"Magic Is Might"

Reading the *Harry Potter* Heptalogy through a Dystopian Lens

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Tarkastelen pro gradu -tutkielmassani J. K. Rowlingin maailmanlaatuista suosiota saavuttanutta *Harry Potter* -kirjasarjaa (1997–2007) dystopian näkökulmasta. Romaaneja analysoimalla tutkin, esiintyykö usein synkkänä ja toivottomana koetun dystopiakirjallisuuden ominaispiirteitä myös teoksissa, jotka tavallisesti luokitellaan viattomaksi lastenkirjallisuudeksi. Tutkielman tarkoituksena on selvittää, mitä hyötyä nuorille ja vanhemmillekin lukijoille on dystopiaan tutustumisesta ja mitä he voivat tästä kirjallisuudenlajista oppia.

Vaikka monia kirjallisia teoksia kuvataan dystooppisiksi, ei tälle fiktion tyylisuunnalle löydy aiemmasta tutkimuksesta selkeää määritelmää, joka pätisi kaikkiin dystopioiksi kutsuttuihin teoksiin. Tutkielmassani luon dystopiakirjallisuudelle oman määritelmäni, joka perustuu sekä alan aiempaan tutkimukseen että omaan tulkintaani kolmesta romaanista, jotka usein luetaan kuuluviksi dystopian klassikoihin: Aldous Huxleyn *Uljas uusi maailma* (*Brave New World*, 1932), George Orwellin *Vuonna 1984* (*Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 1949) ja Margaret Atwoodin *Orjattaresi* (*The Handmaid's Tale*, 1985). Kiinnitän tutkimuksessani huomiota myös siihen, millä tavoin dystooppisten teemojen käyttö lapsille ja nuorille aikuisille suunnatuissa kirjoissa tapaa poiketa dystopian klassikoista, mitä havainnollistan esimerkeillä eräästä viime vuosien suosituimmasta nuortenkirjasarjasta, Suzanne Collinsin *Nälkäpeli*-trilogiasta (*The Hunger Games*, 2008–2010).

Tässä määritelmässä eritellyt dystopian ominaispiirteet luovan pohjan *Harry Potter* -sarjan seitsemän osan analyysiin, jossa vertaan sarjassa esiintyviä sosiaalisia ja poliittisia rakenteita ja käytäntöjä dystopian klassikoissa esiintyviin teemoihin. Tutkimukseni osoittaa, että sosiaalinen hierarkia, vallan väärinkäyttö, ihmisoikeuksien rajoittaminen ja kansalaisten tietynasteinen ehdollistaminen ovat yhtä olennainen osa velhomaailmaa kuin dystopian klassikoiden yhteiskuntia. Kaikille lukijoille tämä ei kuitenkaan välttämättä ole ilmeistä, sillä dystooppisia teemoja lähestytään ensisijaisesti lapsilukijoille suunnatuissa *Harry Potter* -kirjoissa tyypillisesti huomattavasti pehmeämmin kuin dystopian klassikoissa.

Tutkimukseni valossa on ilmeistä, että dystopiakirjallisuudella on selkeä tarkoitus: kiinnittää lukijoiden huomio yhteiskunnan epäkohtiin ja rohkaista heitä muuttamaan omaa todellisuuttaan oikeudenmukaisempaan suuntaan. Voisi jopa sanoa, että *Harry Potter* -kirjasarja saavuttaa tämän tavoitteen paremmin kuin vanhemmille lukijoille suunnatut dystopiateokset, sillä huomattavasti laajemman lukijakuntansa ansiosta dystooppiset teemat tavoittavat lapset tavallista varhemmassa iässä.

Avainsanat: Harry Potter, dystopia, lastenkirjallisuus, nuortenkirjallisuus

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List of abbreviations used for primary sources:

THT   Margaret Atwood (1985): *The Handmaid's Tale*

HG   Suzanne Collins (2008): *The Hunger Games*

HGCF   Suzanne Collins (2009): *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire*

HGM   Suzanne Collins (2008): *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay*

BNW   Aldous Huxley (1932): *Brave New World*

NEF   George Orwell (1949): *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

PS   J. K. Rowling (1997): *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*

CoS   J. K. Rowling (1998): *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*

PoA   J. K. Rowling (1999): *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*

GoF   J. K. Rowling (2000): *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*

OoP   J. K. Rowling (2003): *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*

HBP   J. K. Rowling (2005): *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*

DH   J. K. Rowling (2007): *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*

FB   J. K. Rowling (2001): *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*

For full publication details, see Bibliography.

