The ‘real’ magical world of Fantasy in J.K.Rowling’s *The Chamber of Secrets*

The Chamber of Secrets is the second book in the series of Rowling’s heptalogy describing the magical journey and revelation in the life of his wizard protagonist Harry Potter. The novel begins with Harry’s visit to his uncles in London. His uncle Dursley does not like him because Harry knows magic. Harry has a magical background. He knows magic of the Hogwarts – this becomes an alarming signal for the uncle. Harry however also does not like the uncle either. The opening is therefore set in real time London. Harry spends his vacation here but as it happens he is not confined to the real world – he cannot withhold himself from employing his magic.

Rowling employs similar techniques which she has used in the first book with such perfection. Rowling takes the reader into confidence. The gripping tension of the preceding text is carried forward. Rowling is in no hurry to introduce the main plot just as yet. She gradually unravels the fantastic world. The first line looks rather innocuous but it certainly creates a narrative space which is a calculated strategy.

Not for the first time, an argument had broken out over breakfast at number four, Privet Drive. (*The Chamber of Secrets*, pg 7).

The argument is about a chaos emanating from an owl which has run amok in the Dursley household. The owl in question is Harry’s pet owl with which the reader of Book I of the series is familiar. There is a conscious reference to the first book but the author makes no attempt to let the secrets out just yet or be repetitive. The first book will continuously be referred to but she would keep the reader waiting for sometime at least. Harry casually uses the word ‘magic’ referring to the word
‘please’ which his cousin should have used in a particular context. Even the mention of the word magic makes Dursley lose his composure.

WHAT HAVE I TOLD YOU,’ thundered his uncle, spraying spit over the table, ‘ABOUT SAYING THE M WORD IN OUR HOUSE?’

‘I WARNED YOU! I WILL NOT TOLLERATE MENTION OF YOUR ABNORMALITY UNDER THIS ROOF!’ (The Chamber of Secrets, pg 8).

Dursley is very uncomfortable about all this. Harry Potter is introduced just in case Rowling have a fresh reader. This is the first time the traditional and normative sense of the real is being distorted with the non-real. Fantasy I must repeat is not a ‘transcendent other’¹ as Frye would suggest but an extension of our cognition of the real. We are now being prepared for a series of adventures full of shock, suddenness and horror which would await us. A little later Rowling introduces us to Harry Potter and the game Quidditch.

Harry Potter was a wizard – a wizard fresh from his first year at Hogwarts school of Witchcraft and Wizardry. And it the Dursleys were unhappy to have him back for the holidays, it was nothing to how Harry felt….Quidditch, the most popular sport in the wizarding world (six tall goalposts, four flying balls and fourteen players on broomsticks). (The Chamber of Secrets, pg 8).

This requires more than one comment. This is a narrative device to introduce Harry Potter. As far as Quidditch is concerned, first, we realize that there is a game

which does not exist in the real world. Secondly the author works upon our sense of real games to create a game with very specific rules and regulations. Details are very important for Rowling and her brand of fantasy. Once more we can look at this from Piaget’s idea of assimilation.\(^2\) The child can assimilate this game with his idea of real games like football for example. Further, it needs mention that the word ‘Quidditch’, is an adaptation of the word quiddity reminds us how a word can be used to manipulate the sense of the real. There can be different uses of the same word and immense possibilities emerge. Rowling goes beyond normal semantic possibilities and looks for newer words and existing words with different morphological possibilities.\(^3\) Gradually Rowling introduces spell books, wands, robes and cauldron and other school tools which Harry possesses and gradually the world of fantasy is unfolded before us by manipulating the child’s sense of the real. Fantasy has started to operate in full flow even before the actual story has started to unfold itself before us. his is achieved by small anecdotes from Harry’s day to day life.


Towards the end of Chapter I, there is an instance where Harry cracks a prank on his uncle. He wishes to play a trick on the uncle in order to teach him a lesson and have some fun. Harry decides to do this by casting a magic spell –as soon as he chants a magic incantation the uncle chokes and temporarily collapses. In this incident magic is introduced into the real world for the first time by means of the spell. The mantra that he utters however is consonant with the Wittgensteinian notion of language games which are typical to esoteric magic. The incantation does not refer to something which can be semantically explained but a mantra quite synonymous with commonly used magical words.

*Jiggery pokery!* said Harry in a fierce voice. ‘Hocus pocus ….. squiggly wiggly ……’

‘MUUUUUUM!’ howled Dudley, tripping over his feet at he dashed back towards the house. ‘MUUUUUM! He’s doing you know what!’ (*The Chamber of Secrets*, pg13).

Rowling continuously drops in such codes which the child reader can readily pick up. We understand that such correlatives are indeed very much in line with Piaget’s thought as asserted above. A child’s reading of fantasy is always influenced by author’s ability to make him relate to his own condition. An information which is dropped in very casually, achieves with deft touches a realistic representation of something unreal; so as to not make them imposing but occur very naturally to the reader as tropes of fantasy. Rowling is very finicky about how she creates her fantasy.
Rowling does not introduce the theme of the book at the beginning. Rather she concentrates on anecdotes from Harry’s life. Rowling is too good a narrator to waste some lines just for the sake of it. Each line is significant as fantasy is created with deft strategies. Once more the child can relate to himself and Harry has to pay ‘dearly’ for his act both in the Dudley house and reprimanded by the school for violating a norm which is supposed to be maintained; not to use magic in the non-magical muggle world. The word muggle again is a brilliant invention going beyond existing morphological stance taken from the word mug which in British slang means a fool. Rowling uses this for the non-magical world or in other words the normal world, our world. So Rowling goes beyond semantics to create the non-real.\(^4\) The chapter ends finding Harry retire to his bed after a rather sorry birthday, his worst as the title of the chapter suggests. The last line is very significant.

