Chapter IV

The Fantastic Phenomenon of Real World: Harry Potter

With more than 350 million copies of seven volumes in over 63 languages spread in 200 countries worldwide, from bookstores to coffee shops, from prosaic magazines like TV Guide and Tribune Business News to more cerebral ones like the New Yorker or Salon and the radio and television, Harry Potter is present in most of the public and cultural spaces in which we live. The Harry Potter series and its film versions have broken all previous records in terms of sales, marketing strategies and the fanfare surrounding it, making Rowling the richest author of all times and the wealthiest woman of Britain. The media publicity and an expanding market of paraphernalia of the books and the movies have raised ‘Pottermania’ into a cultural phenomenon.

The incredible success of the Harry Potter books have raised the fear of corporate consumerism targeting child culture and also of the cultural commercialization of childhood by the media creating a cultural hegemony (Turner-Vorbeck 13-24; Zipes 170-89). The mass marketing of the Harry Potter products is seen as an infringement of consumerism on our post-modern children living in a state that Baudrillard calls hyper reality in which simulation and appearance seem more “real” and meaningful than substance and reality (qtd. in Heilman 15). Jack Zipes who uses a Marxist perspective in interpreting children’s literature, warns that the “Harry Potter books are driven by commodity consumption that at the same time sets the parameters of reading and aesthetic taste” (172). The literati too have not spared the ‘orphaned
celebrity’. Harold Bloom denounced the first book, as “short on imaginative vision” (A26). Pennington flings the series aside as “fundamentally failed fantasy” (1).

While social critics on the left have questioned the literary and social values of the Harry Potter books, champions of religion on the right have questioned their moral values, making them the most challenged children’s books ever. Right wing Christian critics like Richard Abanes, Phil Arms etc., as well as Vatican have attacked the ‘un-Christian’ messages of witch craft, black magic and godlessness of the books “framed in the occult” “portray[ing] the occult as empowering” (Wittman, “Occult Trends”), which might enthral children with magic and wizardry, and also desensitize them to the dangers of occult forces (Richard Abanes, Phil Arms qtd. in Lurie, *Boys and Girls* 119). Controversies and protests amounting to burning of the books in public only helped to keep them in the media – inciting intellectual and ethical curiosity to its literary, social and moral impacts – whether as a homogenized manifestation of a bankrupt pop culture or as a reinvention of good, old-fashioned values in fun-filled packages. Since they have become an economic phenomenon and have apparently transcended cultural boundaries more effortlessly than any other fictional work of recent years, and since they are the most challenged books of our time, the *HP* books and the phenomenon deserve serious social, political and literary analyses. Jack Zipes has argued that it is exactly because of the overwhelming success of the *HP* novels and the troubling socio-cultural trends that it has reflected that the phenomenon needs to be evaluated; he prescribed the “formulaic” nature of the series for its incredible success. For, the success criteria for anything phenomenal in Western Society is grounded on a paradox: it must be conventional; it must be ‘unusual’, conforming to the standards of exception set by mass media; it must be popularly accepted, promoted by pop culture and worthy of everyone’s attention; it must conform to the tastes of hegemonic groups.
Zipes is of the opinion that it is impossible to be phenomenal without conforming to conventionality, the very same reason that Rowling’s novels, “a hodgepodge of popular entertainments”, are “so appealing” (Zipes 170-89).

However, the renewed interest in children’s literature the Potter books have fostered has made its author J.K. Rowling a power too great to ignore, inviting scholarly attention to her books, which can be measured in the number of books, academic papers and conferences that explore Harry’s connection to the Stoics, St. Augustine, Beowulf, Jung, Freud and what not. Rowling has been noticed by the literati from the publication of the first book itself, namely *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, which has won several literary awards like the British Book Awards’ Children’s Book of the year (1997), the ABBY award from the American Book sellers Association, the Carnegie Medal etc. The second book, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* also won the same awards, in addition to the BBA Book of the year. Rowling won the Smarties Prize in a row from 1997 to 1999 and was nominated to compete with Nobel laureate Seamus Heaney’s translation of *Beowulf* for the Whitbread Book of the Year Prize in 1999. Heaney won, much to the relief of the literati, and Rowling’s book was named Whitbread Children’s Book of the Year. This prejudice of considering a book marketed for young readers but also successful with adults as less laudable an achievement than a successful book targeted primarily at adults, was sensed by children’s literature scholars as a long-standing prejudice of the mainstream academics against the genre. Nevertheless, Rowling achieved another milestone when she was named the Author of the Year by the British Book Awards in 2000, thus occupying a permanent place in the literary canon. Yet it remains to be seen whether the books will, in the long run, be regarded as classics or merely as a
phenomenal publishing success; whether its place in literary history would be cultural or commercial.

Rowling, a serious writer attempting a serious literary achievement, is the most conscientious and successful inheritor of a long line of great predecessors of the fantasy genre from whose infinite wealth of imagination she has learned and assimilated much. Her originality is in no way diminished by her intertextuality; rather the additional levels of meaning render the books as more attractive, especially to adult readers who often compare her to authors like Roald Dahl, P.L. Travers, C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Frank Baum etc. The fantasy frame work of the HP series is thought to be an antecedent of that of Lewis’s Narnia series; the boarding school tradition of Hogwarts is considered as directly influenced by Thomas Hughes’s *Tom Brown’s School Days*; its magical apprenticeship is said to be founded on Ursula Le Guin’s Earthsea saga, Jill Murphy’s *Worst Witch* books, Anthony Horowitz’s *Groosham Grange* or Diana Wynne Jones’ *Chrestomanci* books; the fantastic names and characters resemble those of Tolkien’s *Middle earth*; the comedy and humour is compared to that of the iconoclastic tales of Dahl; and the light-hearted fertility of invention and the fully imagined world recalls Frank Baum’s *Oz* stories. Rowling’s biographer Sean Smith cites that *The Little White Horse* (1946) by Elizabeth Goudge, Rowling’s favourite book from childhood “[perhaps, more than any other book,…has a direct influence on the Harry Potter books” (42). Whether or not Rowling was inspired by these authors or used some of their motifs is not the vital question; the issue here is the nature of intertextuality within a larger moral frame-work which lends a cross-over appeal to the Potter books. Imbibing or adapting from specific earlier texts, well-known stories, archetypes, genres, conventions, traditions and other discourses, and recombining and subverting the various traditional elements in a non-traditional way, Rowling has
brought forth a freshness to story-telling which is testified by her huge fan-following of both adults and children of a range of age groups and also by the huge potential of critical analyses her books stimulate.

The powerful fresh and innovative story-teller of Harry Potter’s fantasy world, Rowling herself has a rag-to-riches tale surrounding her life, almost amounting to fantasy. Born in 1966 in Chipping Sodbury, Gloucestershire, England as the eldest of the two daughters of Peter and Ann Rowling, Joanne Kathleen Rowling was a shy student who loved to read and to invent stories and imaginary games which she shared with her younger sister. She wrote her own first story of a rabbit, called ‘Rabbit’ when she was six. In the hamlet of Winterbourne where she spent her childhood, Joanne had a seven year old boy as playmate in the neighbouring Potter family, presumably her inspiration for the main character’s name. Even while studying French and classics at Exeter University, and working in different positions as teacher, secretary etc and later moving to Portugal as teacher, Rowling kept kindling the embers of the dream to pursue a writing career. The failure of a long-term relationship, the ache and insecurity left by the untimely loss of her mother, the short-lived and turbulent marriage with a Portuguese journalist, the escape to Edinburgh with her infant daughter Jessica and the struggle to survive and support her as a single parent with the aid of public assistance – nothing could extinguish her fervour to deliver her fantasy child Harry Potter, who had already ‘strolled into her head fully formed’ (“Surprising Success”), way back in 1990 during a train journey. Rowling’s sustenance on public welfare, her daily trips to the nearby café with daughter Jessica to escape their unheated apartment, where she could write while rocking her daughter to sleep in her pram beside her, the several rejections of the book until Bloomsbury’s acceptance to print 30,000 copies for 4000 pounds, the publicity by the old fashioned word-of-mouth which catapulted the sales and later the
sale of the American rights to Scholastic USA where her reputation caught fire more quickly than in Britain and the rise of HP along with its author to a global phenomenon - all appear as incredible events picked out of a tale of high fantasy, which have been savoured with as keen an enthusiasm by Potter fans as the books themselves have generated.

Rowling says that she was not really aware that it was a children’s book: “I really wrote it for me. It was what I found funny and what I liked” (News Week, qtd. in Shapiro 79). Torn between writing the typical children’s book, which often condescended to the reader, and simply writing the book that she would choose to read as an adult, Rowling chose the latter course. Like Tolkien, Rowling too had not written her book with any target audience in mind, which probably accounts for its universal appeal, thus making her a principal catalyst for the burgeoning interest in cross-over fiction. The books are upbeat, humorous and light-hearted, making them very different from much of the children’s and young adult fiction currently published, and turning non-readers into book lovers. The universality and universal appeal of HP series owes to its generic nature and generic fusion connecting the text with other genres and texts. Along with the ‘main stream’ genres such as fantasy, adventure, quest romance and myth, Rowling has fused in minor genres like mystery, school story and sports story as well as traditionally ‘despised’ genres like pulp fiction, gothic fiction, horror story, detective fiction and series books, into a larger mosaic in HP.

Though the HP novels are a juxtaposition of several seemingly contradictory genres “that sometimes it seems as though Rowling has assembled her novels from a kit” (“Why Harry’s Hot”, Newsweek 52), basically they belong to the tradition of Anglo-American fantasy set in a secondary world of magic and the supernatural involving the fight of good against evil- with the unique ‘Rowlingian’ subversions.
Like any typical fantasy, the HP books too, begin with the humdrum, every day life of an ordinary person. Harry Potter, a disempowered orphan who was undergoing a ‘Cinderlad’ existence in a “cupboard under the stairs…” (Philosopher’s Stone 20) with his Muggle (non-magical people) relatives, the Dursleys, is suddenly elevated into a hero of power when he realizes that he is a wizard. When he steps through London’s shabby Leaky Cauldron into the Diagon Alley -the parallel alternative wizard world located within but hidden from the world of Muggles – his life, his vision and his personality are transformed and empowered through enchantment.