1 Introduction

J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, whose seven volumes were published between 1997 and 2007, has been a phenomenal success and universally loved among readers of all ages ever since the first novel was released. To date, its global sales have surpassed 400 million copies, making it an iconic and ubiquitous part of today's cultural world (Heilman 2009, 1). While many people – particularly those who have not actually read the novels – view the *Harry Potter* series as simple children's stories unworthy of adults' and especially literary critics' attention (Thomas 2009, 24), Colin Manlove (2009, 8) argues that a closer look at the novels reveals that they are more complex and offer much more food for thought than generally expected. It may be that for its youngest readers, the heptalogy only offers exciting adventures and immature jokes about gnomes in Christmas trees (*HBP* 309), but for others – often older readers – there is subtler humour and plenty of serious if, in places, equally subtle social commentary to appreciate. Over the course of the seven novels, various darker aspects of the wizarding world are brought to light in a manner that forces every reader, regardless of age, to pay attention to them. Some of them are only discussed in passing – such as Hermione's intense but quickly forgotten campaign for house-elf rights – but others in considerable detail, most notably Lord Voldemort's brutal pursuit for world dominance.

In recent years, it seems that a lot of literature aimed at younger readers, particularly at the young adult (YA) market, has taken a fancy to the darker side of life. Some of the most popular YA novels published over the last fifteen years have included the *Divergent* series by Veronica Roth (published 2011–2013) and *The Hunger Games* trilogy by Suzanne Collins (2008–2010), which are marketed under the title of YA dystopia. These works integrate all or some of the elements featured in traditional dystopian literature, except they replace the adult protagonist with a young one and often make certain adjustments to the typical dystopian storyline to make it more suitable for their young readers. The recent popularity of incorporating darker, dystopian themes, including caste systems, restrictions on an individual's free will and the misuse of power, into works of literature

aimed primarily at younger readers raises questions about why this is done and whether other works popular among this readership could be interpreted as representing this trend. (For the purposes of this thesis, literary works are denominated as *children's literature* or *YA literature* simply based on the section of a book store or library in which the books in question are likely to be found, although the terms generally also reveal the approximate age of the protagonist.)

The aim of this thesis is to read the *Harry Potter* heptalogy from a dystopian point of view, with the hope of discovering the extent to which this supposedly innocent children's story utilises features and themes from the traditionally bleak dystopian tradition of writing. Along the way, it attempts to discover the benefits of introducing readers to difficult topics at a young age, and to point out what they can learn from fictional dystopian societies. Even a superficial reading of the *Harry Potter* series reveals that the wizarding world contains a number of aspects which undermine its classification as a utopian place, and it is to be suspected that plenty more injustice can be unearthed in a detailed analysis of the novels. The main hypotheses of this thesis are that dystopia is present in everything – in real life as well as in any literary work – and that dystopian literature serves a very important purpose: making readers aware of the political and social injustices of the world and, in doing so, encouraging them to change their own reality for the better.

In order to answer these questions, it will first be necessary to establish a definition for what is meant by dystopia in general, and to identify its typical features in literature. The word *dystopia* has been used to describe literary works for several decades, but it is often unclear what exactly this concept entails. Many people seem fairly familiar with what could crudely be called its opposite, utopia, yet there is much more to dystopian literature than the depiction of a world in which nothing is good or desirable. Chapter 2 of this thesis will provide an overview of dystopian literature and its function, followed by a discussion of the features and themes which are typically highlighted in these works. In addition, the most significant differences in the way these features are incorporated into dystopian literature aimed at the younger readership will be pointed out. The research will be

equally based on existing scholarly works on dystopian texts and a careful reading of three novels which are generally seen to epitomise the dystopian tradition – Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (first published in 1932), George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (first published in 1949) and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (first published in 1985), which will henceforth collectively be referred to as classic dystopia – as well as Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* trilogy, which exemplifies the differences between adult and YA dystopia.

Each of these works features more or less the same dystopian elements, yet they all approach the concept of dystopia from a different angle. In *Brave New World*, the main protagonist John cannot adjust to the artificial and emotionless lifestyle of the World State, whose citizens are methodically conditioned to consume excessively and to appreciate their place in social hierarchy unconditionally; in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, compliance with the dictatorial system of Oceania is ensured by systematically limiting its citizens' knowledge of the world and by punishing rule-breakers brutally, leaving the protagonist, Winston Smith, powerless against Big Brother; and in *The Handmaid's Tale*, women have been subjugated to male authority in the Republic of Gilead, which forces its few fertile women, like the protagonist Offred, to bear children to the Commander of her household. While each novel can be seen to critique a variety of topics, it could be argued that *Brave New World* had the concerns regarding the advancement of various technologies – material and behavioural – as its primary inspiration, while *The Handmaid's Tale* seems to have built on the feminist movement born in the decades prior to its publication. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, meanwhile, portrays a clear critique of the political climate of its age, the novel having been written in the years following World War II.

Once the typical features of dystopia have been identified, attention will be turned to the *Harry Potter* heptalogy. In Chapter 3, the seven novels will be analysed thoroughly in order to see which of the aspects of classic dystopia can also be found in the wizarding world, how they influence the lives of wizards and whether their presence justifies the classification of *Harry Potter*

as a dystopian work. Throughout this investigation, the potential reasons for the integration of dystopian elements into a work of – supposed – children's literature will be sought out. This being the tenth anniversary of the publication of the final instalment of the series, quite a few scholarly works have already been written on *Harry Potter*, yet none of them strictly in relation to dystopia. Nonetheless, some of the topics in the existing research – for instance, morality, heroism, leadership and power relations – are closely related to dystopian themes and can therefore be used to support the focus of this study. As a whole, this thesis will provide a relatively comprehensive list of the features which make life in a fictional society dystopian, which has been surprisingly difficult to find in previous research. In addition, it will offer a brand new point of view to one of the best-loved stories of all time and hopefully demonstrate to the sceptics that readers of all ages can learn a number of weighty lessons from *Harry Potter*.

