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Trabajo Fin de Grado

**A GLOSSARY OF
THE MAGICAL TERMS
AND ELEMENTS USED IN
J.K. ROWLING'S
HARRY POTTER NOVELS**

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Abstract

The aim of this essay is to get a closer approach to J.K. Rowling's saga *Harry Potter*, one of the most famous series of novels of the last times. It is unquestionable the fame both the writer and her books have acquired in the last twenty years, becoming the most successful science fiction saga in the period, possibly together with George R.R. Martin's *Song of Ice and Fire*. The seven novels that make up the whole story and the other three complementary books have created a magic world which has captivated the attention and devotion of so many people all around the world.

In order to understand this world of fantasy which accommodates Rowling's fiction, my main purpose in this essay is to compile a glossary of the magical elements and terms used in the novels (including spells, fantastic creatures, objects and characters) that may facilitate the reading of the novels. In this glossary, arranged according to different categories, every term and element will be analysed taking into account their etymology, their antecedents or their influences from different cultures and folklores, because the wizarding world of the *Harry Potter* books is very rich in this aspect.

Keywords: fantastic literature, Harry Potter, J.K. Rowling, science fiction, spells, charms, mythology, folklore, fantastic creatures, magic objects, magic.

Resumen

El objetivo de este trabajo es el de hacer un acercamiento a *Harry Potter*, de J.K. Rowling, una de las más famosas sagas de novelas de los últimos tiempos. Es indudable la fama que durante los últimos veinte años ha adquirido tanto la escritora, como los libros, pasando a convertirse, posiblemente, en la saga de ciencia ficción más exitosa durante este período, junto a *Songs of Ice and Fire*, de George R.R. Martin. Tanto las siete novelas que conforman la base de la historia, como los otros tres libros complementarios de la serie, conforman el mundo mágico que ha cautivado a tanta gente por todo el mundo.

Para acercarnos este mundo de fantasía que respalda la obra de Rowling, mi propósito principal en este trabajo es reunir un glosario de términos, ya sean hechizos, criaturas fantásticas, personajes y objetos que conforman la saga. Cada uno de esos conceptos se analizará en términos de precedentes, influencias de diferentes culturas y folclores, ya que el mundo mágico que conforma la saga de *Harry Potter* es rico en éstas.

Palabras clave: literatura fantástica, Harry Potter, J.K. Rowling, ciencia ficción, hechizos, encantamientos, mitología, folklore, criaturas fantásticas, objetos mágicos, magia.

1. Introduction.

Most of the possible readers of this BA dissertation may already know the series of novels written by J. K. Rowling and entitled *Harry Potter* (first volume published in 1997), that phenomenon which rose up at the end of the 1990's. From its irruption, it has probably become the most profitable and notorious book saga in the current century, together with George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* (the first volume published in 1996), most commonly known by its dramatic adaptation *Game of Thrones*. However, not only are these novels popular among readers of all ages, but they are also known by the general public thanks to their film adaptations, which have been even more successful than the novels themselves.

Given the popularity of the saga of *Harry Potter*, the main goal of this essay is to provide readers of the novels with a glossary of the magical terms used in *Harry Potter* books and films, (including objects, spells, creatures and characters, among other references) with the purpose of identifying and defining these items from a perspective that draws attention to both their linguistic and their cultural sources of reference. For every definition we offer a description of the role of the items in the series and a review of the possible influences that Rowling took into account to create the magic elements and to give shape to the world of magic she presents in her novels. These items are not totally original or invented by her, for a great number of them already existed in classic mythology, popular folklore, etc. What is innovative in her work is the way in which Rowling makes use of the tradition and combines diverse cultural sources to create a world inhabited by creatures and full of fantastic and whimsical ingredients that have appealed to the widest range of readers.

That is why most part of this work is a glossary. I have considered it important to collect and arrange in alphabetical order all those terms to help possible readers to get closer to the *Harry Potter* world, as well as to offer a kind of complementary reading for the books.

The bibliographic resources about this topic are not precisely numerous. Even though there are plenty of studies and papers concerning the *Harry Potter* books, very few of them focus on those particular elements and on their possible origins. That is another reason why I think this paper can be relevant, as it aims at cataloguing and defining the magical terms

used by Rowling with the purpose of contributing to the general understanding of these elements and clarifying their function within the saga.

To do so, I have collected information from books and articles about European mythology, popular tales, some works which focused on *Harry Potter* and even Latin or English dictionaries, in order to give cultural, linguistic and etymological details about the terms.

The essay is mainly a glossary, as mentioned above. Nevertheless, I have also included an approach to J.K. Rowling's life and work on which to substantiate my analysis and definition of the terms. After that, I have added some details about the synopsis of the seven main books of the saga and the three complementary short readings that complete the series, in order to contextualize the appearance and use of the magical elements.

Similarly, I have also considered it convenient to offer a review of *Harry Potter* in the context of children's fantastic literature and an explanation of the use of magic in the seven novels.

2. J.K Rowling's Biography

Joanne Rowling is an English writer born in Yate, Gloucestershire (England) in 1965. The *K* in her pen-name comes from Kathleen, her grandmother's name. She started to use it when her agent suggested her to publish book using initials, providing that children would be less likely to read books written by women.

Since her early childhood, she has always liked writing stories and enjoyed reading them to her sister. She did a Bachelor of Arts in French and Classics at the University of Exeter, where she graduated in 1986. After that, she moved to London to work with *Amnesty International*.

In 1990, she came up the idea of a School of Magic, which she started to develop that very moment, while in a trip from London to Manchester. Not long ago, her mother passed away due to multiple sclerosis.

She moved to Porto, where she worked as an English teacher for two years and married Jorge Arantes, a Portuguese journalist, in 1992. The next year, in July, she gave birth to her first daughter Jessica. Unfortunately, her marriage did not have a good result and they divorced in November. Some rumours and sources state that Joanne suffered from domestic abuse.

Things were not good when she moved from Portugal to Edinburgh. Being jobless and with a dependent child, she signed up for welfare benefits, which allowed her to begin a teaching training course in Edinburgh and write at the same time.

With an agency helping, she sent the first manuscript of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* to twelve publishing houses, all of them rejected. Finally, it was Bloomsbury the one which began selling the book. Since the moment in which her first book was published, she has made a living as an author.

Apart from the Harry Potter series, she has published some other works, mainly for children, under the name of Robert Galbraith. Among these books, we can highlight *The Cuckoo's Calling* (2013) or *The Silkworm* (2014).

3. Synopsis

Before analyzing all those different terms in the glossary, it is relevant for the development of this paper to make a short approach to the plot of the books, in order to provide the reader with some background for the subsequent reading.

The saga is composed by seven main books which make the story. They are ordered chronologically, being *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* the first of them to be published and starting the development of the story. Though the facts happen in a lineal way, there are some jumps in time, especially backwards, producing flashbacks that complete the story. Some of those flashbacks are produced in a traditional way, but Rowling uses some elements and objects in the story to create them and make the character aware of the fact that what they are watching is the actual past. (*The Pensieve*, 2000, chapter thirty).

Besides, apart from the main story, there are also three complementary little books, not necessary for the complete understanding of the story, but useful for a better assimilation of the world in which the characters live. It is interesting to remark them because they share a special feature, which is that all of them exist within the internal world of the books and are used by some characters. However, two of them are not vital for the story to advance, but the last one certainly is.