The trouble was there was already someone sitting on it. (pg14)

This is the first instance in the text in which the author consciously leaves more questions un-answered than answered. She weaves a conundrum which can be resolved only at the end. The last line of the chapter is full of creates suspense, mystery and wonder. Rowling uses imagery of the non-real which will certainly enhance the fantasy. Rowling is a brilliant raconteur. She is a brilliant story-teller par excellence and one cannot but wait to do justice to this chapter which is titled ‘Dobby’s warning’. The title itself is very exciting. The ‘someone’ already waiting

on Harry’s bed is described with real signifiers. Rowling uses epithets which are used in normal parlance for a magical creature which is non-real but is created realistically for the child reader. Once more comparisons are specific. ‘Bat like’ and ‘Tennis ball’ are very real things which exist but the author manipulates the sense of the real by something non-existent. Dobby has come to warn Harry Potter about ‘Voldemort’, ‘One who must not be Named’. The reader is fed with the first doses of horror and shock of which there shall be no dearth in the novel. The suspense is sustained right from the beginning. Harry spends a miserable summer with his only remaining family, the Dursleys. During a dinner party given by Harry's aunt and uncle, Dobby, a house-elf pops into Harry's bedroom, warning Harry not to return to Hogwarts, telling him terrible things will happen if he does. Harry disregards the warning. Dobby wreaks havoc in the kitchen, infuriating the Dursleys, who angrily imprison Harry. A little later there is a letter addressed to Harry warning him about the consequence of performing a magic spell outside the school and any further violation can lead to expulsion. Even the exact law is mentioned and that too in brackets to make it very specific

(Decree for the Reasonable Restriction of Underage Sorcery, 1875, Paragraph. *(The Chamber of Secrets*, pg 21).

Rowling replaces a real law that might exist in a residential school for an unreal one. Reality is being distorted at every level and Rowling plays upon the idea of the possible and further. Harry’s predicament allows the child reader to relate him
Harry is rescued by his friend Ron Weasley and brothers Fred and George in their flying car, spending the summer at the Weasley home. Rowling works out the magical texture ceaselessly.

Fantasy operates through a continuous deployment of different language games some of which go beyond the normal semantic possibilities. Rowling has a way with words. For example, the use of ‘magicking’ is a liberty which Rowling makes the text more engrossing as Harry weighs the probabilities of escaping from the room by magic.

What was the good of magicking himself out of his room if Hogwarts would expel him for doing it? (The Chamber of Secrets , pg 22).

A word is not confined to its narrow morphological possibilities but one can go beyond it ‘once the mental cramp is relieved’ one can go beyond the traditional linguistic paradigm. The word ‘magicking’ does not exist, but one does not have a problem in trying to relate to this word which carries a specific meaning in this text. The narrative takes up a lot of space and speed in a very ‘realistic manner.’ Rowling craftily creates out the world of the ‘para-real.’ She compares wizards of the para-real


Hogwarts world to wizard of the real world. I would like to cite an example in which the author makes a comparison. It is very significant.

“A lot of wizards think it’s a waste of time, knowing this sort of Muggle trick,” said Fred, “but we feel they’re skills worth learning even if they are a bit slow.” (The Chamber of Secrets, pg 25).

Here ‘magical wizards’ are compared with ‘real wizards.’ This is the other world which we can call the para-real. The story is related from the perspective of the wizard world which is constructed realistically by Rowling. The adventure thickens and we find the descriptions become more and more specific. Epithets used in normal parlance are substituted for a world which exists only in the realm of fantasy. This description of a gnome is a case in point.

It was certainly nothing like Father Christmas. It was small and leathery-looking, with a large, knobbly, bald head exactly like a potato. Ron held it at arm’s length as it kicked out at him with its horny little feet; he grasped it around the ankles and turned it upside-down. (The Chamber of Secrets, pg 33).

There is indeed a game of aggrandizement and miniaturization to distort reality. The list of books required by the second year students is a case in point. It looks like a real book list.

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There is no student who does not avidly wait for the new booklist at the beginning of a term and as always there are joys and sighs together. The books come in the alphabetical order which resemble any real booklist. The books are bound to let the child reader assimilate and associate with their real life school experience. Their cognitive thought process would instill in them such activity which would allow relating as Piaget explains. There is an irresistible charm in the alliterative device