From then on Harry’s life is a series of adventures, stretching over seven years of his school life at Hogwarts covering seven volumes, at the end of which he is a mature adult- physically, intellectually, morally and spiritually- typical of bildungsroman fantasy novels. At the beginning of the series, in Philosopher’s Stone, Harry is quite literally a child, a baby in fact, in total oblivion of his parentage or his special powers; gradually he comes to realize his potential as well as his orphaned Muggle existence; later on, in the same book, he becomes aware that even in the wizard world, he holds a special heroic status; as the series develops, he turns out to be the chosen one bound to defeat the evil-incarnate Voldemort. By the end of this journey of the hero-in-progress, Harry is initiated from childhood to adulthood, growing from innocence to experience, thus completing his coming-of-age process. Harry’s personal quest of growing up to become a wizard is central to the fate of the wizard world (and the primary world) as Voldemort seeks to regain his power and Harry must thwart him, representative of traditional fantasy story. This transformational journey and the resultant separation which leads to self-discovery and meaning in the world forms the basis of Young Adult coming-of-age fantasy literature, which is what the novels are.
But Rowling has upset the expected elements in the initiation paradigm. In Campbell’s analysis of a recurrent pattern of literary initiation, the universal mythical hero typically goes on a quest of arduous trials assisted by a mentor, and returns home triumphant, with the awareness of a new world order and the treasure which he shares with the community (30-40). By having Harry leave the Dursleys for Hogwarts, Rowling inverts the traditional paradigm when Harry is introduced to the childhood nurture and domestic safety that his life at Privet Drive with the Muggles precluded; “[t]he castle felt more like home than Privet Drive ever had” (Philosopher’s Stone 126) because it was the only place where he had ever been happy. In place of the carefree blissful childhood of the Campbellian initiate, Harry suffers physical trials in the form of abuse and punishment during his pre-initiation stage with the Dursleys, while his journey from Privet Drive to Hogwarts is a journey to physical safety and innocence of childhood before he must handle the trials associated with adulthood, as Hogwarts too becomes vulnerable from the fourth book onwards. When Harry turns seventeen his protection charm is broken, (having completed his initiation) and he is not safe anymore, not even in Privet Drive; yet separation from home is never traumatic for him.

In contrast to the physical and mental deprivation of the typical initiate, Harry is also endowed with a generous inheritance at the goblin-run Gringott’s bank, an Invisibility cloak and an Elder Wand, and is encouraged by supportive peers in Ron and Hermione and nurturing and appreciating adults in the Weasleys, Hagrid, Sirius Black, Lupin, McGonagall and above all, Dumbledore. Rowling’s inversions prepare Harry for the more personal, intellectual psychological challenges that will alter his world view and will in turn forge in him a more mature understanding of self, a stronger connection with family and friends and a deeper commitment to others - typically an
initiate’s shift from egocentrism to other-centeredness. Rowling’s adoption of and adaptations to the initiation paradigm, “has created an extended narrative about the tragedy of lost childhood, the possibility of transcending a horrific past, and the heroic needed to achieve a balanced view of the self and the world one inhabits” (De Rosa 183). She makes use of this strategy within a traditional fantasy framework.

Harry Potter, as a character type, is not new but the latest protagonist in a long line of the fantasy literature that extends through numerous structures from Gilgamesh, Arthur, and Kal El to Frodo, Ged, Peter and Luke Skywalker. Though the son of a wizard couple, his life begins in ignorance of his heritage; like Arthur and Luke Skywalker he is unaware of his powers. Like his Victorian predecessors Harry is vulnerable in his powerlessness, but as he discovers his strength, he releases a new source of vitality into the world - a kind of Everychild, and as an Everychild, he needs guidance. Like Frodo who does not know the way to destroy the Ring, Harry too is totally unaware of his destiny. And like Frodo, he is reluctant to accept his new role as a wizard initially, since it was powerlessness that he had known throughout his childhood with the Dursleys. He tries to convince Hagrid that the giant would have mistaken his identity: “I think you must have made a mistake. I don’t think I can be a wizard” (Philosopher’s Stone 47).

But at Hogwarts, he realizes that he is not only a wizard but an exceptional one too, possessing potentials enough to thwart the motives of the most evil wizard of the world. As the only person ever known to have survived the killing curse Avada Kedavra, Harry is considered by many to be the ‘Chosen One’ to wipe out Voldemort and his evil powers. The prophecy made to Dumbledore by Professor Trelawny about “the one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord” (Phoenix 741) further confirms that Harry is “the one who’s got to finish off Voldemort” (Half-Blood Prince 96).
Moreover, “for his own inscrutable reasons, Voldemort had chosen to believe that Harry was the one meant” (133). Past actions, and present circumstances lead Harry too, to the traditional conclusion: “I am the Chosen One” (458), though at times doubts creep in whether he is equipped with the “uncommon skill and power” (476) it would take to kill such a powerful wizard like Voldemort. This conviction, which is further endorsed by reassurance time and again from Dumbledore, emboldens him to counter Voldemort’s jeer that he was ‘the boy who has survived by accident’:

‘Accident was it, when my mother died to save me?’ asked Harry … ‘Accident, when I decided to fight in that graveyard? Accident, that I didn’t defend myself tonight, and still survived, and returned to fight again?’ (Deathly Hallows 591).

Harry’s relationship with his own destiny means that the main events in his life often happen because they have to, rather than through his individual choice; his identity as a wizard and his uniqueness from other wizards owing to his birth-right reinforces this. He is a hero like “[t]hose who… have leadership thrust upon them, and take up the mantle because they must, and find to their own surprise that they wear it well” (575). Here again, Rowling has toppled the conventional paradigm regarding the Chosen One; it was not any benevolent powers that chose Harry Potter against evil powers; it was Voldemort, in singling out Harry as the person who would be most dangerous to him, who “made [him] the person who would be most dangerous to him” (Half-Blood Prince 476), thus himself creating his worst enemy, while also providing him with the tools for eliminating him.

Whatever the reason or whoever the means, Harry Potter is nonetheless, the Chosen One. Yet his actions are solidly founded upon free choice, which, as Dumbledore underlines, makes all the difference: “It is our choices, Harry, that show
what we truly are, far more than our abilities” (Chamber 245). Choice is the central theme of the whole series and this is made evident from the Philosopher’s Stone onwards. During the Sorting Hat Ceremony, which marks a newcomer’s quest to identity as an individual and as member of a larger group, when the Hat considers where it shall put Harry, he desperately pleads, “Not Slytherin, not Slytherin” (Philosopher’s Stone 90-1), thus actively participating in the ritual in a way the other students do not. “The Sorting Hat takes your choice into account”, Harry later accentuates the freedom of right choice to his son, in the epilogue of Deathly Hallows (607). This choice for courage (as represented by Gryffindor) over ambition (marked by Slytherin) reasserts himself as Voldemort’s enemy, although he didn’t know it at that time. He also rejects Voldemort’s call to join him and thus save his own life (213). Even at the end of the long battle against the Dark Lord, he had the choice to board a train from King’s Cross station and thus save himself. But he uses his free will and chooses to return to the wizard world, to his world, so that Evil may be finished for good.

As the series progresses, this ordinary ‘no-account’ boy becomes the epitome of what Tolkien praises as the ‘ennoblement of the humble and meek’. The self-discovery of himself as the central character of his own story moves him to a sense of his power and also to his responsibility to the larger community. In this process of ‘life-learning’, Harry is introduced also to self-learning regarding his survival against Voldemort’s fatal attack, the nature of his relationship with Voldemort, the powers he possesses that can foil Voldemort etc. Self-knowledge makes him bolder and tougher (“I’ll make sure I take as many Death Eaters with me as I can” (Half-blood Prince 78)) but it doesn’t make him proud or aggressive (“I wouldn’t have used a spell like that [Sectum Sempra], not even on Malfoy” (495)). Like a true hero, he can forgive Peter Pettigrew-
“the vermin [who] is reason [he has] no parents” - (Azkaban, 275). Again, it is his sacrifice and love serving as a protection that saves his friends and supporters from the evil spells of the dark side in the final battle. Harry even calls upon Voldemort to repentance: “[T]hink about what you’ve done… think, and try for some remorse” (Deathly Hallows 594). With this ability to love and to forgive unconditionally, which is agape, Harry already achieves spiritual victory over Voldemort. Once the psychological warfare is won, the physical victory which follows is only inevitable; finally the noble does inherit the world.

Thus Harry Potter is both a typical and atypical fantasy hero who can operate on all the displacement levels of Northrop Frye’s schema of archetypal figures – myth, romance, high-mimetic narrative, low-mimetic narrative and ironic narrative (33-34). The separation-initiation-return of Campbellian mono-myth is most tangible in the character of Potter. Empowered by magical powers and endowed with magical agents, Harry grows from being the underdog to being the master, a pattern typical of a fairytale hero. He is an ordinary child empowered by magic and a magical world, into the superior position of the romantic hero based on Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of carnival, through the common carnivalesque device of fantasy. He is also a tragic hero who becomes more and “more alone than he had ever been before” (Half-Blood Prince 601) until the very end, with the loss of each of his loved ones and the emotional and psychological separation from the community to which he belongs.

Harry is atypical as a hero in many ways too. Though smart, brave, athletic and willing to take risks for ‘the greater good’, he is not physically a stereotypical hero, being “small and skinny…[with] a thin face, knobbly knees, black hair and bright-green eyes [and] …a very thin scar on his forehead which was shaped like a bolt of lightning”; clothed in trousers and shirts four times his size and wearing “round glasses
held together with a lot of Sellotape” (Philosopher’s Stone 20). Harry is not a mythical figure in the sense of a cultural hero. Unlike a true fairy-tale hero, he is complex, has doubts, fears and despairs, breaks rules and is not hundred percent heroic. His intrinsic goodness is his most momentous weapon, yet he has grown from the ideal romantic child-hero he was, to an adult with mature authority and power. The child-hero is not disempowered or adult authority is not re-established in the closure as is common in children’s mythical and romantic fiction. Unlike a conventional romantic hero, Harry displays quite a few traits normally associated with feminine stereotypes: he is non-violent, non-aggressive (except with evil), emotional, caring and vulnerable. Above all, Harry as a modern tragic hero is an ordinary yet noble person affecting through his actions the destiny of the whole world, both the secondary wizard world where he belongs by birthright and the primary Muggle world where he was ‘reared’ as a child. Young readers accustomed to their own ordinariness, therefore find Harry an easy hero to identify with, like Frodo, than other high profile tragic heroes. “Personal fantasies do not come much more appealing than this, especially when they are embodied in someone who up to the age of 10 was treated as of no account at all” (Tucker, “The Rise and Rise” 227).

A fantasy hero, by tradition, is called to a wholly alternative world of dangerous adventures on his quest. In such a secondary world, the sub-genre of parallel worlds existing alongside the primary world is one of great appeal, as in C.S. Lewis’s Narnia Chronicles. The wizard world of HP is an exploration of another world while our own real world remains the starting point of experience. The secondary world of Hogwarts “maintains its own inner consistency of reality” (“On Fairy”155) through Rowling’s sub-creative art, the qualities of which are absolutely “derived from Reality or are flowing into it” (155) intermittently. The characters in the story move in and out to a
parallel world existing inside but hidden away in the real world, the constant cross-reference and juxtaposition between the two creating the sense of parallelism. As Harry glimpses, interacts and encounters magical creatures like goblins, elves, Hippogriffs, unicorns and dragons, the imagined world of the wizard world is made real through the potency of words; and it fulfils for him one of man’s “primal desires that lie near the heart of Faerie”, the wish “to hold communion with other living things”(117).

Harry Potter becomes aware of a magic world existing in the interstices of Britain, when on his eleventh birthday, a torrent of letters delivered by owls start arriving for him, inviting him to join the Hogwarts School of Wizardry and Witchcraft. Harry becomes initiated into that parallel world when Hagrid taps on the brick walls of a London pub, The Leaky Cauldron and opens up the enchanting ways to Diagon Alley. He becomes an active member of the wizard world when he enters platform nine and three quarters to take the Hogwarts Express:

He pushed his trolley round and stared at the barrier. It looked very solid.

He started to walk towards it…- leaning forward on his trolley he broke into a heavy run – the barrier was coming nearer and nearer – he wouldn’t be able to stop- … he closed his eyes ready for the crash-

It didn’t come … he kept on running … he opened his eyes.