3.1 *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (1997)

Harry is an 11 years-old-boy whose parents died when he was 1. He lives with The Dursleys (his uncle, aunt and cousin, who hate him). One day, he receives a letter from *Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry*, one which will definitively change his world. He realizes that he is a Wizard and starts discovering a fantastic and different world from the one he knew, accompanied by Hagrid, the Keeper of Keys. It is in Hogwarts where he will meet his new friends, Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger; a

rival, Draco Malfoy and especially Lord Voldemort, his parents' murderer, to whom he will have to confront one more time.

3.2 *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (1998)

Something is threatening Hogwarts School. That is what a new friend tells Harry. He also warns him to stay at home this course. Things got worse when the Dursleys decide to lock Harry in his room forever.

Nevertheless, his friends appear in a flying car to rescue him. Once in Hogwarts, a series of misunderstandings will lead the students to think Harry is evil, though he is not. Together with Ron and Hermione, he will have to face terrifying unknown creatures and a curse coming from a secret diary which has a lot to do with Lord Voldemort.

3.3 *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (1999)

After a strong quarrel, Harry escapes from the Dursleys. These are hard times for the Wizarding World, because Sirius Black, a dangerous murderer, has just fled from prison. Rumours say his escape has to do with Harry and now looks for him. Events will show that Sirius is one of Harry's parents' best friends. In this book, Harry will have to face new creatures, as *dementors* or hippogriffs, together with Ron and Hermione and a new professor, also one of his parents' friends, who will guide them to fight all these terrible new dangers.

3.4 *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (2000)

The *Triwizard Tournament*, a legendary competition, takes place at Hogwarts this year for those older than seventeen. However, Harry finds the protagonism he does not look for and ends up participating in the tournament. As it is made for older students, the races are particularly dangerous and challenging for Harry. Dragons, sea creatures, love and the mystery of a murder will lead him to his mortal enemy, Lord Voldemort, who comes back stronger than ever.

3.5 *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (2003)

As Harry was the only person alive to see Voldemort's return, there are plenty of people in the Wizarding World not believing the version of the boy who lived. Given that, Voldemort takes advantage of it and starts his own war in silence, searching for a prophecy which tells something about him and Harry and maybe the way to kill him once and for all. As having the feeling of a new war coming, Harry, Ron and Hermione decide to lead a group of students to practice magic hidden from Dolores

Umbridge, the new teacher the Ministry of Magic has got into Hogwarts. Exams, girls and a possible connection between Harry's mind and Voldemort's make this one a very difficult year for the protagonist.

3.6 *Harry Potter and the Half-blood Prince* (2005)

Being Voldemort discovered and Harry trusted by the wizard community, the protagonist starts his sixth course in Hogwarts in the middle of terrible events surrounding England. The school has been reinforced this year. Despite all the security measures, two students are attacked. Dumbledore is aware of the fact that the crucial moment in which Harry and Voldemort will face is getting closer and closer. The old director and Harry will cooperate in a series of time-travels to find out how to weaken Voldemort and finally finish him. Some objects called *Horcrux* are the key for that.

3.7 *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2007)

The protective charm in Harry is eliminated once he turns 17. After Dumbledore's death, the whole Ministry is controlled by Voldemort's flunkies. Harry, Ron and Hermione will head for the remaining *Horcruxes* in a long journey to eliminate the Dark Lord. Finally, the outcome will happen in Hogwarts itself, in a war between *Death Eaters* (Voldemort's allies) and the rest of the Wizarding World.

3.8 Complementary Books

- *Fantastic Creatures and Where to find Them* (2001) is an encyclopaedia of most special creatures which are mentioned in the books, no matter if they have an important role or not. Some of them make relevant appearances in the main books, while others are just named a number of times.
- *Quidditch Through the Ages* (2001) deals with the most famous sport in the Wizarding World, which is similar to football, while played on broomsticks. The origins, history and evolution are explained in it, making a fictional sport more realistic since it is contextualized from the very first moments of life.
- *The Tales of Beedle the Bard* (2007) are a set of very famous stories or fables for wizards. As such, they teach young wizards morals with their tales. This book is especially important in the last novel since Hermione acquires it and one of their tales contains a clue to beat Lord Voldemort once and for all.

4. *Harry Potter*. A fantasy book for children?

If one takes into account the definition that Hunt (1992:1) provides about literature for children, saying that “children’s literature is an amorphous, ambiguous creature“, it is relatively difficult for scholars to establish clear borders of what this kind of literature should comprise or how it should be considered. In fact, the study of this kind of literature is quite recent. He also points out that (1992:10) “it is also fortunate that the growth of children’s literature studies has coincided with the burgeoning of literary theory (which) is leading to the break-down of the established literary canon.“

But initially, *Harry Potter* is not only a book for children, but in terms of genre, it seems clear that it belongs to science fiction or also called fantastic literature. According to what Rabkin (1979:5) states: “fantastic worlds dramatize answers to (...) real questions for the ease of the questioners.“

In addition to it, Hallet (2005:9) quotes Sheila Egoff talking about the purpose of fantasy, saying that “the purpose of fantasy is not to escape reality but to illuminate it: to transport us to a world different from the real world, yet to demonstrate certain immutable truths that persist even there-and in every possible world.“

Taking the previous statements into account, there is a general tendency to label *Harry Potter* within the theoretical framework of both terms, fantastic and children’s literature. However, the saga can be considered, following Hunt’s definition, as ‘ambiguous’, because even though *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* fits the definition of literature for children, it is not so clear than the last book of the series, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* can be considered as such. One of the causes that may explain this is that Rowling initially wrote the first book addressing a younger public, and also that her rhythm of publication made her develop her main character, Harry, with each novel, in a parallel way in which their readers also grew up.

As a conclusion, with the successive publication of the books, these appear to have progressively included and tackled an increasing number of topics of a more complex, and we could add, mature nature, so, as Harry turns into an adult, his readers similarly get more mature, which contributes to add at the same time a feeling of identification between the reader and the protagonists.

Now that *Harry Potter* has been defined and labelled, there will be an analysis below on

how the fantasy, in the shape of a wizarding world is developed throughout the books.

First of all, what Rowling creates is a magic world, parallel to the one the reader knows as the real world. In fact, one may be conscious of the fact that the main plot is set in England in the 1990's due to constant references to concrete and real places such as King's Cross train station in London or Little Whinging, Surrey, where Harry's relatives' house is.

In addition to this, Hallett makes an important declaration: (2005:44)

Most of the new places Rowling creates are often either invisible or (...) simply cannot be mapped and added to *Muggle*¹ atlases. Throughout the Wizarding World, charms push prying non-Wizard eyes away from such magical places (...). No matter where Rowling locates magical space, her witches and wizards either enchant the gateways with charms designed to repel Muggle eyes directly or mask the entrances as ordinary objects that belie their true importance (...). Rowling tempts their readers with the idea that if they look in the right place they may gain entry to the world she describes.

As Hallett indicates, there are certain boundaries between normal people and wizards. The way the latter behave shows that they are aware of the activities of the *muggles*, although, the *muggles* in general are not conscious of the existence of wizards. However, in the books, the reader is aware of the existence of a unique idiosyncrasy for the wizards as well as a proper socio-economic system, only for wizards, within the boundaries of their world.

There are certain cases in which they get to know each other. As a matter of fact, wizards and *muggles* can marry, form a couple and have children together, as the young Seamus Finnigan tells in book one (1997: 133): "I'm half and half (...). Me dad's a Muggle. Mam didn't tell him she was a witch 'til after they were married. Bit of a nasty shock for him."

