the child reader knows no bounds. The narrative gets more gripping as Hagrid, ‘Keeper of Keys and Grounds’ at Hogwarts arrives to wish Harry a happy birthday and he is shocked that Harry has no clue about
“our world, I mean your world. My world. Yer parent’s world. (Harry Potter Book I 41). The hints have been gradually laid down by Rowling with great finesse. ‘Us’, ‘our world’, ‘the letters’, ‘Hogwarts’ are all language games carefully employed to conjure a labyrinth in which the reader is lost. We know Harry is famous, but why? Rowling manipulates the child’s imagination and the notion of the real by introducing tropes / imagery of the non-real, & therefore one of shock, horror, suddenness, mystery and wonder. And then we are told that Harry is a wizard. The story gets a turn from this point of time as Harry is to join a school and the letter is presented to him:

HOGWARTS SCHOOL OF WITCHCRAFT AND WIZARDRY

Headmaster: Albus Dumbledore

(Order of Merlin, First class, Grand Sorcerer Chief of Warlock
Supreme Mugwump, International Confederation of Wizards.)

Dear Mr Potter,

We are pleased to inform you that you have a place at Hogwarts School of witchcraft and wizardry. Please find enclosed a list of all necessary books and equipment.

Term begins on 1 September. We await your owl by no later than 31 July.

Yours sincerely,

Minerva Mc Gonagall,
Deputy Headmistress.

Many questions imploded inside Harry’s head like fireworks and he could not decide which to ask first. (Harry Potter Book I 42-43)

Questions explode in the reader’s head also, and that is only obvious. Questions pertaining to the school, place names like Warlock, the owl, all raise questions. The narrative strategically conceals answers to such questions, but fantasy has started to create its handiwork and we are gradually being transported into the world of the para-real which is being created here by

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calculated strategies. Rowling manipulates reality by being an accomplice of the reader. The reader can hardly wait for Harry to go to Hogwart’s school, the alternative world. “CAR CRASH” roared Hagrid, jumping up so angrily that the Dursleys scuttled back to their corner, “How could a car crash kill Lily and James Potter? It’s an outrage! A scandal! Harry Potter not knowin’ his own story when every kid in our world knows his name! (Harry Potter Book I 44)

Hagrid, a guardian angel sort for Harry is dumfounded at the ignorance. We learn, along with Harry, that his parents were killed not by the car crash as he was told earlier but by a certain Voldemort. The phrase ‘our world’ is also of great significance. Rowling artistically creates a parallel world with distinctive features and replaces the real world.

Never wondered how you got that mark on yer forehead? That was no ordinary cut. That's what yeh get when a powerful, evil curse touches yeh--took care of yer mum an' dad an' yer house, even--but it didn't work on you, an' that's why yer famous, Harry." (Harry Potter Book I 45)

The reader have been informed of the scar earlier. The reader is informed about a Ministry of Magic and of a world which exists parallel to his, and that right in London there is a place called ‘The Leaky cauldron’, where magic equipment and books to be read in the school can be bought for a price. The narrator provide two lists; one a list of books and another the prescribed uniform for the school; broken into minute details. These lists distort and substitute real lists provided to students in real schools at the beginning of sessions. We can have a look at the details of the uniform that the school requires and also at other equipment:

*Three sets of plain work robes,*

*One plain pointed (black) for day wear*

*One pair of protective gloves (dragon hide or similar)*

*One winter cloak (black, silver fastening)*

*Note that all pupils’ clothes must carry name tags.*
Other Equipment

I Wand

I Cauldron (pewter standard size 2)

I set glass or crystal phials

I telescope

I set brass scales (Harry Potter, Book 1, pg 53),

The list is itself very fascinating. When we look into the details, we find them quite mind boggling. The ‘cloaks’ need to be ‘black’ as does the ‘pointed hat’, and the dragon gloves need to be of ‘dragon hides’ or ‘similar’, and the winter cloak needs to be black with silver fastenings. Such specific details are very instrumental in creating the world of ‘para real’. The child reader can relate very easily to such details as it is invariable that such a list is handed to all students at the beginning of the term in school. It is obvious that Piaget becomes very relevant in this aspect as he talks about how a child relates to things he is familiar to. The specifications are worked out, for example the size of the Cauldron and its variety. We realize we are not reading a mere fantasy tale. The child can identify these realistic details as Harry shops with Hagrid. Hagrid takes Harry to Diagon Alley, a magically concealed shopping precinct in London, where Harry is bewildered to discover how famous he is among wizards as "the boy who lived." He also finds that he is quite wealthy, since a bequest from his parents has remained on deposit at Gringotts Wizarding Bank. Guided by Hagrid, he buys the equipment he needs for Hogwarts.