A scarlet steam engine was waiting …with… [a] sign overhead [which] said *Hogwarts Express, 11 0’ clock*. Harry looked behind him and saw a wrought – iron archway where the ticket box had been, with the words *Platform Nine and Three Quarters* on it. He had done it (*Philosopher’s Stone* 70-71).
Harry and so also his readers are transported immediately into the alternate world of magic. By the help of his new wizard friend Ron, Harry is introduced to the dainties of the wizard world of wonder and enchantment by way of Bertie Bott’s Every Flavour Beans, chocolate frogs which can jump and picture trading cards from which the wizards can vanish.

The new recruits of Hogwarts, both wizard born and Muggle born, are called upon to view the ordinary in a fresh new way, which is ‘Recovery’ in Tolkenian terms. The portraits move in and out of their frames; staircases change positions; doors open only if you ask politely. Each student is sorted out into one of the four houses by a talking, thinking Sorting Hat; each house has its own poltergeist or ghost; the household chores are done by house elves; the subjects of study are Potions, Defence Against Dark Arts, Transfiguration, Care of Magical Creatures etc.; the popular game is Quidditch played on broomsticks; dragons, were-wolves, giants and centaurs exist side-by-side with wizards, goblins and elves. Spells and counter spells are used in achieving ends and in destroying enemies; memories can be delved into through a Pensieve, confused by Confundus or Imperious curse, blocked by Occlumency or erased by memory-modifying spells. Thus fantasy “arrests strangeness” (“On Fairy”139) and the desire of the primary world for “the making or glimpsing of Other Worlds” is realized (135).

In the Hogwarts classrooms too, the same juxtaposition of the ordinary and the extraordinary occur, making the parallelism between the magic world and the real/Muggle world more conspicuous. For instance, Professor Trelawney briefs her students on the lesson-plan of Divination:

‘In the summer term … we shall progress to the crystal ball – if we have finished with fire omens, that is. Unfortunately,
classes will be disrupted in February by a nasty bout of flu.

I myself will lose my voice. And around Easter, one of our number will leave us forever’ (Azkaban 80).

Readers get caught up in this sort of tomfoolery along with Harry and start to see wizard ways as sensible and Muggle ways as absurd. “The beauty of it is, of course, that no self-respecting child reader will ever think of himself as a Muggle” (Allen13-4).

The Magic world is deliberately located in the crevices of the Muggle world and can be entered by various means (if you know them). But the wizard world works hard to ensure non-intrusion of magic into the Muggle world. The Muggle world is presented in a way which complements the Magic world. “[I]n it magic can be manifested and casual explanations cannot always apply; magic is apparent as magic because it defeats the desires and sharpens the explanatory failures of Muggles; the Muggle world and the magic world are mutually definitive” (Gupta 87). Much space is devoted gleefully elaborating these relationships and exploiting the contradictions. The Muggle world, reflected through the microcosm of the Dursley household, is aware of the Magic world but chooses to disregard or shun it or refuses to accept its existence since the former lacks imagination and therefore, ‘Recovery’. The wizard world generally has little or no interaction with the latter unless absolutely necessary, or it seldom has any know-how regarding the affairs of Muggles or about their customs, conventions and culture. Ron sounds amazed and thinks it “Weird!” that in the Muggle world, “people just stay put in photos” (Philosopher’s Stone 77); Mr. Weasley’s wonderment at Muggle artefacts is forever.

Tolkien says that the most “familiares are the ones both most difficult to play fantastic tricks with, and most difficult really to see with fresh attention, perceiving their likeness and unlikeness” (“On Fairy”146). Rowling excels in doing this. The
Muggle world is defamiliarized and made exotic in the wizard eyes just as the wizard world in the Muggle eyes, achieving ‘Recovery’ – “as things apart from ourselves” (146). The trite, familiar and insignificant everyday Muggle activities which have been ‘appropriated’, are recovered, defamiliarized and looked upon with freshness of vision. By juxtaposing two parallel worlds, both seeming fantastic to one another, Rowling has opened the hoard of triteness and familiarity of our insipid and colourless mental landscapes and “let all the locked things fly away like cage-birds” letting the ‘dangerous and potent’ “free and wild: no more yours than they were you”(147). The admixture creates something new – a world that resembles our own, but isn’t quite our own.

In many ways, the series is steeped in reality. Hogwarts is implied to exist in the England of today: students attend classes, do home work and experience peer pressures, pleasures and rivalries; the good are engaged in a constant struggle against the evil; wizards work hard to keep their family going; mother witches cook, clean, caution and care. But the luminous setting in the secondary world defamiliarizes its everyday aspects: owls bring posts; portraits talk and move; hearths act out ‘video-conferencing’; buses squeeze-in through heavy traffic; people ‘apparate’ and ‘disapparate’, and sometimes change into animals; and magic turns a normal ordinary eleven year old boy into a wizard with great powers.

The things that happen in the wizarding world are the things of the primary world: the fantasy is in the details. On the other hand, it is the ordinary and the mundane of the primary world that the secondary wizard world finds enchanting, like making a phone call or driving a car. Our everyday non-magical world is transformed when Rowling presents our culture afresh to us as a version of ‘our’ reality expressed through a wizard narrative, as when Ron says, “Mum’s got a second cousin who’s an
accountant, but we don’t talk about him” (Philosopher’s Stone 75). The wizard world itself is our culture defamiliarized, transformed and enchanted. The mundane Muggle world is a signifier — recognizable as everything apparent on the surface, but below it or rather parallel to it is the signified wizard world, existing in the gaps in Muggle perceptions. The two worlds co-exist and interact across “the great, invisible wall that divide[s] the relentlessly non-magical world of Privet Drive and the world beyond” (Phoenix 39). Rowling presents us with two worlds, which are really one. “[L]ike Harry encountering the black haired, orphaned Tom Riddle, the young Lord Voldemort, we meet the stranger face to face and find that he is us, transformed by narrative” (Behr 128).

One of Rowling’s greatest strengths lies in this effortlessness with which she can combine fantasy and reality involving the readers’ willing suspension of disbelief in the imagined world. By recovering for us the child-like sense of wonder things used to have, the veil of familiarity is removed and the reader acquires again the potency of the familiar everyday things through fantasy. By looking at children on par with them and not looking down to them, Rowling is able to ‘regain a clear view’ with child-like wonder, the quality of a Tolkienian fairy-story which allows us to stay childish. Consequently, as Rowling claims, she can with no difficulty think of herself back to eleven years old (qtd. in Shapiro 6). Eleven-year old Potter fan Dexter Lateef underlines this statement in relation to his reading experience of HP thus: that the secondary world Rowling creates is “a fantasy place that I can get into and escape from reality…not too far removed from my own world in an inner-city day-school” (qtd. in Westman 305).

The parallel world that Rowling creates in the Harry Potter novels, while holding a mirror unto reality, also offers an escape from reality, especially in being
backward-looking and nostalgic. Therefore, Rowling’s magic world has been criticized
to be medieval; the school of Hogwarts is considered Victorian, and the Dursleys are
said to be drawn out of fairy tale (Jenkyns 38-49): Nicholas Tucker validates the
“distinctly back-ward looking quality” of the HP novels to its immense cross-over
success:

[The] modern children relish the chance to return to some
of the popular themes and attitudes that used to be found in
their fiction [...] [A]dult readers... do so because Rowling
takes them back to the simplicities of the stories they read
when young, at a time when children’s books were generally
less realistic and more concerned with pleasing fantasies (221).

Contemporary social issues of young adults do not appear in Harry’s world; instead
old-fashioned issues raised by malicious teachers, scheming rich bullies and terrifying
villains problematize it in an alternative magical world clearly marked by good and evil
powers. By returning to heroism, melodrama, moral certainty and wish-fulfilment,
Rowling has breathed new life into the traditional form of fantasy writing for children.
With a world of steam engines, cobbled streets, Victorian looking dress and manners
and old-fashioned values such as courage, fidelity, honour, discipline and respect for
elders, Rowling takes the reader a step back to “a time when there were such things as
childhood and adolescence, when the young were not expected to lose their innocence
at seven and their virginity at thirteen” (Wrigley 9).

Rowling achieves this merging of the antithetical worlds of fantasy and reality
in her secondary world by making exceptional use of the fantasy tools of magic and the
supernatural. Tolkien calls this ‘special skill, a kind of elvish craft’, “[t]o make a
secondary world inside which the green sun will be credible, commanding Secondary
Belief” (“On Fairy” 140)- by the term Enchantment. The *HP* novels clearly illustrate Rowling’s “uncanny ability to nourish the human hunger for enchantment” (“Wild About Harry”). Ironically, the most scathing attack on the Potter novels has been directed on the theme of magic used in the stories, as it is obviously linked to wizardry. Conservative Christians have been wildly supportive of the use of magic and wizardry of Tolkien and Lewis, yet they burn the *HP* books and challenge them for ‘dabbling in the occult’, even though Inkling parallels with *HP* are obvious. Vatican slams Harry as the wrong kind of hero “who poses a danger to children across the world with a secret knowledge”:

> Despite the values we come across in the narration, at the base of this story, witchcraft is proposed as a positive ideal. The violent manipulation of things and people comes thanks to knowledge of the occult” (“Vatican Slams”).

While the moral relativism and the promotion of witchcraft and occult are seen as the ‘Menace Behind the Magick’ (sub-title of Richard Abanes’s book) of the Potter books, several critics as well as Christian leaders like Alan Jacobs, Chuck Colson, Richard Mouw, Francis Bridger and others have responded positively to Harry Potter. While practicing witch Wren Walker offers a thoroughly Wicca exegesis, praising Harry for challenging “blind adherences to patterns that are unhealthy and inimical to personal expression and growth…” (qtd. in Lentini), ex-occult practitioner Alison Lentini urges parents not to abandon “a biblically informed caution about things magical” because there is “no “safe magic” for a Christian, not even in a fairy tale” and so the “safe magic of Harry Potter is no safer than “safe sex” (“Occult Cosmology” 22-25). The caution alluded to is with reference to a passage in Deuteronomy:
There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For whoever does these things is detestable to the Lord (Deut.18:9-12).

Rowling has denounced the complaints in her interviews and talks and explains that no child fan of hers, to her knowledge, has ever expressed a desire to become a witch or wizard, because children can easily discern where reality ends and fantasy begins. Bruno Bettelheim implies this in the *Uses of Enchantment* when he says that stories speak to a child “in the language of symbols and not that of everyday reality” (62):

> The child intuitively comprehends that although these stories are unreal, they are not untrue; that while what these stories tell about does not happen in fact, it must happen as inner experience and personal development; that [fantasy] tales depict in imaginary and symbolic form the essential steps in growing up and achieving an independent existence (73).

In *HP*, witchcraft is a desirable vocation, learned through rigorous training for over a period of seven years, which is quite different from the magic of the Narnia tales or LotR. The story is a bildungsroman, yet coming to maturity of Harry means ‘coming-of-age’ as a wizard.