The relations between *muggles* and wizards are, therefore, limited, though in the sixth book (*The Other Minister*, 2005: chapter one) it is revealed that England's current Prime Minister and the Minister of Magic are in contact. As most *muggles*, then, are not aware of the existence of magic, they do not have a formed opinion about them. However, since they are less numerous, wizards are aware of *muggles* and they have their own opinion about them. Some of these wizards show a classistic behavior and see *muggles* as inferior, but most of them respect them, while others admire them because their use of technology and inventions in spite of not having magic in their DNA, as in the case of Arthur Weasley, of whom Rowling tells the following in book two (1998:44): "Mr Weasley liked Harry to sit next to him at the dinner table so that he could bombard him with questions about life with Muggles, asking him

¹ Muggle is the term Rowlings and their wizard characters use to refer to non-magic people.

to explain how things like plugs and the postal service work.“

Hallett has also an interesting view of how the structure of the magic world is presented along the books (2005:45):

Like Harry, we begin the series with no knowledge of the Wizarding World, but Rowling leads us deeper and deeper into (it) with each successive work in the series; in the first novel, we follow Harry to three magical places: the Leaky Cauldron² and Diagon Alley³, Platform 9¾, and Hogwarts School.

In the first book, she has described Harry's first steps into the Wizarding World, getting to know its existence itself, and how it works, in a basic basis. Nevertheless, alongside the different books, Harry starts making discoveries on how his new environment is structured.

In the second book, the existence of the Ministry of Magic is proven, as well as the existence of a School Council and some new attitudes of wizards towards *muggleborns* and *muggles*.

In the third book, the existence of *Azkaban*, the prison of wizards is revealed, as well as the existence of towns which are populated only by wizards, such as Hogsmeade.

In the fourth and fifth books, there is a closer emphasis on how the Ministry is divided in many departments and how the law is accomplished.

In the sixth book, as mentioned above, the relations between muggle and wizard politics are drawn and developed and how the war is triggered.

In the seventh, finally, how the war is developed in the Wizarding World and how it influences the Ministry, which is held by Voldemort.

In this fantastic parallel world whose functioning and development has been described above, magic is used for practically every home tasks, service or maintenance.

Most spells are usually cast using a wand pronouncing their different magic words in high voice, though it is possible to obtain the same result without any of this requirements, whenever one reaches certain level of ability in using magic.

As previously mentioned above, the ability to use magic is innate and cannot change once a baby is born. However, there are certain differences in its manifestations, depending of the child. In the case of what it is known of the character Neville Longbottom in book one (1997:133-134):

² *The Leaky Cauldron* is a pub invented by Rowling in the middle of London that takes to the Diagon Alley.

³ *Diagon Alley* is a commercial streets for witches and wizards which is only accesible through *The Leaky Cauldron*

-Well, my gran brought me up and she's a witch (...) but the family thought I was all Muggle for ages (...). Nothing happened until I was eight. (...). They were all really pleased. Gran was crying, she was so happy. And you should have seen their faces when I got in here – they thought I might not be magic enough to come, you see.

Broadly speaking, what Rowling offers is an alternative and parallel world which she uses for her purposes, as well as she invents attitudes in their characters and a whole socio-economic system that leads the reader to a new society, which has a proper idiosyncratic, habits, ideologies and ways of living.

One of the purposes she could have in creating this parallel world could be, for example, denouncing the role of actual governments. This is, for instance, explained by Bryfonski (2009:47):

It is worth examining what Rowling has to say about government and its role in society. (...) Rowling's vision of government consists almost solely of bureaucracy, without elections to offer the sheen of democracy, without a free press or independent judiciary to act as a check on bureaucratic excess, and with few true public servants to counteract craven bureaucrats.

Bryfonski (2009: 48-49) develops this idea by analysing every book of the saga, thus concluding in his study that:

The first five books lay the groundwork for Rowling's depiction of the Ministry of Magic in *The Half-Blood Prince* (...). The first three books take a relatively lighthearted view of the wizard government. (...) In *The Goblet of Fire*, we have the first real hints of Rowling's darker vision for the Ministry of Magic. (...) The end of *The Goblet of Fire* presages the open hostility between the Ministry of Magic and Harry and Dumbledore in *The Order of the Phoenix*. (...) *The Half-Blood Prince*, however, offers no such succor to government. The Ministry remains remarkably ineffective in its battle against Voldemort.

As Bryfonski mentioned, the three first books, which open the saga offer a soft image of the Ministry, in an allegory of what may come in the next books, showing how the plot acquires a more and more adult tone with the advance of the story, confirming how the issues acquire a more mature background.

In short, Rowling's vision of magic and fantasy mixes the fantastic world in which everything

seems to be nice and magical; and the fierce criticism to social issues that concern her, being the setting suitable for a fairy tale for children in the first steps of the series, and ending with a more realistic perspective, closer to the actual society she lives in.

5. Glossary of magical terms and elements

As a conclusion of what has just been mentioned and analysed in the previous point of the essay, the role of the imagination plays an important part in Rowling's *Harry Potter*. This world of fantasy which creates the context for the plot cannot be understood without all the numerous references that are present in the books, no matter if they are spells, objects, creatures or characters.

In what follows a compilation and glossary of these references are offered with the purpose of analyzing the different elements Rowling uses to create her world of fantasy. The terms have been arranged according to four different categories. In each of them, the diverse elements belonging to the categories will be analyzed in terms of origin, antecedents, etymology, etc.

It is remarkable the amount of influences that Rowling takes from classical culture, but this is understandable because, as indicated in the biography, she did a BA in classic literature. Therefore, she has taken advantage of her wide knowledge of the Greek and Latin traditions, mainly, although she also uses other countries' and cultures' folklores and tales.

5.1 Spells and magic

- **Accio:** the name of this spell is no coincidence with its effect. It is the Latin verb for *cast* or *summon*. It is used to bring any particular thing to the wizard casting the spell. In the books there are two ways of using it: pointing at the object itself or saying its name after the spell. E.g. Harry called his broomstick during the *Triwizard Tournament* in order to fight a dragon by raising his wand and saying “accio firebolt!” (2000: 299)⁴.

- **Curses:** in the books there are three unforgivable curses, that is to say, anyone to do any of them is automatically sent to prison due to the consequences for the target.

⁴ From *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*

There are three of them.

- **Avada Kedavra:** also known as the killing curse. It is the one that Voldemort uses the most to kill other people. There are dozens of wizards who have died because of it, as in the case of Harry's parents. It is identified by a green light beam which does not leave traces.

In contrast with some spells in this list, this term comes from the Aramaic language and means "may the thing be destroyed".

- **Crucio:** also called the *cruciatus* or torture curse. This is not necessarily fatal, but as its name indicates, it causes a horrible pain to the target. Voldemort and his allies tend to use them as a way to blackmail other wizards and witches in order to take information from them.

In fact, *crucio* is the Latin word meaning *to torture*.

- **Imperio:** this can be considered either the least dangerous or the most. It gives the wizards complete control over his target. Depending on how skilful is the user; the control will be shorter or longer, partial or total. It is possible to react against it but a great will power is required.

Concerning the origins of this word, *Impero* is Latin for *to command*. Moreover, *imperium* means *absolute rule*.

- **Expelliarmus:** also known as the disarming charm. It is first shown in the first meeting of the Duelling Club, during Harry's second year. Snape uses it against Lockhart as an exhibition for students but due to Lockhart's incompetence, he ended up falling to the ground.

Normally the disarming charm just makes the target's wand fly from their hands.

Expello is the Latin word for *expel* or *drive out*, while *armus* means *weapon*.