At the wand shop, he finds that the wand that suits him best is the twin of Voldemort's; both wands contain feathers from the same phoenix. Harry has goblins for company and

Galleons as the currency to pay for some commodity. Thus Rowling replaces real life shopping experiences for a new session in a school with unreal ones. Harry realises that he is different and he has his task cut out.

"Everyone thinks I'm special...All those people in the Leaky Cauldron, Professor Quirrell, Mr. Ollivander...But I don't know anything about magic at all. (Harry Potter Book I 66)

Harry meets Malfoy, his foe in school. He learns more from Hagrid about Quidditch, a popular game in the Hogwarts School and about the Hogwarts houses, and by the time Harry boards the train to the school Rowling prepares the reader to enter a real world of wizardry. The day finally arrives and they embark upon the journey. Harry lands up at the platform Nine and Three Quarters. There is a pillar between Platforms 9 and 10. Rowling introduces the portal through which the world of fantasy is opened up. The child reader avidly waits for Harry to enter the school. Harry Potter is quite a famous name in these parts of the world and as they await to enter the castle, a number of questions are still unanswered and a number of issues relevant for the present discussion creep up as Hagrid waits at the Gate of the Castle of Hogwarts,

“Hagrid raised a gigantic fist and knocked on the castle door”(Harry Potter Book I 84)

A little later Mr Ollivander suggests:

'Curious indeed how these things happen. The wand chooses the wizard, remember.... I think we must expect great things from you, Mr Potter.... After all, He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named did great things — terrible, yes, but great.' Harry Potter Book I 85)

The reader’s expectation also rises. The narrator evokes the world by manipulating the sense of the real by calculated strategies, which is peculiar to such texts. One of the first things that happens in a real school is the sorting of houses. Hogwarts is no exception Harry, Ron and
Hermione find the same house Gryffindor. Before the sorting event there a robust declaration by Albus Dumbledore;

Before we begin our banquet, I would like to say a few words. And here they are: Nitwit! Blubber! Oddment! Tweak! Thank you. *Harry Potter Book I, 91-92*)

These might not mean much semantically but it carries a lot of weight in the magical context of the wizards here and in the context of fantasy. These words create a magical effect and transfix the reader into the world of wizardry. There is even a school song:

*Hogwarts, Hogwaits, Hoggy Warty Hogwarts*
*Teach us something please,*
*Whether we be old and bald*
*Or young with scabby knees,*
*Our heads could do with the filling*
*With some interesting stuff*
*Now they’re bare and full of air*
*Dead flies and bits of fluff,*
*So teach us things worth knowing,*
*Bring back what we’ve forgot,*
*Just do your best, well do the rest,*
*And learn until our brain all rot.* (*Harry Potter Book I, 95*)

This school song is among the many aspects in the narrative which aid in the creation of the para real world, the world which is constructed as one parallel to the real world. The child can identify such pattern of his own school life as he goes ahead with the narrative of this book.

In fact a very major portion of the novel does not focus on the plot but a substitution of real life school situations. Rules, discipline codes, classes, songs, games, merry making, the good boy, the bad boy, the bully, all seem to come alive in the pages of the book. The syllabi and the subjects certainly evoke a lot of interest in the children. These subjects are not ‘real’ but are they substitute with subjects in a ‘real’ school. So subjects like *Herbology, Potions, Tranfiguration*
and Divination are presented very realistically. The novel proceeds with descriptions of Harry’s experiences in the school. There are hints dropped in about the philosopher’s stone but there are pages together in which there is no reference to the stone or the plot of the novel. Rowling invests her genius in replacing real life school situations with magical unreal ones. Magic is the vehicle on which fantasy rides and the narrative moves ahead. In each Harry Potter text the improbable and the fantastic are projected realistically. All non magical people are labeled ‘muggles’ by the wizards and would simply fit in this world as outsiders. As noted earlier, Rowling coins the world ‘muggle’, from the colloquial ‘mug’ which means a foolish, moron like person. Rowling narrates the tales with such finesse, that there is no room for incredulity to step in at any point of time. Rowling continually chips in with anecdotes and snippets from Harry’s school life which might apparently look quite insignificant but are very important as any school student would vouch. In school such seemingly aimless and trifling events hold special significance in the life of school-goers. I must provide an example;