But Rowling has declared that her books are not about “magick” in the sense of Wiccan practice (McVeigh), but about imagination where she appeals to a child’s imagination or to one who can respond to her books like a child. As Lewis says “What is meant lightly [we must] take lightly; what is meant gravely, gravely” (*An Experiment*
In *HP* Rowling is neither seducing children into the occult nor associating her magic with any religion, rather she is intending to open up imagination, to “baptize the imagination” (Lewis, *Miracles* 218 n.1). This is the ‘Recovery’ of imaginative vision, the ability to see our world clearly that Tolkien speaks about. Both Tolkien and Lewis saw the making or glimpsing of other worlds as a form of imaginative activity that nurtures and enables hope to deal with the present and to take hold of the future and also as a special form of self-transcendence. The magic in *HP* equip children to transcend their present day difficulties and to awaken their imaginative faith so that they can grasp the “deeper magic” that is also there. Rowling’s ‘elvish craft’ accomplishes this rare achievement of narrative art, which is story-making in its primary and most potent mode (“On Fairy”140).

Magic which is the most integral part of Harry Potter’s story is not supernatural or demonic, it is part of the natural order of wizard reality. It is a literary device comparable to quasi-magical and unscientific powers of literary creations like Superman that helps children suspend disbelief and enter another world. Unlike other fantasy heroes who are either thrust into a magical world or who stumble upon a magical ring, a creature, a carpet or a book, Harry Potter himself personifies magic in a Muggle world. Whereas Lucy is an ordinary girl who is introduced to the new world of magic and enchantment when she enters Narnia through a wardrobe, and Frodo who inherits a magical ring is an ordinary hobbit who is also part of a Middle-earth peopled by supernatural beings with magical powers, Harry Potter is an extraordinary wizard who has stumbled into the ordinary Muggle world from the wizard world of magic and enchantment. He has inherited magic from his wizard parents and from his larger wizard community, by extension. But he is unaware that he is a wizard until his coming-of-age; thus magic is defamiliarized until he ‘regains a clear view’- until he
achieves Recovery- of his potential powers by being reintroduced to the magical world where he truly belongs.

Typical of all secondary worlds of fantasy, Harry’s wizard world too is teeming with magical elements. The Potter magic calls attention to the awe and wonder of ordinary life and objects, enhancing their vitality. Rowling shines a spotlight on our own everyday reality; everything in the real world has its magical counterpart making the magic “Mooreffoc or Chestertonian”, which according to Tolkien is “Coffee-room, viewed from the inside through the glass door,…[which] denote[s] the queerness of things that have become trite, when they are seen suddenly from a new angle” (146), thus affecting the Recovery. Besides the stock magical paraphernalia of magical rings, wands, broomsticks, invisible cloaks, elves, unicorns, dragons, basilisks and phoenixes, the Potter world is replete with some of Rowling’s most unique and brilliant creations, where her wizardry is at its best: magical tools like the Put-Outer, extendable ears, Marauder’s Map, Pensieve, Remembrall and Deluminator; magical spells like Expelliaramus, Sectum-Sempra, Accio, Crucio and Avada Kedavra; magical potions like Polyjuice potion, Felix Felicis, Veritaserum etc; magical creatures like hippogriff, grindylow, boggart, thestrals, blast-ended skrewts and dementors; magical games like Quidditch and live-chess; magical herbs like Gillyweed, Mandrake and medicines like Skele Gro and bezoar; and to top them all, magical master strokes like Legilimency, Occlumency, Parseltongue, Petrification, Patronus and Horcruxes.

The literary motifs of magic and secrecy dominate the HP novels. Magic is accessible to anyone who knows where to look for it and also is ready to open up imagination. The knowledge of magic and the actual ability to practice it is clearly distinguished by the presence of different levels of sorcerers- great wizards (Dumbledore, Harry) dark wizards (Grindelwald, Voldemort) normal ones (Black,
Mr. Weasely), below average wizards (Neville Longbottom) frauds (Lockhart), non-practitioners (Hagrid) and un-magical ‘Squibs’ (Filch, Merlope). Magic is practised using a wide range of methods: spells are used to reduce burdens, to get things done, for vengeance and to defend attackers; potions are used to impersonate another person, to get the truth out of someone, to get lucky or even to make someone fall in love; transfiguration can transform a tea cup into a mouse and a person into an animal if he/she possesses the skill of an Animagus; and divination helps in foretelling the future. Magic in the wizard world is taken so seriously that to use it responsibly, seven years’ learning is required, during which two exams - OWL or Ordinary Wizarding Level and NEWT or Nastily Exhausting Wizarding Test - have to be taken.

Wizardry and magic in the world of HP are metaphors for power. How this power is used is what matters, and how Harry and Voldemort use it makes all the difference. Harry’s secret magical powers take folktale forms of flying brooms, spells, potions, transformation and talking animals. It is also a metaphor for the special powers of childhood: imagination, creativity and humour. Rowling says:

The idea that we could have a child who escapes from the confines of the adult world and goes somewhere where he has power, both literally and metaphorically, really appealed to me.

(http://www.scholastic.com).

With each academic year at Hogwarts, Harry and his friends slowly acquire power over their world, as their magical learning progresses. From a totally powerless and bullied Muggle existence Harry grows to become the master of his natural world, magic operating as metaphor for his self-development. The magical gifts that Harry receives or inherits from the first book on, like the new broomsticks *Nimbus Two Thousand* and *Firebolt*, the Invisibility Cloak, the Marauder’s Map, the Elder Wand and the
Resurrection Stone, demonstrate power in the materialistic sense. Voldemort, in marking Harry with the scar, gave him powers and a future, which fitted him to escape him not once, but whenever they meet. Time and again, Dumbledore reveals to Harry the abstract powers that he has inherited through his connection with Voldemort: “[H]e transferred some of his own powers to you the night he gave you that scar” (Chamber 245). Sybil Trelawney’s prophecy about “[t]he one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord… [with] power the Dark Lord knows not…” (Phoenix 741) empowers Harry with the chance of conquering Lord Voldemort. It is this power that Harry Potter’s magic provides, which makes the child reader identify with the hero, making them powerful enough to destroy their opponents and achieve their goals, rather than its occultic lure.

*HP’s* magic is different from that of other fantasy and more appealing to the present day cyber-kids not because of its occult power, but because it is entirely this-worldly. It “works as reliably … as the technology which makes airplanes fly and refrigerators chill the air” (Jacobs 37) and so, in a sense, is disenchanted. Magic is a skill that the students acquire through books, lessons, practice, tests, assignments and rigorous training. It is mechanical in the sense that magical gadgetry and inventions are central to Harry’s world. The Put-Outer, a magical version of a remote control, Omniculors with replay facility, Sneakoseope which signal the approach of a spy and Remembrall, a magical reminder are all magical machinery, similar to products of ordinary technology in our world. Magic, thus becomes technology. Peter Appelbaum observes that just as video games, television cyborgs and fantasy role-playing games in “our world treat technology as magic”, magic in the books is treated as “commodified technology” (38). Children are attracted to technology for its ability to perform magic and to magic for its potential as a tool. Like technology, magic too is fun, but also
potentially dangerous when in the wrong hands; Rowling here alludes to the connection between science and an ethics devoid of any spirituality, through the magic of Voldemort and the Death Eaters.

In the view of famous Christian columnist Chuck Colson, it is this “purely mechanical, as opposed to occultic” aspect of the magic used in the Potter books that avoids “contact with a supernatural world” that rates the books’ magic as “just for fun” and “not to be taken seriously” (“Radio Broadcast”, 2 Nov. 1999). Rowling represents magic as a natural, not supernatural, science by reinstating the tactility of experience in the wizard magic. Magical gadgets too break down, get obsolete and cannot be repaired by casting spells or chanting incantations. Harry understands that magic cannot offer solutions to life’s hardships and also learns about its essential limitations; that magic cannot eliminate inequalities, perform miracles or fight his inner battles, and like science cannot help in making moral decisions. Rowling draws the reader into a parallel world where “[even] … the means by which the physical world can be manipulated offers little help to understanding or altering human nature” (Chevalier 409).

Rowling has declared that she didn’t believe in magic (as practiced in her novels), but believed in other forms of magic, such as love and imagination. Some of these aspects of magic depend on patterns of meaning and personality rather than impersonal forces. It is personal integrity that saves Harry from turning into a Dursley, a product of hegemonic consumerism. Harry is saved from Voldemort by the power of his mother’s sacrificial love (Philosopher’s Stone 216). In the Chamber, it is Harry’s loyalty to Dumbledore that beckons the phoenix to his rescue (244). His father’s spirit that lives in him appears as a Patronus to save him from the dementors (Azkaban 428-9) and again from Voldemort at his resurrection in the graveyard (Goblet 576-9). All of Voldemort’s dark powers and spells at the final battle go ineffective with Harry’s
supporters, since Harry had already, with deep love and willingness, sacrificed his life to save his friends. “You won’t be able to kill any of them, ever again”, Harry tells Voldemort:

‘[Because] I was ready to die to stop you hurting these people-

‘… and that’s what did it. I’ve done what my mother did.

They are protected from you…. You can’t touch them’ ……

‘Is it love again?’ said Voldemort… (Deathly Hallows 591-2).

This magic, deeper than spells or hexes, is spiritual rather than technological or supernatural. Voldemort, with all his learning and with all his seven souls, can never comprehend its omnipotence:

‘Of house-elves and children’s tales, of love, loyalty and

innocence, Voldemort knows and understands nothing. Nothing.

That they all have a power beyond his own, a power beyond

the reach of any magic, is a truth he has never grasped’ (568).

In fact, the real magic that HP alludes to is ‘the Deeper Magic from Before the Dawn of Time’ which Lewis presents in the Chronicles of Narnia - ‘the deeper magic’ of mercy, love, truth and grace that works wonders throughout the series. Lily Potter’s sacrificial love for her son, Harry’s mercy to the betrayer of his parents, his sacrifice for his friends and his pity towards the eternal fall of his worst enemy are all “magic at the deepest, its most impenetrable” (Azkaban 427). Rowling uses the term ‘deeper magic’ to describe the power that overcomes evil, with the implicit promise that every one of us can experience the deepest magic of all, which is to know we are accepted and are special and deeply loved. Like Lewis, Tolkien, George MacDonald and Chesterton, Rowling baptizes myth and magic in the ‘sanctified imagination’ of the Potter books.
with the old religion of natural magic as “it is important to remember that we all have
magic inside of us” (Rowling, “Harry Potter Lexicon”).

If magic of such uniqueness is what provides deeper significance to the
enchantment of the Potter series, it is the depiction of the Supernatural Other that serves
as the driving force in shaping its fantasy world and developing the story proper,
fulfilling to the core Tolkien’s ‘profound desire for dragons’. The books exhibit a
wonder world of created beings from abrasive concocted animals and birds like the
Blast-Ended Screwts and Flobberworms to the conventional mythical supernatural ones
like the centaurs, unicorns, dragons, giants, mammoth spiders, phoenix, basilisk etc.
Witches and wizards with magic in their blood are otherwise no different from humans,
and so cannot be considered as supernatural. The elves with “large, bat-like ears and
bulging green eyes the size of tennis balls” (Chamber15) and with their own unique
magical powers are little creatures of sub-human existence, in contrast to the noble
elegant superhuman elves of Tolkien who control the affairs of Middle-earth.
Rowling’s goblins are mean and untrustworthy yet clever unlike Tolkien’s mercenary
goblins, while the centaurs are “star-gazers [n]ot interested in anythin’ closer’n the
moon” (Philosopher’s Stone 185).