- **Legilimency:** also the power to read the mind, which most dark wizards tend to use to know if a person is lying or saying the truth. In fifth course, Snape teaches Harry how to block *legilimency* using *occlumency* so as to hide his thought and feelings from the Dark Lord.

Snape uses a spell which penetrates into Harry's mind and it is called *legeremens*

which means literally *read the mind* in Latin.

- **Lumos:** it is an easy but useful spell which sends a beam of light from the end of the wand, similar to a torch.

Lumen is the Latin word for *light*. There exists a counterpart spell, which is *Nox*, which comes also from Latin and means *night*.

- **Obliviate:** this spell name comes from the Latin *oblivio*, which means *forgetfulness*.

As its name indicates, this charm is used to make the target forget their memories.

Hermione, for instance, is forced to do that to her parents to save them from Lord Voldemort, making them forget they have a witch daughter, so that they cannot be pursued or interrogated.

- **Occlumency:** there is no concrete spell to close one's mind to others; however, *Occlumency* is the power of hiding one's true feelings or thoughts in order not to be penetrated.

It comes from Latin *occlude* (meaning close off) and again the use of *mens* (mind).

- **Patronus charm:** one of the most famous spells in the saga. This charm is used to repel *dementors*. It is also considered an advanced kind of magic. The most common effect of this charm is a little silver beam which may work for keeping *dementors* away. However, the most powerful *patroni* have a shape, commonly an animal. Harry's is a deer in clear reference to his father, whose *patronus* was also a deer.

The wizard using this spell must pronounce the words *expecto patronum* while having a very happy moment (be it real or not) in mind. After that, the positive feeling of the memory would help *dementors* stay out for a while.

In Latin, the meaning of the magic words for the spell would be *I expect for a guardian*.

- **Petrificus Totalus:** it is a spell which may work for bidding others. Its exact consequence is that the target will not be able to move for a while, as the meaning of the spell indicates.

It means literally *totally petrify*.

- **Priori Incantatem:** literally *preceeding charms*, from Latin. As Hallet (2005:20) puts it:

At the invocation of Lord Voldemort's next curse, the death curse of "Avada Kedavra," Harry manages to lock wands with him (...) a reverse spell that can only occur when two wands share a common core. In this case, Harry's wand is the brother wand of Lord Voldemort, because both have at their core a tail feather from same phoenix.

It is not a spell itself but an effect which is made by the encounter of Harry's wand with Voldemort's in the fourth book.

This confrontation makes Voldemort's wand spit steam-like representations of the last charms the wand had performed.

As a result, Harry's parents and Cedric Diggory's ghosts, among other people, came out from Voldemort's Wand to help Harry escape from the Dark Lord, as Hallet has declared.

- **Protego:** also known as the shield charm, as its name may denote. It is a defensive spell which is used to weaken or cancel a possible curse against the user. That is why it is mostly used by *aurors*⁵ in the Wizarding World.

As far as its name is concerned, *protego* means literally *to protect*.

- **Stupefy:** or also called stunning spell. This is extremely used by *aurors* to seize criminals, because it may stun the targets, but not kill them. It is one of the spells which characters in the saga tend to take advantage the most, especially from the fifth book onwards.

In Latin, *stupere* means *to be stunned*. As a result, *stupefy* in English means *daze*.

5.2 Objects

- **Broomsticks:** to begin with, broomstick riding is one of the most typical means of transport through the fantasy stories. In the Wizarding World, almost all families have their own set of broomsticks. However, they are more commonly seen in those

⁵ *Aurors* are the equivalent to security agents in the Wizarding World of *Harry Potter*.

chapters in the book where there are *Quidditch* matches, since this sport is played while riding a broomstick.

What Kronzek (2005:125) thinks about them is the following⁶:

Aunque hoy en día las ilustraciones populares siempre representan a la escoba como el medio de transporta de las brujas, no siempre ha sido así. Entre 1450 y 1600 (...), se afirmaba que las brujas alaban el vuelvo de camino hacia sus reuniones nocturnas montadas en cabras, bueyes, ovejas, perros y lobos, Pero, según sugieren algunos estudiosos, las escobas acabaron convirtiéndose en su vehículo favorito, debido a la función tradicional de las mujeres como amas de casa.

- **Cauldron:** another typical object used by witches, wizards and alchemists are cauldrons. In *Harry Potter* books they are mostly used for mixing potions in class.

The first cauldrons in History were of diverse shapes and sizes. They were made of bronze, pewter or copper. In medieval times, cauldrons played an important role in domestic activities. It was used for cooking, preparing medicines, making soap and candles, washing, etc.

In Greek Mythology, Medea was considered, according to Graves (1955:377) as “the goddess who presided over cauldron of regeneration, she could offer heroes the chance of another life on earth. “

All the same, the most famous cauldron in History is the one that belonged to the threesome of witches who dragged Macbeth down the road to ruin. They made three spirits appear who offered him three true prophecies, though deceiving.

Curiously, the spell in Macbeth is adapted into song in the movie that corresponds to the third book, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*.

- **Invisible Cloak:** Harry is given one during Christmas in his first year in Hogwarts. He does not know who sent it until the end, when Dumbledore reveals himself. It belonged to his father and Harry uses it throughout the entire saga to hide from enemies or obstacles. Harry’s cloak is special from others because of his durability. It seems not to lose its effect despite all the years of use.

As Dumbledore explains (2007:583-584):

⁶ Due to the author’s impossibility of using the original source text in English, the Spanish version will be used and quoted when necessary, and also added to the bibliography.

The cloak, as you know now, travelled down through the ages, father to son, mother to daughter, right down to Ignotus' last living descendant, who was born, as Ignotus was, in the village of Godric's Hollow.

Invisible clothes were already found in Greek mythology. Hades, the Greek God of the Underworld had the Helm of Darkness who made invisible to anyone wearing it and "it was given him as a mark of gratitude by the Cyclopes when he consented to release them at Zeus's order", as Graves suggests (1955: 74).

Subsequently, the young Perseus wore it while fighting against Medusa and the God Hermes used it in his fight against Hippolytus the giant.

- **The Mirror of Erised:** As other objects and creatures, this mirror has its only appearance in the first book, playing an important role. In fact, whoever looking at it would see the deepest of their desires. Harry discovered it in Christmas while wandering in the Castle and saw his parents for the first time. Later on, Quirrel tried to acquire the Philosopher's stone by looking at it and does not achieve it.

As a matter of fact *Erised* means *desire* if read back to front.

The clearest antecedent of this mirror is the one in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*. While the former's creator is unknown, *the Mirror of King Ryence* was made by Merlin. The main similarity they have is that both show what the person looking at them wishes the most.

- **Potions:** naturally, potions also play a part in J.K. Rowling's work. Indeed, it is one of the compulsory subjects students must take until they reach to 6th course in *Hogwarts School*.

The use of potions comes from classic mythology, when witches prepared potions with various effects as rejuvenate or transform people. Medieval legends and fairy tales mostly deal with potions to sleep or forget.

However, potions in the Wizarding World tend to be made with disgusting ingredients. That can be considered as an influence by old Greece and Rome. Their druids used materials as bat blood, beetle powder, snake bones, etc. This is because of the old belief that the drinker could acquire the features of those animals by eating them.

- **Wands:** in the Wizarding World, there is no wizard who does not have a wand. They are made in various types of wood, as oak, ash or cedar. They also have a nucleus which may come from unicorn hairs, heart of dragon or phoenix feathers.

As a matter of fact, magic wands have existed since Ancient Egypt, though there are cave paintings representing them too. In the Old Testament, for instance, Moses used a staff to separate the Red Sea.