Friday was an important day for Harry and Ron. They finally managed to find their way down to the Great Hall without getting lost once. (Harry Potter Book 1,95)

The school days are similar to any school pattern anywhere in the world. Students across the world can identify themselves with the predicaments of Harry, Ron, Hermione and Snape. In this context it must be suggested that there are very pronounced similarities with Thomas Hughes’ Tom Brown’s School Days(1857) Both the school life patterns have similarities. Dumbledore is like Dr Arnold, Harry is like Tom; impetuous and good hearted, Ron resembles Harry East, Tom’s best friend, in Hermione we have a shadow of Miss Swot, in Draco Malfoy we have images of Flashman, in the Quidditch games there are semblances of the sports activities and the cricket match that the Rugby school of Tom played with the MCC. The similarities manifest
even more how Rowling’s Harry Potter and his amazing school of wizardry represent a distorted version of a real school. Classes are depicted realistically. For example, the details with which Rowling represents the potions classes and the partial, scheming professor in Snape impeccably distort reality. I will quote an extract to demonstrate how Rowling creates a real life classroom like situation with characters and terminology that do not exist but are constructed realistically for the child reader.

You are here to learn the subtle science and exact art of potion-making,’ he began. He spoke in barely more than a whisper, but they caught every word — like Professor McGonagall, Snape had the gift of keeping a class silent without effort. "What is the difference, Potter, between monkshood and wolfsbane?"

At this, Hermione stood up, her hand stretching towards the dungeon ceiling. "I don't know," said Harry quietly. "I think Hermione does, though, why don't you try asking her?"

A few people laughed; Harry caught sight of Seamus's eye and Seamus winked. Snape, however, was not pleased. "Sit down," he snapped at Hermione. "For your information, Potter, asphodel and wormwood make a sleeping potion so powerful it is known as the Draught of Living Death. A bezoar is a stone taken from the stomach of a goat and it will save you from most poisons. As for monkshood and wolfsbane, they are the same plant, which also goes by the name of aconite. Well? Why aren't you all copying that down?"

There was a sudden rummaging for quills and parchment. Over the noise, Snape said, "And a point will be taken from Gryffindor house for your cheek, Potter."('Harry Potter Book I, 102)

So, on one plane; questions like difference between ‘monkshood’ and ‘wolfsbane’ do not really surprise the reader any more. They are presented realistically. On the other, as the session goes ahead the adult and child reader alike sink into the gripping narrative, the classes, the increasing
enmity between Harry and Malfoy, all have that magical flair in them. When Madam Hooch warns “You leave those brooms where they are or you’ll out of Hogwarts before you can say Quidditch come on dear’ (Harry Potter Book I) Such warnings are not uncommon in real schools. The world of the para real takes shape very distinctly and the child is transported into this world without its full awareness. After a terrible first Potions lesson with Snape, Harry and Ron visit Hagrid, who lives in a cabin on the edge of the Forbidden Forest. There they learn that the attempted robbery at Gringotts happened the day Harry withdrew money. Here that Hagrid had removed a small package from the vault that had been broken into. One must

As Professor McGonogall hands over a parcel to Harry, she warns him not to open it in public. The narrative is scintillating. Harry had difficulty hiding his glee as he handed the note to Ron to read:

“A Nimbus Two Thousand!” Ron moaned enviously, “One never even touched one” (Harry Potter Book I 122)

The excitement among the children is obvious. The presentation is so very realistically done that Rowling’s narrative is truly very engrossing as it tweaks our imagination and engages us in discussions which make the child reader wonder at the surprising turn of events. Here Rowling uses the trope of transference of epithets. The Nimbus Two Thousand is a very special; kind of broomstick; an equivalent of which can be a particular cricket bat, a baseball bat or a particular brand of sports equipment that a young boy would clamour for. There are a number of issues operating here. We can understand from Piaget’s point of view how a child can relate to
something familiar. We can also interpret this from Mukhopadhyay’s observation on how art can aggrandize or minimize as the requirement demands to depict what it wants. Our imagination is stirred and fantasy operates with a distorted version of the real. This is the para real world at its best. Another case in point is the circumstances where Wood, answers to a query by Harry: explains to the new comers the nuances of the game of Quidditch:

Now, Quidditch is easy enough to understand, even if its not too easy to play. There are seven players on each side. Three of them are called Chasers. The ball is called a Quaffle. The Chasers throw to each other and try to get it through one of the hoops to score a goal. Ten points every time the Quaffle goes through one of the hoops. *(Harry Potter Book1, 124)*