2 Dystopian Literature

The term *dystopia* appears only to have been coined in the 1960s (Lederer 1967, 1135), but it has since been ascribed to many literary works that were, in fact, written much earlier than that. Perhaps the best-known dystopian novels, for instance – Huxley's *Brave New World* and Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* – were first published in 1932 and 1949 respectively, and critics such as M. Keith Booker (1994, 5) trace the roots of this tradition of writing all the way back to Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* from 1726. Since the 1960s, each decade has witnessed the emergence of more and more literature described as dystopian, and the increasing variety of themes under consideration in these novels can be seen, for instance, in the portrayal of gender roles in Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (first published in 1985). Despite the increased popularity of the term, its specific meaning often remains unclear. Practically all critical discussion on dystopian literature refers to the way it contrasts with utopian fiction; hence, any attempt at defining dystopia needs to begin with a remark on the concept's intrinsic connection with its positive counterpart. The etymology of the word *dystopia* emphasises this connection to utopia, but it also brings to light the key difference between the two concepts with regard to the possibility of either vision coming true. *Utopia* is "a word created by Sir Thomas More in 1516 by combining the [Greek] prefixes *eu* (good) and *ou* (no) with the words for place (*topos)* and state of being (*-ia*)" (Dimock, Kuyper and Dimock 2009, 92). Thus, utopia simultaneously means "the good place" and "no place", or an imaginary paradise that can never become reality. When the prefix is substituted with *dys* (bad, negative), the result is *dystopia* – "the bad place" – a nightmare world which may very well become reality if heed is not taken (92–3).

As literary terms, there is no clear-cut definition for either utopia or dystopia. Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry (2003, 2–3) point out that for some critics, it is the author's intentions in describing a perfect or terrible world that make a text utopian or dystopian, while for others it can be either the thematic message of the text, the beliefs held by its characters or even the response of

its reader. They also dismiss defining utopian texts solely by their genre simply because these texts come in many forms (3). Similarly, Clare Bradford, Kerry Mallan, John Stephens and Robyn McCallum (2008, 12) argue that while certain literary works aimed at the adult market can be described as distinctly dystopian, texts written with the younger readership in mind typically represent a wide variety of genres and merely apply elements of dystopia as tropes, themes or settings. The seemingly innocent *Harry Potter* series, for instance, may not at first glance seem particularly dystopian; yet the novels contain a fair amount of social commentary which may – for the youngest readers, in particular – remain hidden underneath the more prominent layers of adventure, love and friendship (see Ch. 3).

It is apparent from the existing research that critics often use different sets of criteria when deciding if a text should be classified as utopian or dystopian. Many works employ more than one method in constructing the desired fictional world, and no two worlds are exactly alike, which makes it very difficult to form an all-encompassing definition for utopian or dystopian literature. As Booker (1994, 3) points out, "any number of literary works . . . can be seen to contain dystopian energies, and readings that emphasize these energies can reveal dystopian impulses in works that might not otherwise be considered clear examples of dystopian literature." Hintz and Ostry (2003, 3) have opted for a simplified definition, by which the term *utopia* is used "to signify a nonexistent society that is posited as significantly better than that of the reader" and *dystopia* for a society "in which the ideals for improvement have gone tragically amok." While this approach undoubtedly applies to all literature considered to represent the dystopian tradition, it remains too vague a definition for the purposes of this thesis and will be built upon in this chapter by an identification of a number of features and themes typically associated with all dystopian novels. To illustrate these, examples will be sought from the classics of dystopia, *Brave New World*, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Handmaid's Tale*. As mentioned above, the treatment of dystopian themes in YA literature

differs in certain ways from classic dystopia, and these differences will be pointed out along the way, illustrated with select examples from *The Hunger Games* trilogy.

Before moving on to the identification of the features that make a literary work dystopian, the fine line between dystopian and utopian writing needs to be emphasised in order to fully understand the nature of the former. As Rebecca Carol Noël Totaro (2003, 127) points out, when utopia and dystopia are examined in more detail, the seemingly clear division between the two into good and evil becomes muddled and the reader should realise that one person's utopia may very well be another's dystopia, and vice versa. What is described as ideal behaviour in one fictional text may be found in another as the root of all evil. In addition, readers' perceptions of a particular text may also change over time as general attitudes change, as Atwood (2007, xii) points out in her introduction to a reissue of *Brave New World*. Perhaps most importantly, the fictional characters within one dystopian work typically differ in their opinions of the state of things. The opposing points-of-view are often thoroughly explained in a discussion between the protagonist – from whose perspective dystopian works are typically written – and a leading figure of the ruling group, which helps the reader make up his own mind about the nature of the text (Newman 1993, 70). In *Brave New World*, for instance, this conversation takes place between John the Savage and the World Controller Mustapha Mond in a surprisingly civilised manner (*BNW* 192–212), while Winston Smith's discussion with Inner Party member O'Brien in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* constitutes part of his torture sessions (*NEF* 256–87; 295–300). Having all counterarguments presented in such a thorough format is likely to provoke readers to weigh in the pros and cons for themselves before deciding whether they are reading a dystopian or utopian novel. To conclude, the same text can be classified in multiple ways, depending on the reader and the time the reading takes place, and this fact should be kept in mind throughout reading this thesis.