As far as literature is concerned, magic wands appeared for the first time in Homer's *The Odyssey*. Circe used it to transform the hero's crew into a herd of pigs. As Graves explains, "Circe was skilled in all enchantments, but had little love for human-kind" (1955: 412).

Nonetheless, wands have always been linked with fairies and the fact of transforming one thing into another. That is the case of the fairy godmother in *Cinderella*, which is the most famous use of a magic wand with the prototypical image of a star at the end of its handle

5.3 Fantastic creatures

- **Basilisk:** first appeared in a note in book two as (1998: 306):

This snake, which may reach gigantic size and live many hundreds of years, is born by a chicken's egg, hatched beneath a toad. (...) all who are fixed with the beam of its eye shall suffer instant death.

Before Harry Potter, basilisk can be a giant poisonous reptile, a giant dragon or a chimera with cock's wings and head stuck to a snake body. Though versions can be different, the basilisk is always a terrifying creature which can kill with little effort. According to Kronzek (2005:57):

La primera referencia sobre este reptil nos viene de Plinio el Viejo (Pliny the Elder), el escritor latino del siglo I, cuyo libro *Naturalis Historia* refleja mucho de lo que los antiguos romanos creían acerca del mundo de la naturaleza. Según Plinio, el basilisco es una serpiente pequeña pero letal y (...) conocido como el <<rey de las serpientes>> debido a las señales en forma de corona que tiene en la cabeza (*basiliskos significa <<pequeño rey>> en griego*).

Basilisks have two weak points: the smell of the weasels and the crowing of the

roosters. Curiously, only the last is shown within the Harry Potter books. There is no reference to weasels being lethal for the basilisk in the saga.

In the Middle Ages, bestiaries started to describe basilisk as body-shaped snakes with roosters' head and wings.

In the Harry Potter books, the origin of the first basilisk created was the same that Pierre de Beauvais indicated in his bestiary in 1206. According to this source, the basilisk is the creature that comes out of a hen egg hatched by a toad.

All in all, the creature in the second book shares the shape of Pliny's version and some other aspects of later references.

- **Boggart:** it makes appearance in books three and four, though it is more relevant in the former one. Their special feature is that their appearance may vary depending of the fear of the person looking at them. They will adapt their form to what that person fears the most.

Therefore, there is nobody who knows the true form of a boggart.

Concerning their origins, the boggart is especially known in Scotland and the North of England and conserve its changing nature. They are related to brownies, which are kind creatures which help at home and bring luck to the house where they live. After their work, they tend to be rewarded with some food. Nevertheless, if their reward is too high, they may get offended. If this happens, a boggart may come to replace the brownie.

Unlike Rowling's version, boggarts have an ugly and hairy shape and they are dressed in rags.

They may have also relation with the popular figure of the boogiemán, since both words have similarities and have the appearance of something humans fear.

- **Centaur:** there is a herd of centaurs living in the *Dark Forest*, on the outskirts of *Hogwarts School*. They have the head and chest of a human and the legs of a horse. They have divination abilities as well as use weapons to defend themselves, such as bows and arrows. According to the Ministry of Magic, they are seen as semi-humans, or hybrids.

They get on well with Hagrid, though there are some of them more temperamental.

In the fifth book, when the Divination teacher is fired up by Dolores Umbridge, Dumbledore names the centaur Firenze as the new teacher. According to Rowling

(2001:6), they are “Being intelligent and capable of speech, it should not strictly speaking be termed a beast, but by its own request it has been classified as such by the Ministry of Magic.”

As Graves (1955: 213) indicated some decades before:

Centaurs claimed descent from Ixion, an oak-hero, and had a horse cult in common. They were primitive mountain tribes in Northern Greece“ and “these mountaineers seem to have had erotic orgies, and thus won a reputation for promiscuity.

There were a few centaurs which rebel against the wilderness of their equals and chose a more elegant and schooled lifestyle. Cheiron was the most famous of them, who taught the basics to heroes such as Heracles. He was an expert in medicine, hunting, and herbology, among other disciplines as divination and astrology. Rowling linked these two in order to provide centaurs with predicting powers. Therefore in Harry Potter books, they are able to foresee future events by looking at the stars.

• **Dragon:** undoubtedly, one of the most famous creatures in all history. Dragons also play some important roles through the books. What is especially remarkable about them in the saga is the fact that there are seven types of dragons depending of their origin, shape or colour but, as Rowling herself indicated (2001: 11) “these have been known to interbreed on occasion.”

However, there are some features that all dragon share. They all have wings and horns and a giant reptile skin. As will be mentioned below, this is the classic image of Dragons.

The first appearance of a dragon in the saga is in the first book, when a man sells Hagrid a Norwegian Ridgeback, which he takes care of, despite it is illegal in the Wizarding World to have one. At the end, the dragon is sent to Romania.

These creatures have been part of the mythology of lots of cultures through all times. Almost all heroes have fought against them. Heracles, for instance, killed some of them, including the famous Hydra, in what Graves (1955:297) states that “the candidate for the kingship had to overcome a serpent and take his gold; and this Heracles did both here and in his battle with the Hydra.”

In general, the descriptions of the dragons are quite similar among them. As a matter

of fact, the word *dragon* itself means *giant snake*. Depending of the source, the dragon may have two or four legs, or horns. Most of them usually throw fireballs through his mouth.

- **Elves:** in the books, they are known as house-elves, because they do not fear hard work. That is why most rich families in the Wizarding World have elves at home. Nonetheless, the conditions in which the majority of them live is really bad. There are also elves working at the kitchen in Hogwarts School.

The most known elf is Dobby, who plays an important role in books two and seven. He belongs to the Malfoy family until Harry makes his master free him.

Elves are also part of folklore in many nations. As such, they are all sizes and shapes, depending of the place.

However, there is something common to all of them and is that they use their supernatural power in order to interfere in human's life. Though there is no clear precedent of elves being enslaved, many elves volunteer to help in housework. That is the case of the tale *The Elves and the Shoemaker*, according to Kronzek (2005:116) in which the latter rewards them with complete set of clothes. After that, full with happiness, the elves leave and are never seen again, establishing a comparison with the image of the Elves in the *Harry Potter* books.

- **Fluffy:** it is a three-headed dog which makes an appearance in the first book. Its role is that of saving the *Philosopher's Stone* from possible thieves.

In this case, it is very easy to identify the antecedent of this creature. *Fluffy* is clearly inspired on Cerberus, with whom it shares all its physical features.

In Greek mythology, Cerberus guarded the door of the Underworld. In the 8th Century b.C, Hesiod the poet described Cerberus as a fifty-headed dog.

However, according to posterior writers, this number of heads decreased to three.

Greeks thought that when somebody died, their spirits passed over the Underworld, ruled by Hades and his husband Persephone. Not only that, but also that these souls' lifestyles would be influenced by their previous behaviour on Earth.

As the guardian of this Underworld, Cerberus' work was that of not letting anybody go once inside.

As Graves (1955: 80) adds, "Cerberus (is) associated by the Dorians with dog-headed Egyptian god Anubis who conducted souls to the Underworld."

According to the myths, Eurydice the nymph played her lyre in a way that Cerberus let her cross the line. This influence is also important in Fluffy, because in the book one, Hagrid tells Harry that Fluffy can be easily put to sleep if it hears music. That is why, Professor Quirrel, helped by Voldemort uses an harp to make it sleep so that he can enter the room in which the Philosopher's Stone is.