There are more details about Quidditch. The details continue to create an ambience of reality. The students at Hogwarts avidly learn about the different coloured and different sized balls, the Bludgers, the Beaters, the Chasers, the Snitch, the Golden Snitch and other intricacies of the game. Along with the first year Hogwarts students, the reader also learns of the game. Rowling has the entire reading community in her grip who would like to know more of the game and of course more of what happens next, the invariable question in such a narrative. The practice sessions of the quidditch game are very engagingly and realistically presented before us such that real life game situations in schools are substituted by Quidditch. We can get into this world. Rowling has a special flair when it comes to coining names. The name ‘Quidditch’ for instance gets its source from the world ‘quiddity’ the essence of a thing. Rowling engages in many such language games in this text. Names, Rowling admits have always fascinated her. That such words are coined, itself suggests that Rowling has a special way with words to create the fantastic and the improbable. Quidditch may have no identity in any English lexicon, but to the

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3 Ibid, 65
Harry Potter fan it is as familiar a term as football or basketball. The narrative is fused with such magical and fantastic terms and every time an entirely different other world, a secondary world is created. The world of the ‘para–real’ is taking its shape. Students learn their lessons and practice these at their leisure or when in a group. Charms form a very important part of their lesson. Rowling replaces a normal school with this magical school with its lessons pertaining to magic. It is serious academic business anyway. The precision while discussing anecdotes from Harry’s school life which Rowling achieves is amazing. For example, when Ron tries to pronounce a charms and Hermione corrects him.

Ron at next table, was it having much more luck, ‘Wingardium Leviosa’ he shouted, warning his long arms like a windmill,


This single instance certainly goes a long way to comment on the context that is being dealt with. The details are so elaborately done, that every time a realistically constructed world is being churned out before us. Rowling plays the role of an accomplice narrator by creating fantasy out of a situation which is very real and one which a child reader can very readily identify with. It requires mention that Hermione succeeded in this charm when she tried it out. Hermione, of course is the typical good student. In an interview, Rowling asserted, “Hermione is loosely based on me. This is annoying a lot of ways”.\(^5\) Rowling creates fantasy through the magical and the improbable. Narratorial interventions at times it take up philosophical propositions which titillate the thought procedure of a child as the author continuously takes up the stance of an accomplice narrator. Ron criticises Hermione's ostentatious proficiency in Charms, she hides in the girls'

\(^5\) An Interview in School Literary Journal Vol 45, September 1999; p136
toilet, crying. At the Halloween Night dinner, Professor Quirrell reports that a troll has entered the dungeons. While everyone returns to their dormitories, Harry and Ron rush to warn Hermione. The troll corners Hermione in the toilet but Harry and Ron clumsily save her.

“There are some things you can’t share without ending up liking each other, and knocking out a twelve floor mountain troll is one of them” (Harry Potter Book I 132).

Afterwards, Hermione takes the blame for the battle and becomes a firm friend of the two boys. So this is an achievement of a team work and an excellent instance of camaraderie which get on well with the child reader who in his real life must as well savour such moments of joy. So Rowling repeatedly distorts the normative sense of reality and replaces it with the world of magic. Fantasy is thus not a remote abstract concept but a distorted representation of reality. The particulars of the quidditch game are presented just as any other game, any real competitive game would be presented. There is a suspicion that Harry could be seriously injured or even killed, so his friends are worried.

'Don't play,' said Hermione at once.
'Say you're ill,' said Ron.
'Pretend to break your leg,' Hermione suggested.
'Really break your leg,' said Ron. (Said to Harry when they heard Snape was going to be the referee for the Quidditch match.)

The evening before Harry's first Quidditch match, he sees Snape receiving medical attention from Filch for a bite on his leg caused by the three-headed dog. During the game, Harry's broomstick goes out of control, endangering his life, and Hermione notices that Snape is staring at Harry and muttering. She dashes over to the Professors' stand, knocking over Professor
Quirrell in her haste, and accidentally sets fire to Snape's robe. Harry regains control of his broomstick and catches the Golden Snitch, winning the game for Gryffindor. Bandura’s social learning theories become very crucial here. 6 There is a fairly obvious extension of social learning theory to fantasy literature and related literary experiences for children, for many books have models with which young readers can identify. Hagrid refuses to believe that Snape was responsible for Harry's danger, but lets slip that he bought the three-headed dog and that the monster is guarding a secret that belongs to Professor Dumbledore and someone called Nicolas Flamel.