Often enough, Rowling drops the supernatural creatures into her stories to add
vibrancy and also comic potential to the narrative. Most of them are introduced in
episodes that are humorous, but even then they function within the texts in ways that
are significant. The use of the supernatural other in Rowling is not merely for
decorative purposes or to enhance the fantastic and mystical elements of the Potter
world; they also serve an integral part in the plot development. Each of the
supernatural elements, however minor a part it plays in the story, has an individuality of
its own and a function to perform, effecting a cumulative progress in the plot as well as
in the development of its personality toward the climax. Economic and effective
detailing makes ‘the other’ picturesque, providing a ‘realness’ to their images, which is
unparalleled in fantasy fiction, except perhaps for Tolkien. The general physical and
mental attributes of a species is typical, but the characters are as diverse inside the
species as are human beings, with shades of white to grey to black in their moral
leanings.

With the introduction of house-elves who occupy the lowest rung in the social
ladder of HP’s world through Dobby in The Chamber, “the concept and practicalities of
servitude are introduced into magic world in a manner that is clearly resonant with our
world, if not Muggle world” (Gupta 112). The way they are bullied, marginalized,
ignored and taken for granted as ‘natural slaves’ and their status as the biogenetic
condition of a species makes it appear that Rowling is legitimizing, re-inscribing and
normalizing the marginalized status of the oppressed. In fact, Hermione becomes
Rowling’s spokesperson when, appalled at the slavish situation of the house-elves, she
attempts to organize them and to work for their freedom. But while a conservative
hegemonic situation dominates, Hermione’s SPEW (Society for the Protection of Elfish
Welfare) efforts are mocked, because the house-elves themselves and also the
wizarding community cannot understand why the elves would want to be free. Dobby
breaks the age-old social taboo on house-elves, when against the will of his masters the
Malfoys, he decides to warn and save Harry Potter in an attempt on his life. Later, he
participates actively in the global culture and the greatest struggle of the magical world
by teeming with his new master Harry Potter and by dying a martyr’s death to save
Potter and his friends. The martyrdom of Dobby or the reformation of the mean-elf
Kreacher are no minor feats in accomplishing the final triumph of good over evil which
also edify the hitherto outcast community in the wizard world. But despite this, the
‘happy darky’ Dobby or the miserable Winky are infantilized caricatured aspects of our world’s natural inequality. Rowling’s subplot on house-elves illustrates most acutely the complexity of prejudice within the supposed ‘fantasy’ world of the series – “a world”, as Westman opines, “that frequently bears much more resemblance to the ambiguities of contemporary…culture than any supposedly idyllic realm of fifty years before” (327).

Like the elves, the giants too are scorned as sub-standard, and hated and feared among the wizarding community. They are portrayed as stupid, vicious, ‘bloodthirsty and brutal savages’ (Goblet 374,381) who have caused their own extinction. Yet Rowling makes clear that the result of such cultural logic is prejudice, by depicting the unrelenting loyalty and integrity that Hagrid holds for Dumbledore and Harry and also by showing him as the gentlest adult in the series. Like the shepherds and cattle-heads who take in abandoned children throughout mythology, Hagrid represents the non-threatening archetypal father figure for whom most children wish. He is the kind, reckless, incredibly strong companion and side-kick of the traditional fantasy who enables the hero to achieve his goal. Though inferior by social, economic and educational status and thus marginalized and infantilized, Reubeus Hagrid is superior to all who claim the opposite, by showing great moral fibre unknown and untypical to his race.

The exploration on house-elf rights and giant prejudice in the series coincide with the explicit critique of residual prejudice against werewolves too, “offering further evidence for Rowling’s investigation of how cultural beliefs are naturalized as truth” (Westman 325). Like house-elves and giants, werewolves too are portrayed as sub-standard outcasts with biological and racial distinctions within a community rampant with prejudice and discriminations. Lupin might be one of the most appealing adults in
the series, but he is a suspect outsider in the wizarding world, because of his werewolf identity. A paradoxical figure, a force of good that can be dangerous as well, he is the metaphor for the split-self, of the animal in the human. According to Bruno Bellelheim, such a splitting up of personalities in stories helps a child reader “to keep the good image uncontaminated” (67), while the temporary evil manifestation passes over. In Lupin, the potentially destructive part of the werewolf is edified and offered with understanding in an attempt “to humanize the demonic, rather than demonize the human.” (Natov 136). Rowling makes it clear thus:

Professor Lupin …is one of my favourite characters. He’s a damaged person, literally and metaphorically. I think it’s important for children to know that adults too have their problems, that they struggle. His being a werewolf is really a metaphor for people’s reactions to illness and disability (Fraser, Interview 40).

Rowling underlines individual integrity over biased generalizations through Lupin and Bill Weasley, the mellowed werewolves, who are pitied against Greyback the rapacious and heartless werewolf, who is typical of his race. Professor Snape’s attempts to reveal the were-wolf identity of Lupin to the students and Mrs. Weasley’s apprehension about Bill’s future prospects in the wizarding community are all portraits of deep biologically rooted differences which serve to reinforce readers’ notions of biological differences among races. But the assimilation of Lupin’s son and Bill’s daughter into the mainstream wizarding society (Epilogue, Deathly Hallows 605) is Rowling’s way of accentuating biological anthropologist Templeton’s observation that “[r]ace is a real cultural, political and economic concept in society, but it is not a biological concept… [with] genetic differences” (qtd. in Fitzpatrick “Biological Differences”).
In addition to the individually well-developed supernatural characters of house-elves, giants and werewolves, mythological creatures from all traditions as well as ingenious creations which are Rowling’s own handiworks abound the secondary world of *HP*. The mythological creatures take on new significance within the context of Harry’s stories, working as symbols to communicate important lessons on human condition. The shape-shifting boggarts of Irish legend take on the form of their victims’ deepest fears. Upon learning that Harry’s boggart takes the shape of a dementor, Professor Lupin responds: “Well, well… I’m impressed …. That suggests that what you fear most of all is –fear. Very wise, Harry”(*Azkaban* 117). It becomes a symbol for fear itself, something the hero must overcome; characteristically, it is defeated by laughter. Another supernatural creature is the hippogriff, “a symbol of human potential or the pursuit of dreams” (Kern 201) which, when tamed can take Harry to the highest altitudes (Buckbeak literally does so by helping Harry and Hermione to rescue Harry’s god-father Sirius Black). The unicorns represent innocence and sacredness; when you slay one (which Voldemort does), as Firenze the centaur warns, “[y]ou have slain something pure and defenceless to save yourself and you will have but a half life, a cursed life, from the moment the blood touches your lips” (*Philosopher’s Stone* 188). The learned centaurs, the powerful dragons, the tempting merpeople, the evil basilisk, the horrifying Nagini, the immortal phoenix, all of which represent different aspects of human nature are fantastic creatures of the Potter world that lend the story a mythical canvas.

But the imaginary ‘sub-creations’ of Rowling’s alternate world are fantastic and even outrageous at times. The Blast-ended Skrewts, a kind of combination of scorpion and jet engine, the slimy-throated Flobberworms, the Nifflers, thestrals and dementors are ingenious creations by which Rowling engendered something new from a
combination of the familiar and the fantastic. When battling the horrible, hooded, soul-sucking dementors - Harry is confronting his own fears and exploring his inner demons. By conjuring up a Patronus which is a “positive force, a projection of the very things that the Dementor feed upon – hope, happiness, the desire to survive” (176), to defeat a Dementor, Rowling suggests that the loss of hope can be countered by faith, hope and a reinforcement of the conviction that there is a meaning to life. Harry identifies his own inner strength through the positive force of the Patronus. The privilege that Harry has in being able to see the reptilian winged horses, the thestrals, which are visible only to those who have seen death, is the graver lesson of life learned through pain and loss, rather than the rush of blue blood in his veins. Of this, Jann Lacoss sees a psychological function in the depiction of such disgusting and gross elements in fantasy; that is, by including such boundary crossers as these, Rowling relates to the vicarious control that children desire in their lives by “revel[ling] in being able to gross out the grown ups” through embracing such creatures which “hold some semblance of control for them”(88).

Unlike most typical fantasies, the supernatural in HP is not confined to its created beings alone, but is beaded into the narrative of the secondary world. The sub-plot of the legend of the Deathly Hallows- a story from the Tales of Beedle the Bard included in the Deathly Hallows is one such, evoking a sense of the uncanny in the readers. It is the story of three brothers who clinch three prizes from Death – Death’s own Invisibility Cloak, the Resurrection Stone and the Elder Wand – all of which together would make its possessor invincible and master of Death. The Invisibility Cloak which is owned by Harry lends the legend verisimilitude, thus fusing the supernatural into the story proper. Further more, a substantial part of the story takes place on a plane well above the physical or even the psychological: the bonding that
Harry has with his departed dear ones, the forays that Harry and Voldemort make into each other’s psyche, the meeting with Dumbledore at King’s Cross in Harry’s death (or near-death?) experience etc. which can be explained only in supernatural terms.

The most inexplicable yet most heart-rending of the supernatural instances is one that runs throughout the series, namely, the protection that one gives or gains through sacrifice, forgiveness and love. Harry’s mother died to save him: “… to have been loved so deeply, even though the person who loved us is gone, will give us some protection for ever” (Philosopher’s Stone 216). Pettigrew owed his life to Harry because he saved him from the wrath of Black and Lupin: “When one wizard saves another wizard’s life, it creates a certain bond between them” (Azkaban 311). Harry encompasses all his friends under magical protection when he becomes “ready to die to stop [Voldemort from] hurting” them (Deathly Hallows 591). As Dumbledore attests,” [t]his is magic at its deepest, its most impenetrable…” (Azkaban 311). By focusing on this ‘deep magic’ theme as a distinct and palpable value central to HP’s secondary world, Rowling is clearly indicating about its existence in the intangible in the primary world, and the chaos and issues its absence creates, making the series almost a secular moral tract in a story of good against evil.

The deep moral search that Rowling undertakes through the Potter series leads the reader to a keener understanding of himself and his world through the quest or self-search of the hero, which according to Timmerman is the goal of fantasy. The endurance and sacrifice of the individual becomes worth while when the final solution of the quest – Joy to everyone (which Tolkien calls eucatastrophe) is achieved (Timmerman 91-102). When viewed in this aspect, Harry Potter is a classic fantasy hero on a heroic quest, travelling an ancient road of the quest heroes through initiations and trials, successes and failures, before he reaches his ultimate goal of victory over
evil. Like Tolkien’s hobbit heroes, Harry’s heroic stature too is unconventional, being a weak and powerless ‘nerd’ (until he discovers his magical prowess) – an Everychild. His chief strength is the very fact that he is a child, his intrinsic goodness being his most momentous weapon. Though the chosen one of the magical world to undertake the quest, it is his moral strength and the moral choices he makes that elevates him to a hero’s status, rather than his physical attributes. Fantasy, a carnivalesque device, empowers an ordinary child to a quest hero through transportation to a magical realm and through acquisition of magical powers improbable within the existing order of things.