- **Goblins:** in the Wizarding World, Goblins are very wise and unfriendly magic creatures that have had some social problems with humans all over the times. Despite this fact, they rule *Gringotts*, the bank of wizards, where they can save their belongings and that is considered as the safest place to keep them. They are much smaller than common humans and have larger noses. Their magic is different too and they are particularly skilful at forge objects such as swords, jewellery, etc. These items often have magic properties themselves.

The most direct influence for goblins are dwarfs, who are a race of little people with various powers and who often hide and guard treasures under the ground.

In German and Scandinavian folklore, they tend to be friendly creatures, though in the Harry Potter books happens otherwise.

But both versions coincide in that they are fabulous metal forgers. In fact, Thor, the Nordic God of Thunder chose dwarves in order to make his famous hammer. They also worked for Odin, the Supreme Nordic God, to whom they forged a magic spear which always hit the target.

- **Ghosts:** One of the most famous fantastic creatures in all history and all cultures also appear in the *Harry Potter* books. However they do not play an important role and all of them live at Hogwarts School.

Most of them are nice to people and it is relatively common to find an interaction between a student and a ghost. They are transparent and all of them share a horrible death. In each house in Hogwarts, there is a specific ghost who is more likely to help the students of his own house.

To put it in an example, Nearly Headless Nick is the ghost of Gryffindor House, the one with Harry, Hermione and the Weasleys. He became a ghost due to his death. He was killed by an executioner who was particularly clumsy and did not get to cut his head completely. That is why, even dead, Nick can pull out his head almost completely. This specific case can be inspired in the Count of Lancaster, in the XIV

century, who suffered a similar death.

Usually, ghosts appear as bodiless spirits similar to steam. But in ancient Greece and Rome, they adapted the form of dark shadows. However, ghost were able to “become men again by entering beans, nuts, or fish, and being eaten by their prospective mothers“, as Graves puts it in his study (1955: 75).

In the books, ghosts adapt the latest of this formula, similar to steam and commonly coloured in grey, apart from transparent and immaterial, so they can go through walls and objects, but cannot be back to life again.

- **Phoenix:** there is only one known phoenix in the entire saga. His name is *Fawkes* and he is Albus Dumbledore’s pet and friend. The first time Harry sees him is in the second book, when he burst into flames and reborn again from his ashes. As a fantastic creature, the phoenix has some powers which make him an interesting animal. In fact, phoenix can carry heavy loads despite their turkey swan-size and their tears have healing effects. Furthermore, some wands are made of this creature’s feathers and, as mentioned above, their longevity is quite remarkable because of the fact that they can reborn from their ashes.

Concerning their origins, Hallet (2005:76) indicates:

Ovid (...) speaks of the bird living five hundred years and (...) collects cinnamon, and spikenard, and myrrh, and of these materials builds a pile, on which it deposits itself, and dying, breathes out it last breath amidst odours.

- **Grim:** In the third book, when Harry leaves the Dursley’s, he can see a big black dog coming from a nearby bush. This is the first encounter that the protagonist has with this bad omen.

Not long later, in an Divination class, the tea leaves in Harry’s mug have the shape of the Grim. After that, in a Quidditch match he watches the figure of the Grim just before being attacked by dementors and faints.

Later in the book, it is unrevealed that the big dog in Privet Drive⁷ is none other than Sirius Black, his godfather.

The Grim is considered an omen of death, or else a guard of the souls of the dead. Kronzek, in her study (2005:152-153) considers that:

Desde hace mucho en las islas británicas se le considera un presagio de muerte

⁷ *Privet Drive* is the neighbourhood where Harry lives with The Dursleys.

y (...) se creía que si un perro negro y bueno era enterrado en el lado norte del cementerio, el animal podía asumir el puesto de guardián en lugar del alma humana, que quedaría así liberada y podría viajar hacia el más allá.

- **Hippogriffs:** there is a group of them living in the forest near Hogwarts School. Hagrid showed them in his very first lesson as teacher in the third book. However, Draco Malfoy provokes Buckbeak, one of them, who attacks him, causing Hagrid and the creature being judged. The verdict stated that the hippogriff must be killed, but it is saved by Harry and Hermione later on. The Hippogriff escaped from Hogwarts together with Sirius Black.

Until book five, he lives wherever Sirius goes, until his death, when he returns to Hogwarts, though changing his name in order for not to cause controversy.

As in the books, the hippogriffs are the union of a Gryphon (half lion, half eagle) and a mare.

It was thought to be the favourite mount of Charlemagne and his knights.

Concerning the origins of the hippogriff, Kronzek (2005:171) argues that:

En realidad, esta bestia alada fue inventada en 1516 por Ludovico Ariosto (...) que narra las hazañas de varios caballeros de Carlomagno. (...) El hipogrifo fue domado y amaestrado por el mago Atlante y puede volar más alto y más rápido que cualquier pájaro.

- **Mandrakes:** these plants acquire a special protagonism in the second book as well. Due to the recurrent basilisk attacks, some students got petrified. The cure to this severe petrification is carried out by Professor Sprout, from Herbology, who uses these plants.

In the book, before the attacks are produced, there is a lesson in which she teaches her students how to cope with mandrakes.

When a mandrake is pulled out from the earth, it makes a powerful noise, similar to a bothering scream. They look like little brown humans with big leaves at the top of their heads.

In the Wizarding World, their only known use is that of healing petrification. That is different from other older civilizations, which used mandrakes for other purposes. The Romans, for instance, used them as a painkiller. In addition, The Middle Ages also gave properties to the use of mandrakes. Anglo-Saxon tradition used mandrakes for

expelling demons from humans when possessed. In Germany, they had divination purposes because their human heads nodded or shacked when asked questions about the future.

- **Mermaids:** there is a group of various types of mermaids under the lake next to Hogwarts School. The first time they appear is in the fourth book, in the second task of the *Triwizard Tournament*. They have a complicated language which is used to communicate among them and with certain wizards who know it. Their only human speakers known are Bartemius Crouch and Albus Dumbledore. As they live next to Hogwarts, Dumbledore considers that his role is that of being able to communicate with them.

Ancient civilizations already had creatures under the water. That is the case of Oannes, he was a God who is thought to have had taught all arts and sciences to the Babylonian people.

Nevertheless, the stereotypical image of the pretty long-haired mermaid rose up in the Middle Ages.

She is generally described singing while sitting on a rock and often presented as a sorcerer who made sailors die using her beauty and music. Her only presence was a terrible omen.

However, not all mermaids were bad. Some of them were believed to have huge knowledge about medicine and could heal humans.

- **Poltergeist:** The only present creature of this kind lives in *Hogwarts*. His name is Peeves and he is especially annoying with first year students, to whom he loves joking about.

Peeves is described as “a little man with wicked dark eyes and a wide mouth (...), floating cross-legged in the air” (1997:138).⁸

Traditionally, the image of the poltergeist has been linked to invisible creatures (though Peeves is visible) who make weird noises in order to frighten a house's inhabitants. Indeed, the word poltergeist exists in German and it means *noisy spirit*. Kronzek (2005:276) in her book investigated about the origins of poltergeist:

Hace 2400 años que se cuentan historias de extraños ruidos, mesas y sillas que vuelan y otros fenómenos de tipo *poltergeist*. (...) El gran historiador romano

⁸ *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*

Suetonio escribió acerca de un desafortunado noble que fue arrancado repentinamente de su lecho por una fuerza desconocida y “encontrado seminconsciente en la puerta junto con las sábanas”.

But, according to her, the term *poltergeist* was not consolidated until the XIX century, as in the case of the popular English tale *The Stockwell Ghost*, in which the spirit likes to knock beer barrels out and throw rotten eggs at the cats.