It is interesting that after almost two thirds of the novel is over the main plot is entertained. The reader increasingly identifies with Harry Potter and his peers. The element of fantasy gets constructed on the lines of reality. The game gets more and more enthralling and Harry wins it for his house with the Golden Snitch. Harry’s Christmas Day is another ‘real’ wonder of sorts. It is an invisibility cloak with a note to it; “Your father left this in my possession before he died. It is time it was returned to you. Use it well. A very Merry Christmas to you.

(Harry Potter Book I 148)

Rowling employs reality but then withholds/disturbs or distorts its totalizing effects SHAPE. The narrative springs more wonders, as a screaming book. There is no dearth of wondrous and even horrifying events which make the narrative terse.

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Albert J. Bandura and other theorists, however, perceive human learning in a somewhat different way, asserting that children learn vicariously,—that is, by observing the behavior of social models. According to that theory of social learning, whether or not a child will imitate the behavior of the model depends not only on the behavior but also on the consequences of that behavior——that is, whether the model is rewarded or punished.
Rowling introduces The Mirror of Erised which is a marvellous idea in itself. It is a very interesting language games that Rowling plays. ‘Erised’ is an anagram of ‘desire’ and the intentions are quite clear. Harry and the Weasleys stay at Hogwarts for Christmas, and one of Harry's presents, from an anonymous donor, is an Invisibility Cloak owned by his father. Harry uses the Cloak to search the library's Restricted Section for information about the mysterious Flamel, and he happens to find a room containing the Mirror of Erised, which shows him his parents and several of their ancestors. Harry becomes addicted to the Mirror's visions until he is rescued by Professor Dumbledore, who explains that it only shows the viewer what he most desperately longs for.

The fantasy element, notwithstanding the wondrous part of the thing is the ontological dimension it scales and the associations it conjures.

It shows us nothing more or less than the deepest, non desperate desire of our hearts, you, who have never known your family, see them standing around you. Ronald Weasley, who has always been overshadowed by his brothers, sees himself, standing alone, the last of all of them. However, this mirror will give us neither knowledge and truth; men have wasted away before it, entranced by what they have seen, or been driven mad, not knowing if what it shows is real or even possible (Harry Potter Book I 157)

There is a strong moral content in Rowling as in other fantasy texts. We can identify such discourses well embedded in the fantasy. Such elements make the text more realistic and acceptable for the child reader as moral codes are a very important part of the growing up of the child. There in overall good versus evil format which works well in these structures and then there are good discourses on what to do and what not to do. In this context I would like to take up two references. First I would like to take up the issue of Kolberg. From Kolberg’s premises we can understand that Rowling develops the ideas of moral codes within the perview of fantasy and
further that such morals are presented in a very real manner so that the reader can readily identify.\textsuperscript{7} Secondly I would like to identify with Valadimir Propp’s work on folk tales. Vladimir Propp lists certain functions, these functions are to be found in heroes and villains, the two chief ingredients of such fantasy tales. First I will draw the chart of polarities in Propp’s function and then apply the chart to Harry Potter texts as far as feasible. Propp of course draws out these polarities with reference to folk tales in his famous \textit{Morphology of the Folk Tale} Propp’s morphology is a developer of the motifs on Veselovsky, who too identified some motifs. The polarities are drawn as under:\textsuperscript{8}

\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Hero (Harry Potter)} & \textbf{Villain (Voldemort)} \\
\hline
Seeks revenge & Hinders Harry \\
Suffers from villain’s acts & Punishes hero \\
Undergoes ordeal & makes hero undergo ordeals \\
Is dispatched & engages in reconnaissance \\
gets helpers (his friends, Sirius Black) & has henchmen (evil figures like Tom Riddle) \\
heroines (Hermione, Cho Chong) & enchantresses (Nagini like figures) \\
seeming villains (Sirius Black) & false heroes (Tom Riddle) \\
Love (Not fully developed) & lust (Not fully developed) \\
Young & old \\
Handsome & ugly \\
Individualists & collectiviists \\
Imagination, invention & technology, manpower \\
\hline
\end{tabular}


Finds donor figure  
Defeats villain

There is another chart titled ‘Opposite types among Primary Characters found in Fairy Tales.’