9 Ludwig. Wittgenstein, Tractatus Philosophus. Translated by G.E.M. Anscombe. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1953, p54, “Wittgenstein describes language as a game in which words may be used in a multiplicity of ways: for example, to describe things, to ask questions, to report events, to speculate about events, to make requests, to give commands, to form hypotheses, to solve problems, and to perform other acts of communication. Each word or name may be used in more than one language-game, and thus each word or name may have a family of meanings. A word or name may be useful without having a fixed meaning. The meaning of a word may be fixed or variable, definite or indefinite. A word or name for something may have multiple uses to express or designate that thing. Some language-games may have definite rules, while others may not have definite rules. To the extent that language-games have similar rules, they may have ‘family resemblances.’ To the extent that language-games do not
used in the titles of books. Rowling always tries to relate to the child as its accomplice. There is serious action in every inch of this fantasy text. We can see how Rowling creates dialogue between Harry, Ron and Hermione and others in a very realistic fashion. They go on talking ceaselessly in a very realistic manner resembling dialogues between real students in real schools. For example when Harry and others go shopping in Chapter – IV, they seem to buy things which do not exist in the real world but are substituted strategically. Harry accidentally ends up in Diagon Alley in dark-arts Knockturn Alley. Fortunately, Hagrid (who is buying flesh-eating slug repellent) guides him safely to Diagon Alley to shop for school supplies. In the company of the Weasleys, Harry encounters famous Gilderoy Lockhart, who informs everyone that he's the new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher, and demands to be in a photo shoot with Harry, immediately publicizing himself with him in order to increase his own fame. Rowling gradually unfolds the cascades of ceaseless horrors and suddenness. There is a series of shocks. Shock however is a very important device on which fantasy rides. Gradually the plot unfolds. Fantasy thus is distinct kind of language game as Wittigenstein would have suggested. "True enough major portions of the these texts employ fascinating language games which tweak the child’s imagination and create another world altogether for us.

have similar rules, words which are used in one game may not have the same meaning when they are used in another game. However, in some cases, the use of words may not be governed by any rules, or may occur beyond the limits of a language-game. In such cases, aimless or meaningless combinations of words may not be governed by the rules of any language-game."
As the story advances, the mystery deepens and the horrors seem to be endless. The friends prepare to reach Hogwarts School. The portal through which one could enter the Hogwarts School from the normal platform made for real trains is the medium which separates the real world and the un-real world and it is described very craftily and with lots of wit.

The tricky bit was getting onto platform nos nine and three quarters, which wasn't visible to muggle eye. What you had to do was walk through the solid barrier dividing platforms nine and ten. It didn’t hurt, but it had to be done carefully so that none of the Muggls noticed you vanishing. (The Chamber of Secrets, pg54).

This is once more a case in which the author acts as accomplice of the author, acting as rationally inferior. The deviation from normality occurs with the help of manipulation or distortions of association and referents. So the referents here transport the reader to the world of fantasy. However they miss the train and they decide to reach school in the family car of the Wesleys.
Ron pressed a tiny silver button on the dashboard. The car around them vanished – and so did they. (The Chamber of Secrets, pg38).

The adventure starts even before Harry can reach school as the Whomping Willow, a willow tree comes in his way. It attacks them with all its might and the car barely manages to escape its onslaught. She looks at the world from a child’s point of view. Such adventures though not directly related to the theme of the book engage the child reader as it can relate to one’s own situations. She uses signs and codes which a child can pick up through non-logical, non-rational sense that appreciate fantasy and not the adult rational sense.

The Hogwarts Express was streaking along below them like a scarlet snake. (pg 57).

The language suits the psychological needs of the child. This requirement constitutes the basic paradigm of fantasy. Rowling’s descriptions are fascinating. An example would elaborate. The normal real life school scenario invariably has such issues concerning teachers and students as the extract relates.

Professor Severus Snape was Harry’s least favourite teacher. Harry also happened to be Snape’s least favourite student. Cruel sarcastic and disliked by everybody except the students from his own house (Slytherin), Snape taught Potions. (The Chamber of Secrets, pg61).

Classes have commenced and very soon there is serious academic business in the Hogwarts School. The comparisons not only substitute epithets which could have been used in normal school life situations with those that exist only in fictional space. Miss Gonagall in a class lecture tries to speak on mandrakes which have no existence
in reality but in the realms of fantasy. They are small pithy remarks with create the realistic world. A case in point comes up when in the course of a class on mandrakes the teacher Mrs.Sprout assures;

“As our Mandrakes are only seedlings their cries won’t kill yet” .(The Chamber of Secrets ,pg73).

‘Yet’ here is a significant and very strategic statement which enhances the fantasy. The suggestion here is that mandrakes normally kill but younger ones do not. This is a classic case in which a thing which actually does not exist in reality but is created by the induction of the images of the non-real is made to look like the real. The author wants to assert that the mandrakes are not old enough to kill. So epithets which are used in the normal plane are subverted here for the non-real world. Rowling is the master of description. Epithets become very specific and they create a locale which is the essence of the para-real. The realistic description of the pixies which Lockhart releases in his class is a case in point.

The pixies were electric blue and about eight inches high, with pointed aces and voices so shrill it was like listening to a lot of budgies arguing. The moment the cover had been removed, they had started jabbering and rocketing around, rattling the bars and pulling bizarre faces at the people nearest them. (The Chamber of Secrets ,pg 79).

Rowling uses realistic signifiers which construct the pixies that do not exist for real but are realistically constructed here. The normal world becomes alien and the non-existence world becomes real. The pixies which have no existence are created with very craftily and deft strategies which create the fantasy. Such images of the non real
shapes the fantasy. In the next chapter for example, Rowling spends a good deal of space on the Quidditch practice. What this does is very significant. First, this gives the reader a fair idea about the Quidditch game which has been really constructed for the reader. The narrative strategy that Rowling employs to explain Quidditch rules is actually fascinating. She has already done so in Book 1. But for the new readers Quidditch is not a familiar term. So she must inform but not cause boredom to the loyal readers from Book 1. So introduces an inquisitive Colin a first year, who enquires of Harry about Quidditch rules. A Rowling narrative cannot be all about sedate Quidditch rules.