Harry’s quest throughout the series is to seek evil represented by Voldemort. Evil is elusive and ambiguous while it is formless and abstract, like Sauron, but gradually gains a body and power extraordinary as the story progresses. Rowling topples the quest-order in the first quartet of the series where the quest-object – here Evil – cuts across the path of the quest-hero, probably because it is indistinct and subtle. Once Harry encounters Evil face to face in the Goblet of Fire when Voldemort achieves his resurrection, his vision gains clarity and he achieves ‘Recovery’ and therefore, his quest acquires conviction. From then on, the essence of Harry’s quest is victory over evil, which initiates him to seek it out and out, instead of waiting for fate or chance to trundle it on to his path.

In addition to the central quest of triumphing over Evil, which encompasses the whole series, each book in the series involves a quest of its own. However, attaining this particular quest takes the hero one step further in understanding evil, one step closer towards the greater Quest. The quest in the first book is for the Philosopher’s stone, which, if acquired by Voldemort would make him immortal and invincible. In The Chamber the ‘petrification’ of several students of Hogwarts, including Hermione,
by an unknown danger forces Harry to go down the Chamber to unravel its secret. In
the *Prisoner of Azkaban* the quest is for a reversal of fate – of an innocent man and a
hippogriff – with the assistance of a Time–Turner. Harry Potter is one of the
champions in the Triwizard Tournament of the *Goblet of Fire* who needs to undertake
three tasks in order to win the Cup. In the *Order of the Phoenix*, the personal quest of
Harry is the rescue of his godfather Sirius Black. Harry accompanies Dumbledore in
*The Half- Blood Prince* to the Cave in search of one of the horcruxes of Voldemort.
The quests of the *Deathly Hallows* are diverse: to reveal the mystery of the Deathly
Hallows and to find and destroy the rest of the horcruxes, all of which would finally
lead to the one Great Quest- to vanquish Evil-incarnate Voldemort.

While seeking solutions to mysterious plots that threaten him and also the
wizarding world, Harry is also seeking after hidden and secret knowledge needed for
the quest to defeat the Dark Lord. Just as in the game of Quidditch, Harry is the Seeker
who needs to catch the golden Snitch - a different ball from what the other players are
seeking. He is the seeker whose quest is essentially his own; his catching the Snitch is
crucial to his team’s victory in the game just as his winning over Voldemort is essential
to the existence of the wizard world. Harry's quests involve the discovery of knowledge
that is hidden even within the wizarding world, which is actually the discovery of his
own story. What he had been trying to find in the Mirror of Erised about himself and
his parentage is revealed to him only in the course of his eventful years at Hogwarts.
Thus the quest for self-knowledge leads Harry to self-discovery.

The quest of a fantasy hero is not only a search for the self and the essence of
man’s being, but it is also an eternal struggle for self- realization. The quest is
traditionally associated with actual or symbolic death of the hero, often sacrificial, and
his return by resurrection, which completes his self – search. Harry passes through this
metamorphosis more than once. Similar to Frodo’s passage through Shelob’s lair or, Aragorn’s passage through the Paths of the Dead, or Gandalf’s death and resurrection at Moria, Harry’s actual and symbolic ‘deaths’ and resurrection confirms his immortal and universal nature while helping him to emerge triumphant and powerful by achieving his quest. By passing through these fatal trials, Harry metamorphoses from an immature, insecure, mischievous and troubled teenager to a mature, responsible and balanced individual who has things under his control – the archetypal representative of man’s moral progress from savage barbarity to moral civilization. This search to find oneself is an internal journey, at once psychological and spiritual, a journey from innocence to experience and from ignorance to ‘regaining of a clear view’ of man himself in his present world. As Camus says in The Myth of Sisyphus “[t]he struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man’s heart” (91). The inner journey of Harry is complete when his true education on himself and on the forces of good and evil elevate him to a spiritual level where he wishes for a transformation even for Voldemort.

The quest hero returns home, back from magical journeys and alternate worlds to the ordinary, and the status quo is re-established ushering in the “Consolation of the Happy Ending” (“On Fairy” 153). The saga of Harry Potter ends thus: “The scar had not pained Harry for nineteen years. All was well” (Deathly Hallows 607). Unlike Frodo who saves the quest but is not himself saved, Harry achieves his quest and succeeds over Evil, the journey ending with the growth of the hero and the safety of the community, which is the highest function of a eucatastrophic tale. Quintessentially, “[t]he ‘Boy who Lived’ remains a symbol of everything for which [they fought]: the triumph of good, the power of innocence, the need to keep resisting” (357-8).
Harry gains his quest and triumphs over evil through an epic struggle between the forces of good and evil which threatens the very existence of his secondary world. The conflict between good and evil, a theme integral to the high fantasy plot structure, is the most problematic and controversial feature of the Harry Potter series, in the backdrop of a positive portrayal of witchcraft and wizardry. The mixed responses to the books testify to this. Conservative Christians are concerned that the world view in *HP* is morally confusing without clear boundaries between evil and good; at the same time many critics like Lana A. Whited, Edmund Kern, Lauren Binnendyk, Schonert – Reichl etc have examined the moral development in *HP* in the light of Lawrence Kohlberg’s theories on children’s moral reasoning, the Stoic philosophy etc.

All the main characters including the protagonist, engage themselves, off and on, in actions which are morally ambiguous or even seemingly wrong. Harry and his friends break school rules and encourage others to break them, conveniently tell lies point-blank and sometimes show disrespect to some of their teachers. At times there is an element of vulgar humour and spite too, which is uncommon in classic literature, as when Ron puns in the Divination class, “Can I have a look at Uranus too, Lavender” (*Goblet* 178). Many of the adults too, including the teachers, show moral laxity, which makes the characters more life-like and therefore appealing. Even Dumbledore, who is a role-model, has a somewhat dubious past. The wizard world is built on and is functioning in a system framed on class distinction and questions of blood, where slavery is taken for granted as its indispensable and unquestioned part. But a close examination of the books shows that Rowling’s magical world is neither immoral nor amoral; on the other hand it is a highly moral world. Harry’s formation as a wizard and as a human being involves learning and playing by the rules. Hogwarts is like any other British boarding school of *Tom Brown’s School Days*, loads of fun framed in an
atmosphere of strong discipline. Breaking rules will call in detention or will lose points to one’s House, which means losing the House Cup or even getting expelled which, according to Hermione, is worse than death (*Philosopher’s Stone* 120). Under-age wizards are not permitted to use magic outside Hogwarts; Harry receives summons from the Ministry of Magic when he does, unintentionally though, on two occasions. The Ministry of Magic has a department to check on wizards who hoodwink Muggles with magic or fake magical things. Dark Arts and artefacts are prohibited by the Ministry and those possessing them are penalized. Adult wizards who break rules end up in the prison of Azkaban where the prison guards, the dementors subject them to a death-in-life of soul-less existence.

Apart from such a well regulated peace-keeping force and a law-abiding society established on moral precepts, there is a deeper morality emanating from genuine goodness that runs deep along the entire Harry Potter series, down under the lack of values, desensitization to the occult and the bogus spirituality that prejudiced eyes and religious fundamentalism try to scoop out. More than Harry’s grooming into a wizard, Rowling is focusing on the moral dimension of Harry’s development, which is why he becomes a school dropout to pursue his greater quest of fighting Evil to the very end. Wizardry and magic are metaphors of power which enable Harry to clinch the ‘holy grail’. Love, the source of Harry’s power, is both his greatest weakness and his greatest strength - “the power the Dark Lord knows not,” (*Phoenix* 741).

There is the duality of power; a duality of dark and light forces, of Voldemort the fallen Lucifer and of Harry the sacrificial saviour. Harry’s challenge is to demonstrate his power by choosing right, his heroism enhanced by the difficulty of choice. The Sorting Hat tempts Harry that the “Slytherin [House] will help you on the way to greatness [and power]” (*Philosopher’s Stone* 91), but his awareness of the
seriousness of right choice is that “[i]t is our choices …that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities” (Chamber 245). Harry’s virtue arises from his recognition that he is not inevitably good and that his character is something that he has responsibility for making. With time, Harry comes to know that good and evil do exist, with choice the thin but crucial wall between them, and power the charm that can make that fragile barrier disappear. According to Mary Pharr, this is his school’s greatest lesson and this is what makes him different from Tom Riddle (63).

Denial of power by choosing right calls for exceptional courage, similar to what Shippey defines in his ‘theory of courage’- which is the hallmark of a Gryffindor- “Where dwell the brave at heart, / Their daring, nerve and chivalry” (Philosopher’s Stone 88) setting them apart. Friendship calls for commitment and courage which the good characters on both sides live up to, making Rowling to compliment thus:

‘I admire bravery above almost every other characteristic, the virtue that cannot be faked: you either walk into the woods full of giant spiders or you don’t. Stand up to bullies or hide from them. Hang on to hope, or surrender to fear’ (Gibbs, “The Real Magic”).

Rowling hopes that her work “sends the message that self-worth is about finding out what you do best and working hard at it” (Gibbs, “Person of the Year Runner-Up”). Still, the noblest thing, the real bravery is to rebuild after a trauma; this is why Rowling chooses a perfect bittersweet ending to her series. After all his adventures, Harry’s greatest concern in the end is whether his son would fit in Hogwarts. Of this, the author explains:

‘…because that is what happens to our heroes. We’re human.

I kept arguing that ‘love is the most important force’…. So I wanted
to show him loving. Sometimes it’s dramatic: it means you lay down your life. But sometimes it means making sure some one’s trunk is packed and hoping they’ll be O.K. at school” (Gibbs, “Person of the Year”).

This calls for real bravery. But courage is not something bestowed on Gryffindors alone. When Snape (a Slytherin) chooses to spy for Dumbledore while working as a Voldemort accomplice, placing himself in constant danger, he becomes an epitome of courage of the highest order; and Dumbledore rightly agrees: “You are a braver man… You know, I sometimes think we sort too soon…” (Deathly Hallows 545). On the other hand, it is the unchivalrous cowardice and wrong choice of Pettigrew (a Gryffindor), blinded by a weakling’s response to the lure of power, which rewrites the entire history of the wizard world. In this context, Harry’s conscious renunciation of power by making use of his freedom of choice calls for great courage which brings in a freedom and strength all its own, whereas in his power-mongering opponents it becomes a bondage and weakness.

But Voldemort, like Tolkien’s Sauron, cannot conceive of strength derived from the refusal to dominate by power. He is the antithesis of Dumbledore who renounces power because he couldn’t trust himself with it (Deathly Hallows 575). Typical of a fantasy villain Voldemort clings on to the self, and in seeking to transform all that is the supernatural other,— the creative, regenerative potency in nature — into Self, he cuts himself off from the true source of life and power. Powers of evil can destroy but cannot create; they can imprison but cannot liberate. Sauron can make orcs out of elves, but he cannot create; Voldemort can rebuild a severed hand, but he cannot revive to life on his own. Like Sauron, or like the evil counterpart of any high fantasy, Voldemort is the Dark Lord, the Enemy, He-Who-Must-Not-be-Named, whom the
good fear to name and who forbids his followers to do so. The name itself is imbued with great power, and people cringe at it. Even the dreaded giant-spider Aragog has no strength to name Evil: “we do not speak of it…we do not name it” (Chamber 206).

Evil has a name-Voldemort, but to use it is taboo. Dumbledore alone realizes the power overcoming the taboo: “Call him Voldemort, Harry; always use the proper name for things. Fear of a name increases fear of the thing itself” (Philosopher’s Stone 216).