Now we can equate easily to Harry Potter:

| Heroes (Harry Potter and his associates) | villains (Voldemort and associates) |
| Help (Ron, Hermione) | henchmen (Tom Riddle) |
| Heroines (Not developed) | sirens (Not developed) |
| Good magicians (Harry Potter) | bad magicians (Voldemort) |
| Dispatchers of heroes (Sirius Black) | captors (Voldemort) |
| Seekers (Harry Potter) | avoiders (Voldemort) |
| Seeming villains (Sirius Black) | False heroes (Tom Riddle) |

It is obvious that all these patterns work under the banner of magic. The structures which Propp had developed for folk tales and fairy tales hold good for our purpose also. It is obvious also those patterns are also very identifiable in real life, so it is easy for the reader to identify such contexts. The charts aid us to understand how Rowling creates fantasy on lines of reality.

The events take place one after the other and the issue of the philosopher’s stone, is taken up. This does justice to the title of the novel. Hermione soon finds that he is a 665-year-old man who possesses the only known Philosopher's Stone, from which an elixir of life can be extracted. A few days later, Harry notices Snape sneaking towards the outskirts of the Forbidden Forest.

There he half-hears a furtive conversation about the Philosopher's Stone between Snape and Quirrell. Harry concludes that Snape is trying to steal the Stone and Quirrell has helped prepare a series of defences for it, which was an almost fatal mistake.

\footnote{Ibid, 47}
Hermione brings the precise information of the book:

*The ancient study of alchemy is concerned with making the philosopher’s stone, a legendary substance with astonishing powers. The stone will transform any metal into pure gold. It also produces the elixir of life, which will make the drinker immortal.* There have been many reports of the philosopher’s stone over the centuries, but the only stone currently in existence belongs to the Nicolas Flannel, the noted alchemist and Opera-Lover. Mr Flannel who celebrated his six hundred and sixty fifth birthday last year, enjoys a quiet life in Devon with his wife, Pernelle (Six hundred and fifty eight) (*Harry Potter Book I* 161)

The theme of the book is explained and analysed. The children suspect Snape as a possible seeker of the philosopher’s stone and in the course of the adventure Ron is bitten by a dragon and as always Malfoy plays the role of the spoil sport, the lion or dragon feeding is known to all, hence the problem. The children are at their wit’s end and so are the readers. Harry too at his wit’s end when he and Hermione are ‘caught red handed’ after entering into the Forbidden Forest.

“Excuses, alibis and wild cover-up stories chased each other around Harry’s brain each more feeble than the last. He couldn’t see how they were going to get out of the trouble this time. They were cornered. How could they have been so stupid as to forget the cloak? (*Harry Potter I*, 174)

A school boy has broken the rules of the school and hence awaits punishment. Punishments are so much an integral part of the school life and every student detests punishments. The child can easily identify himself with the situation when points are deducted from Harry’s house. The three friends discover that Hagrid is raising a baby dragon, which is against wizard law, and arrange to smuggle it out of the country around midnight. The ‘good boy’ Neville is put under the ‘Petrifius Totalus’ charm by Hermione as it is essential for them to go out of the Hogwarts
Castle. The intelligent Hermione cracks a riddle and finds out that the 'smallest road' would lead them to the stone. Draco, hoping to get them into trouble, tells Professor McGonagall.

Although the dragon is safely away, they are caught outside of their dormitory. Harry, Hermione, Draco, and Neville (who, trying to stop Harry and Hermione after hearing what Draco had been saying, were caught by McGonagall as well) are punished by helping Hagrid to rescue a badly injured unicorn in the Forbidden Forest. They split into two parties, and Harry and Draco find the unicorn dead, surrounded by its blood. A hooded figure crawls to the corpse and drinks the blood, then moves towards Harry, who is knocked out by an agonising pain in his scar. When Harry regains consciousness, the hooded figure is gone and a centaur, Firenze, offers to give him a ride back to the school. The centaur tells Harry that drinking a unicorn's blood will save the life of a mortally injured person, but at the price of having a cursed life from that moment on. Firenze suggests Voldemort drank the unicorn's blood to gain enough strength to make the elixir of life from the Philosopher's Stone, and regain full health by drinking that.