2.1 Function

Because of the multiplicity of utopian texts, Paul Ricoeur (1986, 16) suggests that instead of defining utopian literature according to its divergent topics or ideals, it may be more fruitful to "seek unity in its function." For Jack Zipes (2003, x), the function of a utopian text is to give its reader a glimpse of a world better than his own to inspire him to improve his own reality. Dystopias utilise the same method, but instead of presenting the reader with a perfect society to strive towards, they create a terrible world to warn the reader of the potentially disastrous consequences of bad political and social decisions made in the present (Sambell 2003, 163). Considering the fact that dystopian texts are seen by many as more realistic than their idealistic but unachievable utopian counterparts (Zipes 2003, x; Jenkins 2003, 32), such warnings are more likely to resonate with readers and prompt them into action than the idylls depicted in utopia. Bradford et al. (2008, 2) call it "transformative utopianism" when dystopian texts are used to draw the readers' attention to issues present in the real world in order to instigate change. They suggest that "by challenging and reformulating ideas about power and identity, community, the body, spatio-temporal change, and ecology," these fictional world orders help readers imagine a better future for themselves, and the same sentiment is put forward in a lot of criticism on dystopia (e.g. Hintz and Ostry 2003, 7; Marks 2005, 236; Booker 1994, 3; Baccolini and Moylan 2003, 7). The transformative function of dystopia is arguably even more important for young readers who are particularly susceptible to the ideas presented in literature (Bradford et al. 2008, 2) and who will, after all, one day be in charge of the societies they live in. In addition, Bradford et al. (129) suggest that the resourceful and compassionate young characters of YA dystopia – like Katniss in *The Hunger Games* and Harry in the *Harry Potter* series – can act as role models for the readers, helping them recognise the difference between what the world is now and what it could be made into. Similarly, being able to identify with a young character facing difficulties can help readers overcome the struggles they face

in their own lives (Totaro 2003, 135), even if these struggles are, hopefully, much less severe than those presented in dystopian fiction.

As the concept of transformative utopianism suggests, the themes of dystopian novels generally reflect the real world and comment on the issues and new developments causing concern in society at the time of writing. The threats played out in dystopias have included both World Wars, the nuclear threat of the Cold War era and the more recent concerns about an ecological disaster as a result of global warming (Bradford et al. 2008, 90). Over several decades, technology has also played a sinister part in many dystopian texts as people have speculated about the consequences of accomplishments in the fields of genetic manipulation and cybernetics, for instance (155). Overall, Peter Marks argues that the "imaginative and provocative accounts of alternative places [in dystopian texts], that draw from, heighten, or extrapolate current fears, trends and circumstances" offer the reader something to measure his own society against and contemplate where the world is heading (2005, 236). This statement clearly emphasises the function of dystopia as an instigator of change and, in a world whose inhabitants are never likely to run out of things to worry about, Hintz and Ostry (2003, 12) suggest that dystopian literature is likely to continue gaining popularity in future years.

2.2 Social Hierarchy and the Use of Power

One of the most prominent features of dystopian literature is the presence of a strict system of social organisation, which is considered a prerequisite for a text's qualification as a utopia or dystopia (Hintz and Ostry 2003, 4). Bobby Newman (1993, 170) argues that dictatorships in which an elite minority controls the rest of the citizens are particularly common in dystopias, and mentions the political system of Oceania in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as "perhaps the finest and most chilling example of a dictatorial government." Although historical fiction is generally excluded from dystopian literature – according to Hintz and Ostry (2003, 5), it demands too complex an

understanding of historical facts and thus takes away from the freely imaginative nature of dystopia – the fictional societies featured in dystopias have often been strongly influenced by existing political systems. For instance, as Ben Pimlott points out in the novel's introduction, the totalitarianism of Oceania clearly mirrors the actual societies of the day in Russia, China and Nazi Germany (2000, v), which were naturally a common talking point in the years following World War II when the novel was written. By taking their inspiration from current politics, the exaggeratedly violent, regressive or otherwise dysfunctional communities of dystopian fiction can provide the reader with negative examples of how not to organise society (Bradford et al. 2008, 107). For the same reason, Hintz and Ostry (2003, 1–2) emphasise the role of dystopian literature in educating children and young adults about social organisation and the role of the individual, suggesting that such texts are likely to be the young reader's first place to learn about such matters.