As a conclusion, most times poltergeists are not considered evil, but mischievous. In the case of the Harry Potter books, it also coincides with that traditional description.

- **Trolls:** this is another of the typical fantastic creatures which are present in many magic sagas. In the first book, a Troll comes into Hogwarts School supported by Professor Quirrel to inspire terror. It is a giant humanoid creature that lacks intelligence, but possesses a great strength. It is described as (1998: 187):

It was a horrible sight. Twelve feet tall, its skin was a dull, granite grey, its great lumpy body like a boulder with its small bald head perched on top like a coconut. It had short legs thick as tree trunks with flat, horny feet.

Later on, it attacks the girls' bathroom. However, Harry and Ron came to rescue her, starting their strong friendship from that moment onwards.

According to Dougherty (2016: 37-39), “the term *troll* originally applied to the *Jotnar*. After the coming of Christianity, the trolls of legend gradually took on their own identity as powerful, but often dimwitted creatures”, also adding “that the term *troll* is used more or less interchangeably with *Jotunn* or *giant*”.

- **Unicorns:** the same way as the troll, this animal only appears in the first book, dead at the Dark Forest. It is a beautiful silver horse with a horn on his head. Their tail hairs are used for making wands and their silver blood has special properties. As a matter of fact, anyone who drinks from it would extend his/her lifetime, in exchange of cursing it in an unknown way which is not specified in the books. That is why Voldemort is obliged to drink it sometimes when embedded to Quirrel.

In Graves' studies about Greek myths (1955: 181) :

White, red, and black; and according to Ctesias's (...) were the colours of the unicorn's horn—the unicorn, as a calendar symbol, represented the Moon-goddess's dominion over the five seasons of the Osirian year, each of which contributed part of an animal to its composition.

In Middle Ages, the unicorn was integrated to literature, representing power, purity and strength. It was also incorporated to Christian symbolism and became part of the England and Scotland emblems.

- **Werewolves:** as it is traditionally established, in the Harry Potter books, a werewolf is a human who turns a wolf when there is a full moon. During the night, they lose control of themselves and become completely wild and aggressive. A person turns into a werewolf when attacked by one, at least in the saga. In other tales, the transformation can be carried out due to a curse or genes. In the Wizarding World, there is a potion that weakens the effects of the transformation, but cannot make somebody avoid it at all.

In Greek mythology the figure of the werewolf is already found. There was a King called Lycaon who annoyed Zeus because he served him with flesh from a child. Zeus made Lycaon turn into a wolf, though he conserved some human features.

Kronzek (2005:175) in her study adds information about a French tale in which a honest werewolf is the protagonist:

A principios de la Edad Media (...) curiosamente, la imagen del hombre lobo no era tan mala en aquella época. En un famoso cuento francés, un noble confiesa a su esposa que es un licántropo. Ésta y su amante le roban la ropa durante su siguiente transformación. Incapaz de recuperar la forma humana sin su ropa, el noble queda atrapado en forma de lobo. Se convierte en la mascota del rey hasta que al final sale a la luz la verdad. Se le devuelve la ropa, la malvada esposa y su amante son desterrados y el noble hombre lobo sale triunfante.

5.4 Characters

- **Alastor Moody:** he is a famous *auror*. Therefore, he is worthy to carry that name, since *Alastor* is a variant of *Alexander*, which means ‘defender’. His surname also fits with him because of his volatile nature.

His appearance makes one think about the pirates in Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* (1883) mainly because Moody has also a wooden leg, due to all his fights.

The false Moody, only in the fourth book, is similar to the character of Long John Silver, who seems to be a protector of Jim Hawkins. At the end, the actual objectives of both of them are revealed.

- **Albus Dumbledore:** the old wise Hogwarts Headmaster's name comes from Latin *albus*, which mean *white* and also *wise*. Rowling has confirmed that this is because Dumbledore is on the side of light in the saga and confronts Voldemort, who represents the dark side.

On the other hand, his surname comes from an Old English word which has evolved into *bumblebee*, an insect which buzzes. According to Rowling, she imagined Dumbledore walking around Hogwarts humming to himself.

- **Dolores Umbridge:** this wicked professor joins Hogwarts in Harry's fifth course. She is sent by the Ministry of Magic and from the very beginning she is in charged to deny all the rumours concerning Voldemort's return. In order to do so, she approves new punishments and rules in order to keep things under control.

Dolores is the Spanish word for *sorrow* while her surname *Umbridge* is a play coming from the English word *umbrage*, which means offense or annoyance.

- **The Dursleys:** they are Harry's adoptive family when his parents died. Both his uncle Vernon and his aunt Petunia knows what Harry is from the very beginning.

As long as their surname is concerned, it may be considered as an anagram for *rude* and *sly*.

Despite all the hatred Harry is exposed to during his life with the Dursleys, he realizes at some moments that Aunt Petunia was her mother's sister after all, (2003:35) when:

(After hearing from Voldemort's back) she was looking at Harry as she had never looked at him before, (...). All he knew was that he was not the only person in the room who had an inkling of what Lord Voldemort being back may mean.

- **Godric Gryffindor:** one of the four founders of *Hogwarts* and a great wizard whose surname heads one of its houses.

Godric means *power* (or *rules*) of God in Anglo-Saxon. His surname has a more complex etymology. *Gryffindor* comes from French "gryffin d'or", which means "golden griffin". A Griffin is a creature half-lion, half eagles. That explains for sure why the emblem of the Gryffindor house in Hogwarts is a lion.

- **Helga Hufflepuff:** another of the founders of Hogwarts. Her symbol is a badger, which symbolises persistence. Hufflepuff students are known for being ‘unafraid of toil’ (1997, 126) according to what the Sorting Hat says.

While *Helga* means *holy*, *Hufflepuff* may come from *huff* and *puff*, which is the onomatopoeia the wolf in the three little pigs tale produced when blowing at their houses. The relation with the persistence matter of this house may have to do with his attempt to blow the third pig’s brick house.

- **Hermione Granger:** one of Harry’s best friends since Ron and he saved her from a troll on their first Halloween in Hogwarts. She’s the most intelligent and cautious in the group, though sometimes her wise advices are ignored by Ron and Harry.

Hermione can be considered as the feminine variant of Hermes, the Greek god of messengers and thieves. The only feature they both share is their intelligence, which is quite remarkable. However, there is a clearer antecedent. In Ancient Greece, Hermione was the daughter of King Menelaus from Sparta and Helen of Troy, as Graves states in his study (1955: 249) “she had been only a nine-year-old child when her mother eloped with Paris, and Menelaus had committed her to Clytemnestra’s charge at the outbreak of the Trojan War”.

- **The Malfoys:** this family of pure-blood wizards have been enemies to Harry since the first moment he coincided with Draco in *Diagon Alley*. They were some of Voldemort’s best allies, but after his fall, they pretended to have been deceived by the Dark Lord and since that moment, they live a calm life. Thus, while many wizards suspect they were pretending, others do not think that way. That is why they still conserve a high status.

At the end of the second book, it is revealed that Dobby the elf belongs to the Malfoys, until Harry makes Lucius free him. That only raises their hatred towards Harry.

Concerning the etymology of the surnames, Malfoy is the combination of the Spanish *mal*, meaning *bad*; and *foy* is Old French for *faith*, according to Rowling.

Lucius was a common name in the Roman Empire, especially for those who were part of the nobility.

Narcissa is taken from the Greek myth about Narcissus, who fell in love with his own image. This obsession took him to die while admiring his reflection. Narcissa is described as a beautiful woman, but she does not seem to have that arrogant air.