Wood was holding up a large diagram of a Quidditch pitch, on which were drawn many lines, arrows and crosses in different coloured inks. (The Chamber of Secrets, pg83).

The child reader can relate to once knowledge/experience of real games as we can relate to Piaget’s concept of assimilation as discussed earlier in this chapter and elsewhere.10 Rowling always acts as accomplice of the child and this she does very intelligently by exploring classroom situations as the extract below demonstrates:.

‘You can address the envelopes!’ Lockhart told Harry, as though this was a huge treat. ‘This first one’s to Gladys Gudgeon, bless her – huge fan of mine. (The Chamber of Secrets, pg92).

So the situation (teacher-student and the normal share of associated like/dislike that is connected) goes very easily with the readers and the purpose is served. At every

instance, the signifiers depict non real images and tropes and the pattern of description border the real. Titles of Chapters become more and more significant as they convey horror and suspense. *The Deathday Party* is a case in point As the narrative proceeds the tropes of horror, shock and suddenness create the fantasy and new surprises are unfolded every time. When Harry is waiting for Filch, the school caretaker, apprehending a sentence for dirtying the school compound he chances upon an envelope which read

**KWIKSPELL**

A Correspondence Course in Beginners’ Magic. ( *The Chamber of Secrets*, pg92).

Rowling further states that the contents which look like an advertisement raised some doubts in the minds of the readers. There are many questions that arise in the mind of the reader and Harry wonders ‘how on earth’ a wizard would require a beginner’s guide of magic. The suspense is created by real time images but one must not forget that reality is distorted at every instance. Things tend to hot up in the Chapter *The Death Day Party*. We are into another realm of dangers as menacing aspects loom large as a cold voice screams. “I smell blood… I SMELL BLOOD” and they see “foot high words daubed on the wall between two windows, shimmering in the light cast by the flaming torches”. The warning is clear and sound:

From this part of the novel the action starts to develop all the way to its climax. Magic operates by induction of tropes of images of the non real.

Harry watched, amazed, as a portly ghost approached the table, crouched low and walked through it, his mouth held wide so that it
passed through one of the stinking salmon. *(The Chamber of Secrets*, 102).


With this warning we need to focus on the next chapter which is entitled ‘The Writing on the Wall’. The meaning of this phrase goes beyond its semantic value as it is an idiomatic expression. This expression here carries a lot of narratological weight. First it means what the idiom actually means. Secondly there is a literal meaning also. There is actually a ‘writing on the wall’ which would unfold itself later. Harry, Ron and Hermione discover that one of Hogwarts' founders, Salazar Slytherin, secretly built the Chamber of Secrets, which is rumoured to contain a monster only Slytherin's heir can have under direct control.

On Halloween, the school caretaker Mrs. Norris’ cat, is ‘petrified’; in the literal sense of the word. Mention of ‘evil mask’ and ‘human bones’ certainly sent ripples down the readers’ spine. Such deftly employed language games comprise a very important aspect of the text. There is an attack on Mrs. Norris, the cat of Filch and the school was busy discussing it as there were suspicion sweeping the minds and gradually the horror is seen to be built up. The chamber has its history which Professor Binns narrates after initial vacillations. There is a “horror within” the chamber which a monster, the heir of Slytheirn can open and he alone could control. A sceptical query emanates even from the usual sedate Ron “Do you really think there is the Chamber of Secrets?” and even the very knowledgeable Hermione does not possess a proper answer. Rowling’s use of language games requires a
lot of mention I have already commented on her use of the word ‘really’ with reference to the chamber of secrets, a thing which actually does not exist.

The word “really” is a great significance here. It is such language games which are certainly instrumental in creating the para-real world. The wizard world is a realistically constructed world. Rowling strives continually to chalk out this para-real world. There is an impending danger as the opened up chamber of secrets might pose problems for ‘muggles’ or ‘muggle borns’. Even Albus Dumbledore admits “it means that the chamber of secret has been opened again.” They arrive at a “real” conclusion. Training sessions and practical classes take place. Rowling has a natural way of narrating facts. Again when I use the word fact we must remember that we are dealing with facts of a para-real world, in the realm of fantasy very craftily constructed out for us:

‘You all know, of course, that Hogwarts was founded over a thousand years ago – the precise date is uncertain – by the four greatest witches and wizards of the age. The four school houses are named after them: Godric Gryffindor, Helga Hufflepuff, Rowena Ravenclaw and Salazar Slytherin. They built this castle together, far from prying Muggle eyes, for it was an age when magic was feared by common people, and witches and wizards suffered much persecution. ( The Chamber of Secrets 114).