The dictatorship of dystopian novels' societies is often accompanied by some form of caste system, placing individuals on a rank according to various criteria as decided by the ruling class. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, an individual's caste is decided by vigorous tests done at an early age (*NEF* 217), whereas in *Brave New World* people are bred with the right genes for their future caste (*BNW* 5). Caste membership can also be decided on grounds of gender, as in *The Handmaid's Tale*, where women are effectively forced into submission by denying them paid employment and access to money (*THT* 188). The different estimation of individuals based on their blood status shows that the wizarding world of *Harry Potter* also features a caste system. The elite minority at the top of the fictional dystopian society's hierarchy has total control over the remaining population, who have little say in how they spend their lives. In addition to setting and maintaining the rules and laws by which all citizens must abide, members of the ruling class typically live and work in somewhat better conditions than the lower classes and enjoy certain perks unavailable to their inferiors (*BNW* 196–7; *NEF* 176; 199; *THT* 20–21; 147). As the division of citizens into the different castes is typically based on qualities which cannot be changed in later life, an individual has virtually no

chance to ascend from his allocated position and thus improve the quality of his life. At the same time, even the highest classes of a dystopian society are mostly subject to the same rules as the rest of the population and, not counting those few perks, live equally controlled lives, at least if compared to the relatively free societies of most modern countries.

Bradford et al. (2008, 184) mention that the societies and systems of social organisation depicted in literature for younger readers tend to be more conservative than in adult dystopias, partly because of the average age of the readership, but also because most authors do not dare step too far outside the ideologies considered normal by the dominant social groups. This sentiment is echoed by Kay Sambell (2003, 164), who argues that dystopian themes are commonly treated with more hesitation and ambiguity in children's literature than in classic dystopia, often because authors are concerned that the texts might otherwise be too forceful for the young readership. However, when asked whether children and young adults can handle the bleakness of dystopia, author Lois Lowry points out that its themes are not foreign to young readers: "Young people handle dystopia every day: in their lives, their dysfunctional families, their violence-ridden schools. They watch dystopian television and movies about the real world where firearms bring about explosive conclusions to conflict" (interviewed in Hintz and Ostry 2003, 199). In addition, Maureen F. Moran (2003, 140) argues that in order for dystopian works to truly act as catalysts for change, it is necessary for them to present the reader with ideas that are noticeably different to the norms of the real world. In other words, young readers' exposure to unfair fictional dictatorships and strict caste systems such as those depicted in *The Hunger Games* will hopefully prevent such dystopian societies from arising in their own realities in years to come.

The concept of societal rule by dictatorship can be broadened to include the use of power in general. According to Ricoeur (1986, 17), it is the use of power in an institution that is the main focus of utopia or dystopia, and the function of such texts is to expose the flaws in the power hierarchies of the world. Amin Malak (1987, 10) agrees, stating that dystopias deal with the

efficient and merciless use of power to keep the citizens of a totalitarian society under control. In a typical dystopian society, power is concentrated in the hands of a small elite who are frequently acting in the same of some higher authority, of which Orwell's Big Brother is perhaps the best example (*NEF* 216–17). The ruling class has often risen into power as a result of some external threat, whether war or an act of terrorism, and the takeover has faced little opposition from the public, seeing as the new rulers have presented themselves as the bringers of renewed peace and stability into society (199–200; 215; *BNW* 201; *THT* 182–183). By the time the the various downsides of these new regimes come to light, the tyrannical elite has established a formidable system of rules, surveillance and punishment which prevents the lower classes from interfering with the social order. A similar power structure can also be found in *Harry Potter*, where Voldemort's original rise to power closely follows the pattern described above, and the Ministry of Magic holds an equally tight grip on the wizarding world in times of peace.

Much of the power of the ruling class in a dystopian society is, indeed, directed at keeping its citizens under control by way of imposing a wide variety of restrictions upon their free will, resulting in a society from which all basic human rights have been virtually eliminated. There are typically strict rules in place which dictate where people are allowed to go, what they are to do with their time and who they can interact with, as well as how they are expected to behave in general. Although these are often unwritten rules – as Winston Smith remarks, in Oceania, "nothing was illegal, since there were no longer any laws" (*NEF* 8) – every citizen nonetheless knows how they are supposed to act in order to avoid consequences. A handmaid in Gilead, for instance, knows exactly how to interact with fellow citizens and how much deviance from the daily routine is acceptable (*THT* 29; 174). In addition to the perfunctory compliance with countless rules, the citizens of a dystopian society are often subjected to a limited availability of various necessities, including food items and razor blades, which are strictly rationed by the government (37; *NEF* 51),

although the extravagant consumerism of *Brave New World* makes an exception to this rule (*BNW* 42).