Draco means “*dragon and serpent*”, which may suit somebody from the Slytherin house.

- **Minerva McGonagall:** the teacher of *Transformations* in *Hogwarts School*, strict but fair at the same time. She is the second person in importance in the School, only under Dumbledore, but when the latter leaves, Minerva tends to be the one in charge.

As precedents, Minerva is the Roman goddess of wisdom, clearly a comparison with her correspondent character in *Harry Potter*.

- **Peter Pettigrew:** one of James Potter's (Harry's father) best friends in his childhood. Peter Pettigrew was an *animagus* (i.e. a wizard who can transform into an animal), and also the only one of their group of friends who did not call the attention. He joined Voldemort and betrayed his old friends, causing James' death.

Since then, he has lived twelve years transformed into a rat called *Scabbers* with the Weasleys. All the truth is discovered in the third book of the series.

As Peter is an *animagus* who can transform into a rat, his surname fits him, since it is formed by *petit* and *grew*, that is to say, a person who reduced his size.

The name *Peter*, though common, can be influenced from the apostle who denied Jesus three times to save his life, the same way Peter did.

- **Remus Lupin:** another member of the gang headed by Sirius and James. He is a werewolf. When Sirius, James and Peter realized, they began to study to become animagi. After they could perform their transformation, they began to be called them *the Marauders*, because in each full moon night, they transformed and wandered through all the passages in Hogwarts castle.

Lupin's etymology is very interesting. To begin with, Remus is the name of one of the founders of Rome, together with his brother Romulus. They are very famous because they were breast-fed by a she-wolf.

On the other hand, *Lupin* comes from Latin *lupus*, which means *wolf*. Thus, his full name is perfectly related with his status.

- **Rowena Ravenclaw:** the third of Hogwarts School's founders. She was especially smart and appreciated that in her students. That is why the boys and girls from the house of Ravenclaw are famous for possessing a great intelligence.

Concerning her name, *Rowena* is the latinized form of an ancient German name, which used to mean *fame* and *joy*.

Her surname is literally formed by *raven* and *claw*, though the symbol of Ravenclaw is an eagle, the raven is considered a very clever animal as well.

- **Rubeus Hagrid:** the keeper of keys of Hogwarts, Hagrid is the first friend Harry makes once he realizes that he is a wizard. In fact, it is Hagrid who tells him.

He is a half-giant, that is to say, his father was a human wizard, but his mother was a giant called Fridwulfa, who abandoned her family. Therefore, he is taller and wider than any casual human.

He was at Hogwarts too, but was expelled in his third year due to a misunderstanding which leads the Ministry to think his pet (an *acromantula*) had killed a girl that year in Hogwarts.

Despite the lack of evidences, his wand was broken in two and Dumbledore let him stay at Hogwarts as forest warden.

The references in his name are not so clear. However, *Rubeus* is an homophone for *rubeous*, which means *ruddy*, having to do with his complexion.

Hagrid might come from *haggard*, meaning *wild-appearing*.

- **Salazar Slytherin:** the last founder of Hogwarts, also the most selective and a dark wizard. Slytherin only wanted for his house to students who came from elder pure-blood families. One of the facts that are known about him is that he was a *parseltongue*, i.e. he could talk to snakes and that Voldemort is one of his descendent. That is why he has also this ability.

Considering his surname, *Slytherin* comes from *slither*, which is the way snakes have to move. That is why the symbol of this house is a snake.

- **Severus Snape:** the potions teacher. A difficult man who does not like Harry since the very beginning due to an old rivalry he had with his father. He is the head of Slytherin house, and always finds the occasion in which he can reward his students, while he is always penalising others. He was originally a Death Eater, that is to say, a dark side follower. Though Albus Dumbledore trusts him, many students do not.

The name *Severus* has that *-us* suffix which indicates Latin origin. It means *harsh* or *stern*.

- **Sirius Black:** James Potter's best friend and Harry's godfather. He was jailed in Azkaban for twelve years because of an error and escapes in the third book, where he finds Harry. At first, he is considered a serial killer, but together with Remus Lupin, they achieved to clear things up with Harry. From that moment onwards, Sirius is Harry's best support. He is also an *animagus*, who can transform into a big black dog, similar to a grim (see 5.3).

As a consequence of his second form, *Sirius* is the name of the *Dog Star*, within the constellation *Canis Major*.

- **Voldemort:** his real name is Tom Marvolo Riddle. He was an orphan who did not know love and entered Hogwarts School believing he was far more interesting than his roommates in the orphanage. He revealed himself as a great student while in Hogwarts, though nobody knew he had already murdered some people. After his student period, he disappeared and travelled all around the World, making incredible but dark achievements. When he came back, he did with many subordinates behind with whom he stroke terror. As explained above, his only name has nothing special. However, his full name is an anagram for the phrase *I am Lord Voldemort*. (1998: 331).

Concerning his pseudonym, Voldemort is a compound word which contains the French words *vol* (*theft* or *flight*), *de* (*of*) and *mort* (*death*).

- **The Weasleys:** together with Hermione and Hagrid, the Weasley family are Harry's best allies.

They are a large pure-blood family, though they are bad seen as other families as the Malfoys, mainly because the Weasleys do not have problem in establishing relations with muggles. As a matter of fact, Arthur likes muggles and he is really interested in how things such as electricity or the underground work.

The Weasley family has possibly one of the most interesting origins of all. Most of the family seem to be related, etymologically speaking, with the myth of King Arthur, though only few scholars have ventured to say something in that regard.

For instance, Goetz (2008:177-178) mentions the following:

Many people have already written about the connections between *Harry Potter* and the Arthur legend, postulating that Harry is the "prince in hiding" who becomes King Arthur of Camelot. Yet we must not forget that there is already

one Arthur in the series: Mr. Weasley. We also know that Ginevra⁹, Ginny's full name, is a derivation of Guinevere. (...) Arthur and Guinevere are married in the original legend.

There are yet connections with the Arthurian tradition. As an example, the third son of the Weasley marriage is called Percy, from Percival, in a clear reference one of the *Knights of the Round Table*.

Furthermore, Aunt Muriel, also a relative from the Weasley family, mentions a cousin called Lancelot in book seven (2007:124) that was a healer in the wizard's hospital, which can lead the reader to a possible further closure between the Weasleys and the Myth of King Arthur.

6 Conclusion

With all the terms defined and explained above, my main purpose has been to unify all the possible sources that Rowling used in her books in order to provide readers of the saga with a deeper understanding of her work.

In order to do so, I have made some research and read sources related to *Harry Potter* and fantastic and children's literature. After completing these readings, I realized that the bibliography focusing on the topic of this dissertation is really scarce and there is hardly a work that successfully integrates this information as a whole.

That is the main reason why I think that this essay can be relevant for future readers of the *Harry Potter* novels. In the years to come, scholars may consider J.K. Rowling as a relevant author in the history of English literature. In not a very far future, she will be studied much more than she is nowadays, since the *Harry Potter* phenomenon is particularly recent.

I estimate this work can be relevant as a point of departure for future studies about possible influences in Rowling's work, as an antecedent for all those papers that will come afterwards.

The result of this work could be used as well to teach younger students myths or folklores, due to the fact that the world of *Harry Potter* is known by most children at the moment. Establishing connections with the previous knowledge of these students using Rowling's

⁹ Ginevra, or else Ginny, is the only daughter in the Weasley family, while all his other siblings are boys.

books can also be a useful tool, especially for modern ways of teaching that are emerging these days.

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