The narrative takes up amazing proportions. Harry concludes that Snape faked the message that called Dumbledore away and will try to steal the Stone that night. Covered by the Invisibility Cloak, Harry and his two friends go to the three-headed dog's chamber, where Harry sends the beast to sleep by playing a flute. After lifting the trap-door, they encounter a series of obstacles, each of which requires special skills possessed by one of the three, and one of which requires Ron to sacrifice himself in a game of wizard's chess. We can identify some aspects of Bakhtinian propositions very central to the themes relevant in our scheme of things. The carnival pageantry of these novels at times seems to be reflected by the central figure of Harry Potter for example. Rowling explores different possibilities of the real by distorting reality at every
instance. The deviation from normality occurs with the help of manipulation or distortion of associations / referents. Each chapter leads to another with more suspense. Chapter 16 ends with the information, "There was already someone there - but it wasn't Snape. It wasn't even Voldemort." (Harry Potter Book I 208.) The audience can only wait with baited breath to know who the person is, and ‘what happens next? Harry is surprised to see Quirrel and Snape, 'p-poor' stuttering P -professor Quirrel', Quirrel turns out to be the aide of Voldemort, the arch villain of the series. In the final room Harry, now alone, finds Quirrel rather than Snape. Quirrel admits that he let in the troll and that he tried to kill Harry during the first Quidditch match. Snape had been trying to protect Harry all along. Quirrell serves Voldemort and, after failing to steal the Philosopher's Stone from Gringotts, allowed his master to possess him in order to improve their chances of success. However, the only other object in the room is the Mirror of Erised, and Quirrell can see no sign of the Stone. At Voldemort's bidding, Quirrell forces Harry to stand in front of the Mirror. Harry feels the Stone drop into his pocket and tries to stall. Quirrell removes his turban, revealing the face of Voldemort on the back of his head. Voldemort/Quirrell tries to grab the Stone from Harry, but simply touching Harry causes Quirrell's flesh to burn.

The words spoken by Professor Quirell, quoting Lord Voldemort raise tension and horror.

There is no good and evil, there is only power, and those too weak to seek it. (Harry Potter Book I 211)

He felt Quirrel’s arm wrenched from his grasp, knowing all was lost and fell into black ness down...down... down.... Harry Potter Book I 214)

Only the philosopher’s stone can come to his rescue Harry tried his best to retain the stone but collapsed into oblivion only to languish in the hospital wing. After regaining
consciousness, he is afraid that the stone in contention lies with Quirrel but Dumbledore assures him. After further struggles, Harry passes out. He awakes in the school hospital, where Professor Dumbledore tells him that he survived because his mother sacrificed her life to protect him, and Voldemort could not understand the power of such love. Voldemort left Quirrell to die and is likely to return by some other means. The Stone has now been destroyed.

Rowling continually plays the role of an accomplice narrator. It is very interesting that every word matters in Rowling; for example a piece of advice like the one Dumbledore makes to Harry which I will quote below suffices.

Humans do have a knack for choosing precisely those things which are worst for them. (Harry Potter Book I 215)

Rowling tries to manipulate reality by transference of epithets. Here humans are being judged from parameters which the wizards decide. Adjectives and comparisons which would otherwise have been used in a real situation now is distorted to create fantasy. As the story reaches its climax we find Harry a bit nervous. Voldemort has no face or proper shape He dreads to mention the name of Voldemort like others but Dumbledore assures him,

Call him Voldemort ,Harry.Always use the proper name of things.Fear of a name increases fear of the thing itself. (Harry Potter Book I 215)

The child reader can easily relate to this predicament as Piaget’s theories would confirm.10 Dumbledore takes charge of Harry’s psychic needs and takes Harry into confidence,

'The truth.' Dumbledore sighed. 'It is a beautiful and terrible thing, and should therefore be treated with great caution…. Your mother died to save you. If there is one thing Voldemort cannot understand, it is love. He didn't realize that love as powerful as your mother's for you leaves its own mark '(Harry Potter Book I 216)

Harry learns to his utter surprise that Snape actually took care of him in order to repay the debt of Harry’s father who had saved Snape’s life. The readers are relieved to know that Dumbledore had restored the stone and destroyed its powers tasking the help of Nicolas Flamel. The child reader is however very still very curious to know whether Harry actually wins the House cup. The house cup is of great significance in school life and Rowling knows it too well. She exploits all her strategies at the end; that of manipulating reality; playing the role of an accomplice narrator and using the tropes of mystery, suspense and suddenness all in the attempt to distort reality and conjure fantasy. All ends well as Gryfindor House lifts the House Cup at the end of the year and after a lot of stiff contest, they edge out Slytherin and thus,

It was the best evening of Harry's life, better that winning at Quidditch or Chistmas or knocking out moving trolls he would never, ever forget tonight”

(Harry Potter, Book I, 222).