This depiction certainly is structured very realistically as if it is a history of a real school. So we find, once more, how reality is distorted in children’s fantasy by some calculated strategies which border the real. So here we have a ‘real’ history of an unreal school which exists only in fictional space. In the midst of all the tension related to the chamber of secrets and its related horrors and suspense, Rowling does
not forget it to bring in a Quidditch match with its associated anxieties and suspense, the purpose consists in replacing a real life house match in a school by an unreal one. Here epithets concerning any real school match are replaced by epithets of non-real which are very comfortably placed in the fantasy. While playing Quidditch, Harry is pursued by a rogue Bludger, which causes Harry's arm to be broken, but he still catches the snitch. Lockhart volunteers to heal the broken bones, but removes them instead. He wakes up ‘hours after hours’ later. (pg132). That night, as Harry lies mending in his hospital bed, Dobby appears and admits responsibility for the platform incident and the rogue Bludger, and begs Harry to leave Hogwarts, sensing that he is in a grave danger and likely will die if he doesn't comply with him. He is warned by Dobby and he mentions cautiously, almost like a request, imploring him to go home for worse consequences from ‘He who must not be Named’ might befall. There are more questions unanswered than answered as the readers are in the middle of the book. There would be suspicion and counter suspicion and a lot of suspense in store. As Hermione hits upon a plan to trick Snape, it looks exactly like a school fun, resembling a gibe, or banter against a teacher. Rowling deviates from the normal sense of size and aggrandizes or minimizes as the requirement might ask\textsuperscript{11}. She uses signs and codes which the child can pick up easily and relate to as she looks in the situation from the child’s point of view capable of imagination, not in the adult rational sense but the non real, non rational, non logical fantastic sense. She continuously engages with the non rational faculty of a child reader. The language suits the psychological requirement of the audience. As it is revealed, Harry is able to speak to a snake.

When Snape turned and walked off to bully Neville, Hermione caught Harry’s eye and nodded.

Then Ron pushed Harry into an armchair and said, ‘You’re a Parselmouth. Why didn’t you tell us?’

‘I’m a what?’ said Harry.

“A Parselmouth!” said Ron. ‘You can talk to snakes!’

That’s why the symbol of Slytherin house is a serpent.’ (The Chamber of Secrets, 146).

This information carries special significance in the Hogwarts school. It could mean that Harry was the Heir of Slytherin which would mean further that he was not possessive of as good an image as he knew of. Every school has its share of secrets and there is one over here. Harry is in a sea of uncertainty and suspense. He was not very pally with this predicament. Crucial phase in the narrative arrives at the juncture of when Harry is suspected as a killer. The suspense is at peak. The magic of the chamber of secrets gets even more engrossing and the mysteries get even more engrossing & confusing. Panic rules at Hogwarts School. Fingers continue to raise against Harry as it is assumed that he is the heir of Slytherin which means that he is possibly responsible for the deaths in Hogwarts. There are images of shock and horror and wonder as people assume that Harry is not a magical person but a muggle. The attacks did not cease.

ATTACK! ATTACK! ANOTHER ATTACK! NO MORTAL OR GHOST IS SAFE! RUN FOR YOUR LIVES! ATAAAACK!’ (The Chamber of Secrets, 151).
In a fantasy tale, suspense and horror are of central importance. There are at this moment strong accusations against Harry. His rival Peeves even improvises a rejoinder.

‘Oh Potter you rotter, oh what have you done?

You’re killing off students, you think it’s good fun-‘(《The Chamber of Secrets》,152).

There of course is no dearth of such readily improvised rhymes aimed as banters at times innocuous and at times quite pungent as in real life school situations. One must identify the hyphen which is Rowling’s way of informing the child reader that there are more lines in the rhyme but it is rather unnecessary in this context.

Harry is in a spot of bother. Other characters that are ‘good’ in this world of magic are also bothered. It was mentioned that the Good versus Evil fabric is constructed eternally in fantasy literature. As Kolberg identifies there are different stages of moral development in individuals which is closely link to our understanding of fantasy12. I will demonstrate later how Propp tries to represent the good and evil patterns in folk tales. I will equate the same to Rowling’s text. In this context it also requires mention that there has been a lot of criticism about Harry Potter not being a

healthy Christian fantasy text. The same critics find Rowling being bordered on the Gnoistic world view which makes it look glamorous and interesting. These gives rise to a few very interesting propositions. First any reader of the Harry Potter series would understand that nowhere does Rowling try to show that evil is virtuous. In her tales it is always evil that loses. Wizardry is not uncommon in fantasy as we have discussed in so many times in this dissertation. Secondly there is no reason to believe that an author needs to stick to orthodox Christian thoughts always. The aspect of reality in fantasy signifies that, at the same time the narrative is an instrument of the real and the improbable. The improbable is treated in such a way that it distorts the probable. Titles of chapters like ‘Polyjuice Potion,’ highlight things which do not have any real existence but is made to look like the real. Hermione talks about a recipe called Poly Juice Potion and explains its ingredients, in graphic details. Suspecting that Draco is the heir of Slytherin, the trio make Polyjuice Potion, a brew which allows them, for a period of time, to look like someone else, but making of the potion will take a month. Harry and his peers smell a conspiracy but are unable to reach any conclusion He is worried whether he is a ‘mudblood’, and is even Ron’s concern as he warns,

“Hearing voices no one else can hear is’nt a good sign, even in the wizarding world.” (The Chamber of Secrets, 157).

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referring to Harry’s ability to listen to disembodied voices twice. Rowling plays with our sense of the real in a fascinating way. The parameters Ron talks about are not parameters of the real world and this violation is not violation of the real world but a distorted version of the real. Use of the word ‘mudblood’ also takes up linguistic parameters which stretch the normal patterns of language giving more space to the limits of morphology. Rowling creates fantasy by going beyond the possibilities that normal semantics can permit. Such usage goes down very well with the child reader. She does not forget to remind us that this is a school after all and this she does from time to time.

At last the term ended, and a silence deep as the snow on the grounds descended on the castle. (The Chamber of Secrets, 158).