Calin-Andrei Mihailescu (quoted in Bradford et al. 2008, 28) adds that the minimising of individual differences has been acknowledged in dystopian works as an efficient tool for keeping society in order and power in the hands of the chosen few. Typically, this is accomplished by having the members of a certain caste wear a specific type and colour of clothing, telling others at a glance to which group the individual belongs (*NEF* 4; *THT* 31; 33–4; *BNW* 22–3). The elimination of differences has been taken to extremes in Huxley's World State, where the Bokanovsky's Process – producing dozens of identical human beings – is named as "one of the major instruments of social stability" (5). Dystopian texts for young adults, which often highlight the personal development of the protagonist, typically examine carefully the effects of the surrounding dystopian society on his developing perception of self (Bradford et al. 2008, 12). In *The Hunger Games*, for instance, although Katniss and her friend Gale have grown up in equally difficult circumstances and share a similar world view in the beginning of the trilogy, they nonetheless discover in the third novel that their views on certain topics differ greatly, at least in part due to their individual experiences over the course of the series (*HG* 16–7; *HGM* 64; 238–40). Personal growth in YA dystopia is thus closely linked with all of the above restrictions a dystopian society imposes on the free will of its citizens, particularly the young, who are still in the process of making sense of the world and their own place in it.

The suppression of individualism is the first example of the more systematic means of control often employed by dystopian governments which further limit citizens' personal freedom and collectively have a profound impact on how the citizens view the world they inhabit. Another such method is the conditioning of the population into thinking a certain way, which features in various forms in the classics of dystopia. The most methodical and perhaps best-known system of conditioning can be found in *Brave New World*, in which all citizens are fed subliminal messages

from birth and exposed to so-called neo-Pavlovian stimuli throughout their childhood. These subconsciously teach the citizens to value the caste to which they have been preassigned above others and even to only enjoy pastimes which are beneficial to the state (*BNW* 16–17; 22–23), resulting in a society which functions exactly as the rulers want. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, a similar result is achieved through a systematic limitation of individuals' ability to think for themselves – and, when this fails, by torturing them into submission (*NEF* 279; 312) – while the rulers of Gilead mainly seem to rely on people gradually forgetting the past and getting used to the new way of life (*THT* 127). Conditioning – most notable in *Harry Potter* in the world view of the house-elves, but perhaps also in the wizards themselves (see p. 46) – is clearly an efficient way for the rulers to maintain their control over the lower classes, as very few people have the capacity to question their decisions and authority.

A further popular tactic of dystopian governments is restricting the kind of information the public has access to. Information sources are generally scarce and the news broadcasts and print media, if available, cannot be relied on for accuracy. As communication with other individuals is often forbidden, there is also little opportunity to spread news through word of mouth. Nonetheless, whether via the media or in compulsory public gatherings, the citizens are fed a constant stream of propaganda designed to induce love for the home country and hate for its enemies (*THT* 93; 232; 290–2; *NEF* 16; 25–6). The most blatant use of the media to serve the government's selfish ends can be found in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, where a large group of citizens are employed for the sole purpose of altering old written material – everything from news reports to historical records – to conform to the current and constantly evolving views of the rulers. In order to "safeguard the infallibility of the Party," nothing contradicting the latest political situation is allowed to remain in existence (221–22). This kind of manipulation of information hence creates a situation in which the citizens of a dystopian society have no way of telling what is true, making it nigh on impossible for them to question the rulers' policies.

Education is likewise very limited in dystopia and, where available, is equally propagandist and often limited to preparing the young citizens for their future role in society (*NEF* 216; *THT* 128–29). In *Brave New World*, it seems that any further education is reserved for those groups which will be in charge of running specific operations in the future (*BNW* 140; 157), while others only seem to gain rather superficial knowledge of the functioning of their society (112–13). Because of the technological innovations – at least seen as such at the time of writing – which often feature in dystopian literature, this tradition of writing is often linked with science fiction, but as Booker (1994, 4) points out, the focal point of dystopia lies not so much on the effects of scientific innovation as on the critique of social organisation, as discussed above. New technologies like the telescreen (see p. 19) may indeed play an important role in how dystopian societies are controlled, but on the whole, these societies appear very static and resistant to change, leaving no room for innovation and progress in the fields of technology or science (Malak 1987, 11). Similar tendencies can be detected in *Harry Potter*, where the Ministry of Magic wants to hold on to its position on top by discouraging innovation and change at the wizarding school Hogwarts (see p. 76). The resistance to change is even more evident in the classics of dystopia: in *Brave New World*, a World Controller explains that scientific innovation has to be restricted in the World State because of the danger it poses to social stability (*BNW* 198), while in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, "technological progress only happens when its products can in some way be used to for the diminution of human liberty" (*NEF* 201). Arguably, the innovative breeding and conditioning methods of the World State mentioned earlier (p. 13) also serve the same purpose.