Rowling mixes school life anecdotes with adventure and magic. The narrative demands an obvious closure with good triumphing over evil; and Harry, for a change, looks forward to lot of fun at the Dursley home he has always detested. Harry returns to the Dursleys for the summer holiday, but does not tell them that under-age wizards are forbidden to use magic outside Hogwarts.
"They don't know we are not allowed to use magic at home. I am going to have a lot of fun with Dudley this summer" (Harry Potter, Book I, 223).

This is a realistic wish in the mind of a kid. He might be a wizard in the making but then he is instinctively a child and it is normal for any child to showcase the skills learned to play some pranks or teach those they do not like a lesson or two. Magic stuff it is indeed and we are a part of the magic. This is a fantasy tale of the present days, in which the pastness initiated in the 'once upon a time' structure is subverted. Everything happens in the present, and very much identifiable. The child reader can place themselves in the situation of Harry Potter and that makes the narrative even more entralling. I will now quote a few extracts from some reviews of the book.

1. "Mystery, magic, a spectacular cast of character and a splendid plot - this is a bold and confident … from a splendid writer and storyteller,"11

2. "Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone has all the makings of a classic… Rowling uses classic narrative devices with flair and originality and delivers a complex and demanding plot in the form of a hugely entertaining thriller. She is a first rate writer for Children"12

11 Lindsay Fraser, Book Trust, Scotland; Printed at the back cover of Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, London; Bloomsbury Publication, 1998

12 Lindsay Fraser, Book Trust, Scotland; Printed at the back cover of Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, London; Bloomsbury Publication, 1998.
3. "A perfect mixture of a classical school story and an almost Tolkiensque world of fantasy with wonderful characters and names."\(^{13}\)

4. This splendid novel leaves me full of anticipation of what she might do next.\(^{14}\)

5. "…a world magically parallel to ours"\(^{15}\)

6. Magic stuff.\(^{16}\)

7. This truly is a work of imagination\(^{17}\)

8. I am yet to find a child who can put it down.\(^{18}\)

9. The narrative gains assurance as it goes on and by the time Harry arrives at a wizard’s shopping...Rowling has assumed control"\(^{19}\)

The reason why I chose a random list of such quotes from different reviews; most of which are not necessarily very critical is to demonstrate the premise that I have been trying to


\(^{15}\)Ruth Fremer, A review, Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone in school libraries, Vol 45; Aug 1997; p147

\(^{16}\)Wendy Cooling, A review; Printed at the back cover of Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, London; Bloomsbury Publication, 1998.

\(^{17}\)Amanda Craig, Wit and Wizardry, the New Statesman Vol 12, no 563, July 12, 1999; pp 47-48

\(^{18}\)The Daily Mirror, Printed at the back cover of Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, London; Bloomsbury Publication, 1998.

\(^{19}\)Judy O’Malley, Book link, Vol 8, No 6, Jul 1999
build up in this thesis. The reviews refer; though loosely; mainly to the element of magic and fantasy. Amanda Craig’s comment, “…a world magically parallel to ours” innocuously suggests how fantasy is not a remote abstract concept but just another version of reality that the author posits before the child reader whose perception of reality is not exactly similar to the adult’s. There, indeed, is a portal here also as the entry into the Hogwarts Castle through the 9\(\frac{3}{4}\) platform, but this fascinating Harry Potter world is one in which we must enter and look at from perspectives which are entirely of a different world, the wizard world and that certainly does justice to the parameters of fantasy. The affinities to Tolkien have already been asserted that Rowling also owes a lot to Ursula Le Guin's *Earth sea* series. The wizard school is a case in point, but that does not mean Rowling is a copycat. She is very ingenious in creating this school of wizardry and there are real children learning magic in these schools. She artfully patterns their world, in which everything is ordered and structured, and we must give ourselves to the charm of this ‘para-real’ world which never fails to appeal. Rowling’s world is a realistically constructed one. She engages in a very deliberate manipulation or distortion of realistic signifiers. It is a very deliberate manipulation or distortion of realistic signifiers. She acts as an accomplice narrator, an accomplice of the child reader who looks at reality from a slightly different perspective. The author uses signs and codes which a child can pick up easily not in the adult rational sense but in the non rational non logical fantastical sense, explored by these unique devices. The language perfectly suits the playful needs of a child reader. It plays with the psychological requirements of a child reader, these requirements constitute the basic paradigm of the fantastic. Rowling creates the fantasy by these calculated strategies. In the next chapter I will take up *The Chamber of Secrets* (Book II of the series) in which Rowling continues the excellent rendering of fantasy.