This resembles a normal school like term end but we know that real parameters have been substituted for those of the non real.

I will quote a small reference in this chapter itself which demonstrates how fantasy is created.

Pinching his nose, Harry drank the Potion down in two large gulps. It tasted like overcooked cabbage. (The Chamber of Secrets, 162).

This is a real point of comparison which the child reader can very easily adhere and relate to such an analogy. We must relate this to Piaget’s concept of formal operations which according to him occurs between eleven and fifteen years. Our

outlook is not to look into the psychological nuances but to relate to the ability of the child not to be bound by concrete problems but develop the ability to deal with abstractions and consideration of hypothetical ideas. The remarkable aspect of Rowling’s narrative is how she continuously manipulates our standard understanding of the real, aggrandizing or minimizing as the requirement might be.

Immediately, his insides started writhing as though he’d just swallowed live snakes – doubled up he wondered whether he was going to be sick – then a burning sensation spread rapidly from his stomach to the very ends of his fingers and toes. *(The Chamber of Secrets)*, 162).

Mukhopadhyay shows in his research pertaining to icons that aggrandizement and miniaturization create impressions that tweak our imagination by manipulating the standard ideas of size.\(^{15}\) the narrator continuously substitutes the real by a distorted version of it. A newspaper cutting clipped out of ‘Daily Prophet requires mention. First there is no such real newspaper called Daily Prophet but it exists in fictional space only. It is a distorted version of the real, in this case a real newspaper. The clipping needs to be discussed.

**ENQUIRY AT THE MINISTRY OF MAGIC**

Arthur Weasley, Head of the Misuse of Muggle Artefacts Office, was today fined fifty Galleons for bewitching a muggle car….Mr Weasley was unavailable for comment although his wife told reporters to clear off or she would set the family ghoul on them. *(The Chamber of Secrets)*, 165).

The clipping refers to an enquiry at the Ministry of Magic. There is a lot of tension as it is suspected that Ron’s father has misused his powers. The report is a substitution of the normal world by calculated strategies. The normal world once more becomes alien and fantasy is created by deviation from normality with the help of manipulation of reality or distortion of associations and references and transference of epithet. A normal report here is substituted by a non real one. Rowling continuously creates narrative space as she takes the story ahead continually acting as the child’s accomplice. I will quote a small extract here which comments significantly how Rowling conjures fantasy and keeps the space open for future narratives.

'Azkaban – the wizard prison, Goyle,' said Malfoy, looking at him in disbelief. 'Honestly, if you were any slower, you'd be going backwards.' (The Chamber of Secrets, 167).

Malfoy mentions Azkaban quite casually in the course of a conversation but Azkaban is to become very significant in the next book of the Rowling series, The Prisoner of Azkaban (Book.3 of the series). A very conscious narrative ploy that Rowling adopts consists in dropping hints in the Book, which would be developed in later books, so when Harry of the prisoners of Azkaban we do not know that more is to come in the next book of the series. Rowling had planned seven books one each for the seven years Harry was to spend at the Hogwarts School. Her world is artfully patterned. Everything in a text is planned and intentional, the comic effect of Lockhart for that matter, which certainly sends the reader into ripples. When it comes it serious business, Rowling stands unparalleled. Harry and Ron intend to question Hagrid, but before they can, he is accused of opening the Chamber of Secrets again, and is sentenced to Azkaban prison. There are
misunderstandings and altercations that creates the secondary world. As Chapter 12 draws to its closures there are doses of suspense that construct fantasy. I will give two instances to validate my statement.

1. Her face was covered in black fur. Her eyes had gone yellow and there were long pointed ears poking through her hair. (The Chamber of Secrets, 167).

2. “Wait till everyone finds out you’ve got a tail!” (The Chamber of Secrets, 169).

Hermione had accidentally used the polyjuice potion which should not be used on animals or a cat. The second line quoted here is a good example how Rowling very engagingly creates narrative space and acts as a child’s accomplice. Here fantasy operates through transference of epithets. We are in a world in which ‘having a tail behind’ carries some social message which is not supposed to be acceptable in that world order, it is tantamount to an insult.

The very next chapter ‘The Very Secret Diary’ is very catchy and continues the breathless space of horror, shock and suspense that has been consciously developed in the last few pages of the text. She continually manipulates the child’s imagination and notion of the real. The list of suspects is endless. The diary in question has nothing written in it or at least nothing visible in it. Hermione tries to unravel things written in it by a particular charm she knows. By now the child reader has entered this para real world and realizes that the charms will never cease to surprise. The uncertainties reach their climax as it were. There is suspense about a diary which
could supposedly expose a lot of things. It is informed that the diary belongs to Tom Riddle but there is a problem as Ron suggests, “There’s nothing written in his diary.”(174). There is a strong confidence in the team of Harry that unraveling the contents of the diary shall unravel the secrets of the Chamber of Secrets. There is a casual narrative style which allows the narrator to be an accomplice of the child reader. is co

It must be getting riskier and riskier and riskier to open the Chamber of Secrets, with the school so alert and suspicious. Perhaps the monster, whatever it was, was even now settling itself down to hibernate for another fifty years.

As the suspense thickens Rowling makes the narrative even more gripping and she continues to manipulate reality by a distorted version of the real.