There is also a noticeable lack of literature in dystopia, which can presumably be explained through the same objective as the alteration of historical records in Oceania – to avoid an uprising against the tyrannical rulers: "so long as they [the citizens] are not permitted to have standards of comparison, they never even become aware that they are oppressed" (*NEF* 216). Just like historical glimpses of a more harmonious past, works of fiction might provide the reader with depictions of

societies whose conditions are better than in the reader's own reality, potentially inspiring him to challenge the prevailing system. The same sentiment appears to be behind the unavailability of literature in both *Brave New World* – where Shakespeare is called a more efficient propagandist than any trained by the World State (*BNW* 160) – and *The Handmaid's Tale* – where one of the founding fathers of Gilead admits that "[o]ur big mistake was teaching them to read. We won't do that again" (*THT* 320). Hence, all old books and magazines have been hunted down and destroyed from the dystopian societies and replaced either by grossly rewritten versions which support the government's line – rather like the historical accounts in *Harry Potter*, in which wizards cover up their mistreatment of goblins, for instance – or by light, meaningless entertainment promoting desirable ideals (*BNW* 29; 194; *NEF* 45–46; 56; 101; *THT* 165–166). The highly restricted access to literature is a further indication of the way dystopia mirrors the real world, as Lowry (interviewed in Hintz and Ostry 2003, 198) points out that artistic expression has been restricted also in many real repressive societies of the past. Without literature, in addition to lacking a comparison point to their own systems of social organisation, the citizens of a dystopian society are unable to use the fictional worlds presented in books for temporary escapism from their own less than ideal reality. In this sense, the dystopian rulers seem to have recognised the role of literature as an instigator of change, as discussed above – only they wish to eliminate this potential by banning all books.

In addition to knowledge, dystopian rulers seem to view emotions as potentially dangerous to their supremacy. As a strong emotional response to the rulers' decisions or actions – particularly if they are perceived as threatening a person's loved ones – can spur a citizen to rebel against the authorities, many dystopian societies attempt to minimise all emotions. Perhaps this also explains the Ministry of Magic's use of Dementors to guard its prisoners in *Harry Potter*, seeing as a criminal who is left with no other emotion than overwhelming despair is generally incapable of clear thinking, let alone any physical action . William Matter (1983, 61) argues that the

various harmless diversions provided for the citizens in *Brave New World*, for instance, are simply attempts to "garishly mask the loss of the individual's right to feel." In fact, the citizens in Huxley's dystopia do have a right to feel, but the only acceptable emotion is happiness. Matter reads this as the author's clear criticism of older utopian texts, where emotions of any kind were seen as an unnecessary distress for the citizens of an idyllic state (68), whereas for Newman (1993, 170), the key issue in *Brave New World* and many other dystopian societies is the absence of the right to choose your emotion for yourself – as Mustapha Mond puts it, "the right to be unhappy" (*BNW* 212).

Hintz (2003, 107) links the elimination of emotions all the way back to Sir Thomas More's description of Utopia, where society was so harmoniously organised that its citizens had no cause for ambition or conflict, leaving no purpose for emotional responses. In the classics of dystopia, where the situation is not quite as idyllic, the rulers have invented various creative ways to suppress undesirable emotions. Each of these societies offers its citizens an artificial outlet for their anger, whether in the form of a chemically induced experience (*BNW* 211) or a public gathering in which the built-up anger is directed at the enemies of the state (*NEF* 13–19; *THT* 290–92). In *Brave New World*, the citizens are additionally distributed regular supplies of *soma*, a hallucinogenic drug bringing its consumer instant, hangover-free happiness. Thus, whenever someone is feeling the slightest bit blue, they can simply take a pill and have a brief, blissful holiday from society and return afterwards in good spirits (*BNW* 46; 79; 143).

There can be various reasons why the oppressed citizens do not rebel against the often brutal enforcement of control over all aspect of their lives, of which the suppression of emotions is one. Its combination with conditioning, in particular, can easily lead to an apathetic society whose members do not even realise that the conditions of their world could be improved. Sometimes the restrictions have simply been the norm for so long that no one remembers a different time, which is expected to occur in both Oceania and Gilead before long (*NEF* 90; 138; *THT* 127). As suggested above, all of

these drastic measures are generally justified in dystopian societies as being necessary for the efficient functioning of the society as a whole. In Gilead, for instance, the handmaids-in-training are effectively told that the new rules will guarantee that women are no longer at risk of the sexual offences of old (even if this seems rather hypocritical, given their future positions as handmaids): "In the days of anarchy, it was freedom to. Now you are being given freedom from. Don't underrate it" (34).

More concerning, however, is the fact that often those not happy with their part are too frightened to express their feelings, as they know they would be severely punished for this. The justice system of a dystopian society is often far from just, with individuals frequently being convicted of crimes they have not committed – perhaps most famously in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, where the concept of thoughtcrime enables the rulers to incarcerate anyone merely contemplating breaking the rules (*NEF* 219–20). This tactic supposedly protects the stability of society as it prevents all crime from being committed in the first place, but in a situation where all political and societal power is held by a small elite, there is always potential for the misuse of this power for personal gain, typically motivated by the elite's desire to maintain their position on top – which is precisely what happens in *Harry Potter* by way of both Voldemort and the Minister for Magic taking full advantage of the Ministry's power over the wizarding community to serve selfish ends (see pp. 50; 54). One of the leaders of Oceania actually drops all pretence of the pursuit of common good and admits to Winston – albeit in private – that the Party is "not interested in the good of others; we are interested solely in power," which in his opinion makes them a much more effective dictatorship than the Nazis or the Russian Communists (*NEF* 275–76). The use of false imprisonment and denying the accused the chance to defend himself further undermine human rights in dystopian societies whose justice systems are driven by their rulers' hunger for power.