Harry achieves his initial victory over the fear of evil by pronouncing it using his free will, thus distinguishing himself as the hero.

Rowling’s depictions of such multiple and competing forms of moral reasoning in Harry’s adventures ensures that her fiction resembles the real world of uncertainties, ambiguities and disappointments. Hence her favourite quip: “What’s very important to me is when Dumbledore says that you have to choose between what is right and what is easy…because what is easy is often not right” (Fraser, Interview 39-40). As in many fantasy literatures, Rowling raises questions about moral choices as the characters choose to align themselves with either the forces of evil led by Voldemort or that of good led by Dumbledore and later carried on by Harry.

However, the wizard world is not an absolute world and Harry is in a dilemma at times to distinguish between friend and foe. There are continual surprises from the first book onwards, where one of his professors, Quirrell, turns out to be sharing his body with Voldemort. Sirius Black, the ‘notorious criminal’ and supposed ‘betrayer’ of Harry’s parents who is suspected to be chasing Harry, is his loyal godfather and actually a strong enemy of the dark side. The most shocking revelation perhaps is, when Snape is unmasked as Dumbledore’s man, not raising an iota of suspicion even in Voldemort. But a far more difficult choice for Harry is learning to trust himself once his striking link to Voldemort is disclosed. Rowling establishes the importance of free
will by presenting Voldemort and Harry as similar but opposing figures whose moral choices make them different. Apart from the hero, choosing right is a struggle fought and won by many others also in the course of their fight against evil. The right choice made by the characters, both of the good side and also a few of the shady ones like Snape and Narcissa Malfoy, is incorporated into the greater choice made by Harry against the evil powers of Lord Voldemort.

Harry's resolution in the face of adversity is the result of conscious choice and moral decisions rooted in endurance, perseverance, self-discipline, empathy, sacrifice and constancy. He realizes that to cope with evil one has to remain true to what is right, regardless of consequences; one has to remain constant. Rowling expresses the virtues of self-reliance, empathy and responsibility through the solutions to the serious problems that confront Harry which are Stoic themes, according to Edmund Kern. He identifies, “Harry’s Stoicism in the face of adversity as the key to his morality” (106) and Rowling’s blending of imaginative wit and serious contemplation of virtue as an essentially updated ‘Stoic moral philosophy’ (18) presented through the ethical dilemmas of Harry and his friends, providing full attention to emotional development. Harry breaks rules because he is more committed to right than to regulation. (Hermione matures to this understanding gradually and follows suit). The right is not determined by his personal perspective, power or juvenile interpretation of others but reinforced by a host of good people. The virtues of empathy, solidarity, mercy, forgiveness and a strong commitment to others which ennoble one to sacrifice, inherent in his parental figures and friends become Harry’s litmus leading him to greater strength in his fight with evil and an enhanced moral compass.
The defeat of evil is never accomplished without sacrifice. In his encounter with the other, the fantasy hero is always called upon to relinquish the very thing the antagonist is unwilling to give up—his personal desire, his ego—because, individual life is fragile indeed; it is the hero’s acceptance of the need for sacrifice in the face of this fragility that enables him to defeat the powers of evil and to incorporate the value of the [Supernatural] other within himself (Sachafsma 70).

Harry has inherited this truth through his mother. It was his mother’s sacrificial love that saved Harry from death as an infant. Even Voldemort has to admit that a mother’s sacrifice can unleash “old magic” (Goblet 566), which preserves her son while it destroys the enemy and serves afterwards as a shield from evil. But this magic is incomprehensible and inaccessible to the Dark Lord: “If there is one thing Voldemort cannot understand, it is love…. [T]o have been loved so deeply, even though the person who loved us is gone, will give us some protection forever” (Philosopher’s Stone 216).

The sacrificial love of his mother running through his veins emboldens Harry to volunteer to die to protect his supporters from Voldemort. Not only Harry, but most of the noble characters in the series possess the virtue of sacrifice: Dumbledore sacrifices personal glory and ultimately, his dear life ‘for the greater good’; Black subordinates his own sense of self and safety to die for his god-son; Ron lets himself ‘to be taken’ by the white queen in the live-game of chess in defence of the Philosopher’s stone and in the later books risks his life several times to save Harry; Hermione willingly drops out of Hogwarts and thus relinquishes a bright future, and worst of all, her studies; all the members of the Order of the Phoenix, especially the Weasleys make sacrifices, many surrendering their lives to fight evil; even Dobby dies rescuing Luna, Harry and others.
When the good willingly lay down their lives for others, the evil lay down others’ lives to save themselves. Voldemort sacrifices others to save himself—unlike Aslan, Gandalf, Dumbledore or Harry. Instead of shedding his own blood to save others, like Dracula he sucks that of others to keep alive. In a striking inversion of Christ’s resurrection, Voldemort is revived to life with a magic spell employing his father’s bones, his servant’s flesh and his enemy’s (Harry’s) blood. To evade death, he is prepared to murder many times, and therefore resorts to the most heinous violation of nature—“ripping his soul repeatedly so as to store it in many, separately concealed Horcruxes” (Half-Blood Prince 467), thereby going “further than anybody along the path that leads to immortality” (469; Goblet 566).

The evil power of HP, just as the forces of good, has a human face. The Dark Arts is not an invisible, intangible cosmic power but a concrete reality represented in Voldemort and the Death Eaters. Therefore the meta-narrative of the good versus evil combat is not an abstract conflict between nebulous powers but an open personal conflict of embodied realities, existing from the time of Salazar Slytherin and the other founders of Hogwarts and still continuing between Voldemort the heir of Slytherin and Harry the heir of Gryffindor. Voldemort, as the name implies, pits himself against fate through ‘a flight from death’. His philosophy, mouthed through Quirrell - that “[t]here is no good and evil, there is only power, and those too weak to seek it” (Philosopher’s Stone 211) - underlines this desire to conquer death. Rowling constructs her villain as someone who rejects the ultimate reality of death and portrays her hero as someone willing to risk it in pursuit of greater good. Death for the Dark Lord is a “shameful human weakness” (Half-Blood Prince 339); so he concludes bitterly, “[m]y mother can’t have been magic, or she wouldn’t have died” (259). The Philosopher’s stone, the seven horcruxes into which he has passed on his lives and the Elder Wand are all
means, he believes, could bestow him with immortality. But he never realizes that tempting fate is no better a course of action than denying it. While Harry acts out his fate consciously, his nemesis Voldemort, denies fate to his own loss and humiliation. So, like Sauron, Voldemort too assumes a shadowy disembodied life in defeat.

Voldemort’s past is a kind of pop-psychology reading of the abused child who grows up to become a violent offender. Through a kind of Pensieve-aided documentary of Voldemort’s early life as the son of a handsome Muggle father hoodwinked by a Squib, who later abandons his pregnant wife to die in an orphanage after the delivery of her child, Rowling takes on the psychology of evil by connecting the origin of evil to the role of the father in family life: “As I look back over the …books, I realize that it’s kind of a litany of bad fathers. That’s where evil seems to flourish, in places where people didn’t get good fathering” (qtd. in Grossman, “Hogwarts and All”). Voldemort’s “contempt for anything that tied him to other people” (Half-Blood Prince 259), his Muggle-hatred and his failure to understand love, may be linked to his father’s disgust and rejection for the issue of a loveless relationship. His mother Merlope too is a victim of bad fathering. Rowling becomes the spokesperson for all neglected victims of bad parenting through Sirius’s comment on the destructive consequences of Elder Crouch’s broken covenant with his family: “Should have spent a bit more time at home with his family, shouldn’t he? Ought to have left the office early once in a while… got to know his own son” (Goblet 458). On the other hand, though confronted with abuse and rejection as an orphan child, Harry is able to make the right choices because of the moral courage shown by his parents.

The antagonist in fantasy serves as a foil to the hero, but he also represents his double or shadow. Ultimately, however, the hero and the antagonist are distinguished by their different responses to the ‘other’. The hero recognizes its intrinsic values,
independent of human desire, but the corrupt figure sees everything in relation to himself (Sachafsma 68). By twinning good with evil Rowling takes a tentative stab at moral complexity. After his futile attempt to kill the infant Harry, Voldemort had transferred much of himself to Harry; he is Harry’s double, like an evil counterpart. As Gollum is to Frodo is the Dark Lord to Harry - an alter ego- the abysmal depravity to which one could degenerate if falling for the wrong choice. Therefore, Voldemort is not an external monster but an internal demon, being part of Harry’s own nature and of ours. He is Harry’s shadow, the other side of his psyche, the dark brother of his conscious mind and ours. For the youngster who identifies with the hero, the only way is to accept it as part of the self, “for the shadow is the guide… of the journey of self-knowledge, to adulthood, to the light” (Le Guin 50). Harry needs to subdue the shadow to achieve selfhood or it will subdue his self.

Accordingly, young readers of *HP* are led beyond the simple concept of evil as purely ‘bad guys’. Characters alter and shift in a way that challenges readers and often individuals rise above their general nature to act with moral responsibility and moral courage. Therefore Lupin, though a werewolf, is a force of good that can be dangerous as well. While the giants, typical of their nature, declare allegiance to the dark side, Hagrid remains eternally loyal to Dumbledore and to Harry. The family motto of the Blacks is “*Toujours pur*” or Always pure (*Phoenix*103) indicating their racial bigotry; Sirius is the only white sheep among the Blacks. The rule-bound and power-hungry bureaucrat of the Ministry of Magic Dolores Umbridge is the perfect example to demonstrate that not every sadist is a Death Eater. The most ambiguous morality is in the character of Snape, which is a psychological case study of a potential Death Eater’s transformation into a loyal accomplice of good, in order to avenge his possessive yet un-requited love. The uncovering of a character’s true being, the unveiling of who
somebody really is and the restoration of them to their true selves is a challenging part of the excitement of the HP narrative.

The Potter books link moral issues to racial and ethnic issues also. In the first three books the blood question appears as secondary, if significant, narrative tensions. But from the Goblet of Fire it emerges as the central theme heightening the role of the politics of ‘purity’ which becomes Voldemort’s political manifesto. Voldemort and his Death Eaters are ethnic cleansers who promote purity of blood. Voldemort, the Malfoys and a motley collection of his followers- “of the weak seeking protection, the ambitious seeking some shared glory, and the thuggish, gravitating towards a leader…” (Half-Blood Prince 338) - are united by a long-standing and explicitly fascist ideology that wishes to preserve the purity of wizard blood. However, the fallacy of anti-Mugglism is shown for what it is through the revelation that neither Harry nor Voldemort are pure-blood. The racial distinctions and the fascist politics of the wizard world parallel the racial hierarchies in much of contemporary society which make Rowling’s views about racism almost propagandist.