Hello, Harry Potter. My name is Tom Riddle. How did you come by my diary?. Lucky that I recorded my memories in some more lasting way than ink. Of course I know about the Chamber of Secrets. In my day, they told us it was a legend, that it did not exist. But this was a lie. The monster lived on and the one who had the power to release it was not imprisoned (The Chamber of Secrets ,177).
There are more revelations as it were. Riddle gives out the ‘history’ of the chamber of secrets and deeds of heroism concerning it. Once more we have a history of something which has existence only in the realms of fantasy. So magic is conjured by continuous induction of tropes and imagery of the non real that create ceaseless horror, suddenness and wonder. Tom Riddle informs that he is ‘Half-blood, sir, said Riddle. ‘Muggle father, witch mother.’( pg 182).

Rowling makes the narrative more and more tight as the battle thickens. Even a casual statement in a Rowling narrative is not uncalled for or superfluous. I will give two examples from Chapter 14.

1. The second years were given something new to think about hiring their Easter holidays. The time had come to choose their subjects for the third year, a matter that Hermione, at least, took very seriously. (The Chamber of Secrets, 177).

2. Perfect Quidditch conditions!’ (The Chamber of Secrets, 188).

In both these cases we have Rowling acting as an accomplice narrator as she projects as rationally inferior or less predictable or serious than the readers she addresses. Further the reader can relate to one’s own holiday homework or favourite sports conditions in real life. So real life situations are distorted and manipulated by the magical world. Such anecdotes continuously develop the story. Rowling never
allows the suspense to loosen though. There is the continuous conflict of interest as there are more attacks:

This will be a bit of a shock,’ said Professor McGonagall in a surprisingly gentle voice as they approached the hospital wing. ‘There has been another attack ….. another double attack.’

( The Chamber of Secrets ,190).

The two people attacked are a girl from another house in the school named Ravenclaw and their good friend Hermoine. The adventure and suspense hot up. Rowling transmutes the sense of the real by transporting us to the world of magic. We learn that ‘Harry had inherited just one thing from his father; a long and silvery invisibility Cloak’. ( The Chamber of Secrets ,190).

Harry ruminates Dumbledore’s last words to himself. Even Dumbledore is not above suspicion, adventures get more gripping as we reached climax, as there is a threat of Basilisk, the dangerous monster of the chamber.

I will only truly have left this school when none have are loyal to me … Help will always be given at Hogwarts to those who ask for it. ( The Chamber of Secrets ,197).
It is very difficult to accept that their revered teacher is responsible. This is a world in which there are a lot of good things also and ‘centaurs and unicorns’ are few of them as Harry certifies.

Preferring not to answer that question. Harry said, ‘There are good things in there, too. The centaurs are all right, and the unicorns.’ (The Chamber of Secrets, 200).

So such beings are very normally mentioned as they normally inhabit the para real world. They decide to unravel the mysteries and realize that they needed. As they entered the Forbidden Forest there are spiders all around:

Spiders. Not tiny spiders like those surging over the leaves below. Spiders, the size of cart horses, eight eyed, eight legged, black, hairy, gigantic. (The Chamber of Secrets, 204).

Rowling plays upon traditional ideas of size and tweaks them to create fantasy. 16 Further, the author also acts as an accomplice narrator by trying to evoke in the child an idea of the spider in concern as the reader would naturally relate it to a real spider. Rowling distorts reality by the sense of the non-real. There however is no dearth of the list of suspects and even Moaning Myrtle is not above it. In the midst of all this suspense there is a rejoinder by Professor. Mc.Gonagal.

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Professor McGonagall told them that their exams would start on the first of June, one week from today. (The Chamber of Secrets, 211).

This is a reminder that this after all is a school. This is just another strategy how Rowling continuously plays as an accomplice of the child reader. Amongst the list of suspects is Aragog, the pet spider of Hagrid. It was believed that Aragog was responsible for similar attacks many years ago. They learn that such allegations were false and Basilisk, a lethal serpent was responsible for the attacks and it was the monster of the Chamber of Secrets. A little later we are given an idea about Basilisk, the king of serpents, the description of which can sent shivers down any one spine

_of the many fearsome beasts and monsters that roam our land, there is none more curious or more deadly than the Basilisk, known also as the King of Serpents. This snake, which may reach gigantic size, and live many hundreds of years., is born from a chicken’s egg, hatched beneath a toad. Its methods of killing are most wondrous for aside from its deadly and venomous fangs, the Basilisk has a murderous stare, and all who are fixed with the beam of its eye shall suffer instant death. Spiders flee before the Basilisk, for it is their mortal enemy, and_
Once more Rowling tweaks standard ideas of size and parameter. The representation of evil is one of Rowling’s forte. It is a fact that Rowling put in a lot of research. There is a very accurate representation of witchcraft, back magic and black art. Though some critics feel this is not merely fantasy and blame her for deviating into terrains of black art, in reality there is no such attempt.\textsuperscript{17} There is also an attempt to link such depictions Wicca but Wiccans have vehemently opposed it.\textsuperscript{18} Rowling uses occult but there is no reason to believe that Rowling propagate witchcraft or any evil ideology. The magic starts to dominate the show to the fullest. Rowling now needs to wrap up the narrative. The suspense has now reached its climax. Just when it seems Harry will be killed by the Basilisk, Fawkes, Dumbledore's pet phoenix, appears and blinds the Basilisk. Fawkes carries the school Sorting Hat, from which

\textsuperscript{17} “The Trouble With Harry” by Marguerite Kelly, \textit{Washington Post}, February 14, 2001

\textsuperscript{18} Wiccans dispute Potter claims”, Ben Roy, \textit{Citizen Online-Newfound Area Bureau}, October 26, 2000. However, The Isle of Avalon Foundation (England) began offering a “part-time course in witchcraft for the 21st century” according to a Reuters, April 6, 2001 release, in part due to the renewed interest in the occult. Other witches have also noticed an increase in interest.
Harry draws a sword and kills the Basilisk, but one of its fangs pierces Harry's arm. Harry is saved by Fawkes, as phoenix tears have immense healing powers.

The tension mounts as we reach the chapter, The Heir of Slytherin and it is bound to intensify. Every reader can ask only one question, “What happens next?” Even Ginny Weasley is suspected but the allegation is not very convincing and it does not take long for us to understand and Tom Riddle, the epitome of goodness turn out to be the arch enemy if the piece as he proudly declares, “Voldemort is my past, present and future,” and there is an inevitable duel on the offing. The phoenix named Fawkes is the aide of Harry and the serpent Riddle’s.

There are tense moments and although the reader knows on whom victory, the “howness” of the theme is what one must avidly await the battle gets tense, charms and exchanged and Harry Potter triumphs over riddle and sanity is restored. Dobby is rewarded he is freed. Harry is at his wit’s end when he finds Tom Riddle as his archenemy of the moment.

**TOM MARVOLO RIDDLE**

Then he waved the wand once, and the letters of his name re-arranged themselves.

I AM LORD VOLDEMORT. (The Chamber of Secrets, 231).

Dumbledore’s been driven out of this castle by the mere memory of me!’ he hissed.
The sheer horror and violence that emanates here is remarkable. Similar real life situations are substituted by fantastic ones. We might forget for once that we are reading fantasy and not fiction involving humans. Rowling’s epithets do not cease till the very end.

A crimson bird the size of a swan had appeared, piping its weird music to the valued ceiling. It had a glittering golden tail as long as a peacock’s and gleaming golden talons, which were gripping a ragged bundle. (The Chamber of Secrets, 232).

Real life parameters are being subverted consciously to reach the ends of fantasy, so we do find a magical entity being constructed as our sense of normalcy is tweaked continuously. Harry Potter who has not been above suspicion gives Riddle a piece of his mind.

My common Muggle-born mother,’ he added, shaking with suppressed rage. ‘She stopped you killing me. And I’ve seen the real you, I saw you last year. You’re a wreck. You’re barely alive. That’s where all your power got you. You’re in hiding. You’re ugly, you’re foul!’ (The Chamber of Secrets, 233).

The narrative moves to its natural closure with the victory of good over evil. We would need to talk more on this a little later towards the end of this chapter. There are odds swinging on both sides however.
She bought you twelve years of borrowed time … but Lord Voldemort got you in the end, as you knew he must.’ (The Chamber of Secrets, 236).

Harry stabs the diary with a Basilisk fang, defeating Riddle and saving Ginny. The two then return with Ron and Lockhart to the school, where Ginny is reunited with her parents, and Harry and Ron are commended by Dumbledore. In the aftermath, Harry accuses school governor Lucius Malfoy (Draco’s father) of putting the journal in Ginny’s cauldron and later tricks him into freeing Dobby. I need to comment on the use of a simile towards the end of the penultimate chapter

His head was spinning as though he’d just travelled miles by Floo powder. (The Chamber of Secrets, 237).

We can see how craftily Rowling uses epithets which are supposed to be quite common in this magical world and has no existence in reality. It is expected that once we are in the world we should know all of it.

‘You can speak Parselotongue, Harry,’ said Dumbledore calmly, because Lord Voldemort – who is the last remaining descendant of Salazar Slytherin – can speak Parseltongue. Unless I’m much mistaken, he transferred some of his own powers to you the night he gave you that scar. Not something he intended to do, I’m sure. (The Chamber of Secrets, 245).
Vladimir Propp in his research on folk tales had brilliantly worked out a few charts which will aid in our understanding if we apply this to the readings of fantasy also. This equation helps us to understand that very central to our understanding of the para-real is our understanding of the moral fabrics of the text. The chart is titled: ‘Opposite types among Primary Character found in Fairy Tales’\textsuperscript{19} Now we can equate easily to Harry Potter:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heroes (Harry Potter and his associates)</th>
<th>villains (Voldemort and associates)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helpers (Ron, Hermione)</td>
<td>henchmen (Tom Riddle)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heroines (Not developed)</td>
<td>sirens (Not developed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good magicians (Harry Potter)</td>
<td>bad magicians (Voldemort)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispatchers of heroes (Hagrid)</td>
<td>captors (Voldemort)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seekers (Harry Potter)</td>
<td>avoiders (Voldemort)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seeming villains (Snape)</td>
<td>false heroes (Tom Riddle)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The author creates fantasy by deviating from normality, by substituting real life situations with an aggrandized or minimized or an alternative distorted version of the real. In this novel, Rowling replaces a real school with magical non real one. She suffuses the text with anecdotes from Harry’s school life at Hogwarts School which is craftily constructed parallel to anecdotes that might transpire in real life schools. She is never in a hurry to initiate the plot but when she

does so, she knows her business. Rowling’s realistically constructed ‘para-real’ world has no place for humans. It is only for the wizards and they decide the modalities of this world. The plot is replete with the adventures and the fight between good and evil which replace probable real life adventures with non real ones; not distanced from the real but a distorted version of it.