Though the Potter world fantasy deals with fictive evil such as these, it is a metaphor for the threats facing civilization every day. Evil is well armed with the weapons of chaos, violence and dark magical powers, but worst of all, indifference. It is not a fleeting reality but an ever-present and all-destructive danger. In LotR evil is an omnipresent force which yet originated from good, whereas evil in HP is personified in bad people or bad nature. Evil cannot be entirely avoided or eradicated since it is a permanent part of the human condition; therefore Slytherin has a home at Hogwarts. Like evil, Slytherin must be endured, and must be fought as well, because there is a little bit of Slytherin in everyone. Rowling here underlines what it means to live with evil and how human adaptability can overcome it. Rowling’s portrayal of evil is much
closer to Tolkien’s extremely sophisticated understanding of the nature of evil, evil being displayed in two different and highly suggestive ways. On the one hand, evil is depicted in the ordinary, such as mischievous behaviour, indifference and bigotry which result from immaturity, ignorance and prejudice. This type of evil emerges from a failure to make the right choices rather than any inherent personal quality. It motivates the reactions of some characters as naturally inclined toward malevolence.

On the other hand, evil is personified in Voldemort and his followers who are genuinely evil by nature. One view emphasizes Providence and holds good and evil as by-products of a larger design, while the other emphasizes free will and holds good and evil as by-products of human pursuits and choices. Rowling portrays both – intrinsic evil by nature (e.g. Greyback, dementors etc.) and instrumental evil by choice (e.g. Voldemort, Pettigrew, Death Eaters). “[T]he Potter books suggest that evil is part of the human conduction; it exist both intrinsically, in things that cannot be controlled, and instrumentally, in actions and decisions that can be” (Kern 213), thus presenting both a Boethian and a Manichean concept of evil.

Despite Vatican’s disclaims of HP as anti-Christian, “…confusing salvation and truth with a secret knowledge” (“Vatican Slams”) and “their subtle seduction that might distort Christianity in the soul” (Gibbs, “Person of the Year”), many have defended Rowling’s works as expressly Christian and the morality that is displayed in the books as subterranean, consistent with Christianity. Atonement that runs deep within HP may be associated with Christian theology. The entire series reverberates with this theme, that it is the sacrificial death of the loving mother Lily Potter that triumphs over evil. Magic is used as a convenient ‘black box’ to avoid explaining how an atoning sacrifice works and what it does, similar to C.S. Lewis’s ‘deeper magic’ in The Loin, the Witch and the Wardrobe (178-79). Rowling extols its virtues as a round-
the-clock philosophy of life, complete with its own innate rewards. It is a moral philosophy to live by, of both her secondary and primary world. The success mantra of the Potter saga lies here, since books that build character are the ones that “not only capture the imagination but cultivate the conscience” (Wolfe et al 18).

Rowling, like Tolkien, employs non-Christian or ambiguously Christian elements in her works consistent with her faith and morality. Familiar religious archetypes such as alienation and reunion, fall and redemption, death and resurrection, hell and heaven, paradise lost and paradise regained surface repeatedly in the stories with hardly a mention of God. As the series progresses and simultaneously turns darker, the intensity of the theme of evil increases. In confronting evil, it is faith in one’s self, faith in one’s friends and faith in the power of love rather than faith in a higher being that secures and guarantees victory. This is obviously a secular reading that victory comes from one’s own virtue even if that victory implies making the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of others. The emphasis on personal integrity and the power of love in confronting evil introduced through a secular story is at the heart of the spirituality of *HP*.

The arguments of Rowling’s religious critics as well as her Christian defenders are based on their own variant of Christianity. The inherent morality which evokes ‘Secondary Belief’ in a wizard world is not a call to spiritual transcendence through faith, even though their message of love, forgiveness and fellowship are Christian values. However these values are not exclusively Christian but universal values upon which all religions and cultures are founded. The portrayal of personal development in *HP* is largely consistent with secular moral philosophy. As literary myth, the stories do not offer an expressly religious message even if the moral system on display is consistent with religious moral teaching. Rowling herself is not happy to be a preacher
in a children’s story: “I don’t think that its’ at all healthy for the work for me to think in those terms [as a moral educator]… [a]lthough, undeniably, morals are drawn” (Grossman “Hogwarts and All”), though she had declared earlier: “I think the Harry books are very moral” (Comic Relief qtd. in Appelbaum n.50) and again in a chat to Barnes and Noble that the books are “fundamentally moral”. Rowling’s religious agenda is very clear; she does not have one:

‘I did not set out to convert anyone to Christianity. I wasn’t trying to do what C.S. Lewis did. It is perfectly possible to live a very moral life without a belief in God, and I think it’s perfectly possible to live a life peppered with ill-doing and believe in God’.

‘What did my books preach against throughout? Bigotry, violence, struggles for power, no matter what’(qtd. in Gibbs, “Person of the Year”).

C.S. Lewis believes that “[t]he only moral that is of any value is that which arises inevitably from the whole cast of the author’s mind” (Of This and Other Worlds 55). The inherent morality of the Potter-world is not Christ-centred, nor is it simplistic. Rowling rather expounds a complex realism of moral decision-making and the existence of fundamental virtues while recognizing the struggle between good and evil. Moral lessons are carefully woven into the richly textured fabric of the novel and not artificially imposed into the plot. Ultimately the central moral of the Potter series is the implacable and ambiguous nature of love, with its undisputed powers to create and to destroy and with its “deepest magic” of all, which is to know that one is accepted and special and deeply loved. Love is much more important to Rowling than magic; the real mystery for her is the human heart. This aspect of Rowling’s morality makes her
world, “Wordsworthian…realistic and didactic, centering[sic] on an individual’s spiritual growth” (McVeigh 197).

The implicit theology and metaphysics and the explicit morality of HP are worthy of what Tolkien calls a eucatastrophic tale which is the truest form and the highest function of a complete fairy-story (“On Fairy” 153). Each of the separate stories in the HP series achieves eucatastrophe or ‘the Consolation of the Happy Ending’. But the greatest moment of eucatastrophe of the whole series is culminated in the final chapter of the Deathly Hallows when Harry’s supporters learn that he is not dead. Voldemort then realizes that Harry knows things which he does not, the most shocking of which is that Harry Potter, and not he, is the true master of the invincible Elder Wand. In the duel that follows, Voldemort is “killed by his own rebounding curse” (Deathly Hallows 596). For the wizarding world, it is the dawn of a new world order, an “echo of evangelium in the real world,” (“On Fairy” 155). But there is no true end to any fairy tale, says Tolkien. With resignation Harry returns the Elder Wand back to where it came from; the wand broken and the magic ended, he returns to normal life, like Prospero in The Tempest. The epilogue ‘Nineteen Years Later’ ends thus: “The scar had not pained Harry for nineteen years. All was well” (Deathly Hallows 607), signifying the peace and tranquillity lingering in the wizard world. Unlike the sense of ultimate loss and defeat pervading the Middle earth and the possibility of heavenly joy only in other worlds, the Harry Potter series ends in hope and peace. For Rowling, the echo of evangelium is not a far-off gleam; the glimpse of joy is not beyond the walls of the world – it is ‘here and now’! Rowling, typical of her inventiveness, explodes the fantasy genre here also.

Such independent invention, inheritance and diffusion play their part in producing the intricate web of the Potter series. Rowling, a master of inventiveness, has
fused all these elements in her series: she has assimilated themes, images and allusions by way of diffusion (borrowing in space) and of inheritance (borrowing in time), taking from as well as adding bits to her story. The phenomenal success of *HP* owes to the meta-narratives it has unfolded in the course of its seven year series, which has expanded beyond the fantasy world of Hogwarts. The ongoing battle between good and evil which is the central theme of all fantasies encompasses the overall grand narrative of the seven books and also marks the climax of the individual narratives as well. In addition to the quintessence of fantasy, by which Rowling brings the reader out of the landscape of contemporary Britain, she is also taking him/her back to a set of paradigms and genres familiar in literature. Some of the *HP* criticism is framed on this shift away from fantasy, for “not hav[ing] a firm foot in fantasy …[nor a] certain[ty] about fantasy content, structure, theme and how these components are essential to the reader’s response to the fantastic” (Pennington 82-83).

A re-reading of the Potter saga would reveal that much of its appeal lies in the incorporation of a vast number of genres in the mainstream fantasy aspect in the books. Rowling wields her magic by dropping just the right amount of ingredients from each of these into her cauldron of fantasy instead of conforming to any of the genres absolutely, thus creating a larger mosaic of popular as well as literary appeal. In terms of readership, titles and content, including the wish-fulfilment and the identification with the hero or heroes, the series shares elements of pulp fiction and popular literature, but has avoided the sentimentality, eroticism, sensationalism and titillation common to the genre. The supernatural elements together with elements of horror and violence evoke ghost and horror stories. A major element in each of the stories in the series is the solving of a mystery related to either Harry or Voldemort, and the protagonists act as detectives who unravel the mystery and solve the crime. The fast-paced, dialogue-
filled, optimistic-toned story-line of the books certainly contains typical elements of an adventure tale. The repeated plot structure and style of each book which covers the duration of one school year involving the same group of characters, with a satisfying thematic closure, is suggestive of the predictability of series books.

By making the series a typical bildungsroman, with the motifs of surrogate parents, struggle for survival and identity and discovery of love embodied in the Potter series, Rowling has allowed her characters to grow and mature as the books progress. The bildungsroman genre is closely related to the school-story genre; what makes the location of Hogwarts enchanted is the added ingredient of magic. But the usual school story structure is revised, subverted and updated in Harry the hero and the triumphant passing out ceremony of a traditional school story is subverted into a contemporary reality as the main protagonists dropout of Hogwarts in their last year. Harry encompasses the traditional characteristics of a mythical hero who represents man’s ideals and aspirations and his quest for self-realization. He emerges as the archetypal hero - the mythical Messiah-, while Voldemort is the archetypal foe associated with death and darkness. By adapting and adopting the typical initiation paradigm, “Rowling has created an extended narrative about the tragedy of lost childhood, the possibility of transcending a horrific past, and the heroics needed to achieve a balanced view of the self and the world one inhabits” (De Rosa 183). Set in a magical world of good and bad characters with dragons, unicorns, trolls, mermaids, centaurs and a myriad of other strange creatures, the HP books work like fairy tales and Harry like a fairy-tale hero, vicariously providing children with the pleasures and reassurances of fairy tales.

Tolkien believed that if fairy stories are worth reading, it is worthy to be written for and read by adults (“On Fairy” 137), since fairy-stories banished and cut off from a
full adult art would in the end, be ruined. The HP series is for the adults too, creating a new genre termed ‘kidult’ literature. Adults can identify with Harry, an outsider who struggles to fit in, and with Harry’s world- a weird world of black, white and grey. The books are the need for the whimsy in the lives of adults, reconnecting with their childhoods and re-enchanting them to achieve ‘Recovery’. Clever, funny and serious, the Potter books are not written down to any particular age group. They are ‘all-age’ books for those who love rousing good stories of a non-threatening read, without any ulterior motives or propagandist agendas beyond the events of the story and the moral points drawn thereunto. To those struggling to make sense of their part in a world of disparities and opposing dichotomies, the HP books give the kind of moral clarity that children need and adults yearn for, making it a true representative of cross-over fiction.

Reading HP through the various lenses of multiple genres allows readers the delight of the recognition of and the anticipation for tags or signs of the various genres employed and the new tags added with each new book and of linking them to other genres which are remodified thus. “By fusing the genres in this way, Rowling has created something new: a generic mosaic made up of numerous individual pieces combined in a way that allows them to keep their original shape while constantly changing their significance” (Alton 159). The continual interplay of these genres is what creates the multiple meanings of the whole and the sense of wonder that results from the repeated experience of finding the “real” meaning of HP.