Even though proof is not always required to incriminate people in a dystopian society, there are various means by which anyone stepping out of line can be caught. The most effective tool for

ensuring conformity to the rules is an omnipresent network of surveillance through which the leaders are able to observe every movement of individual citizens (Bradford et al. 2008, 119). Perhaps the most famous surveillance network is that of Oceania, where every street corner, public building and private living room has a telescreen, a device designed both to transmit government propaganda to the public and keep an eye on them. This leaves the citizens with no privacy, even in their own home, as the rulers can see and hear everything they do and also address them directly if the slightest nonconformity occurs (*NEF* 4–5; 39). In addition to such technological methods, the citizens of a dystopian society are typically kept under constant surveillance by organised law enforcement units whose agents may guard the streets openly (*THT* 30), work undetectably among the population (*THT* 28; 30; *NEF* 113; 233–234) or only be summoned when an unexpected disturbance occurs (*BNW* 188). Some societies also encourage ordinary citizens to spy on their fellows and report any unorthodox behaviour – in Oceania, children will happily turn in their parents (*NEF* 26–27) and in Gilead, the handmaids keep a close eye on their shopping partners (*THT* 29) – creating an environment where individuals cannot trust one another for fear of punishment. Similar methods are also employed in *Harry Potter*, where the addition of magic makes it even harder for wizards to evade getting caught (see p. 35).

2.3 Gated and Alternative Communities

Oceania's method of turning family members against each other is a prime example of the rulers' attempts to abolish the traditional concept of family from dystopian societies. As suggested above, the bonds between family members can be the source of some extremely strong emotions which may act as a catalyst for confrontational action if a loved one is being threatened. According to Bradford et al. (2008, 106), in the modern world, family is often seen as the building-block of society, and the functionality of a state is largely judged on the emotional well-being of its families. Hence, when an individual has no family to care for, he is less likely to react strongly to the rulers'

interference with his life. The systematic abolishment of the traditional family unit can be seen clearly in the classics of dystopia, each of which promotes its own, highly unconventional method of reproduction, for instance (*BNW* 2–10; *NEF* 68–69; *THT* 104–6). The potentially dangerous force of emotional attachments is admitted in both *Brave New World* (209) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (68; 140), and the Gileadian regime's habit of separating biological family members from one another and using them to threaten rebelling individuals – which Voldemort also practices in *Harry Potter* (see p. 100) – suggests that this force has also been acknowledged in *The Handmaid's Tale* (*THT* 113; 323). Newman believes that the authors of dystopian texts are aware of the fact that threatening the traditional concept of family and practicing selective breeding are likely to make their characters less appealing to the reader (1993, 172), which would support the argument that envisioning such radical changes in family life is, indeed, used as a tool in portraying a society as dystopian.

In YA dystopia, even if the concept of family has not been systematically abolished from the fictional society, Bradford et al. (2008, 132) mention that many protagonists are nonetheless left to survive on their own after their immediate family is torn apart as a result of some form of conflict. For instance, in *The Hunger Games*, Katniss is left to solely provide for her family after her father is killed in a mining accident which pushes her mother to a severe bout of depression (*HG* 32–33). Maria Nikolajeva (2009, 230) argues that "[t]he removal of parents is the premise of children's literature" as it forces the child protagonists to take control of their life more autonomously and to face troubles children are often spared in the real world. In addition to having lost their parents, the protagonists of YA dystopia often struggle to find other trustworthy adult characters whom they could rely on for protection, emphasising their need to take charge of whatever situation they are facing on their own and to come up with a solution without adult assistance (Bradford et al. 2008, 135). The young protagonist thus becomes empowered to make decisions much more autonomously than most children who, in real life, tend to stand at the bottom of a hierarchical system, which

further emphasises the protagonist's potential to act as a role model for the young readers. Despite this emphasis on individual survival and empowerment in YA dystopia, the concept of family nonetheless typically remains important to the protagonist and continues to influence his actions long after the parents have been removed from the picture. It may act as his motivator or represent the ideal towards which he is prepared to keep striving (Bradford et al. 2008, 153), which can also be seen in *Harry Potter* in Harry's desire to fight the evils of the wizarding world in order to prevent other families from being torn apart (see p. 108).

The immediate family is also considered to be an important source of emotional support, particularly in literature aimed at the younger readership, where the protagonists tend to be young and dependent on their parents – for guidance as well as shelter and sustenance. When the family unit is broken in the manner described above, an individual is either left to function on his own or to seek a support network elsewhere (Bradford et al. 2008, 131). A mixture of independence, whether begrudged or voluntary, and alternative communities can be found in both *Harry Potter* – where the orphaned Harry chooses to do much on his own but continues to enjoy the full support of various family substitutes nonetheless (see p. 109) – and the classics of dystopia. The rulers of Oceania and Gilead seem to view any voluntarily formed community as being equally dangerous to their rule as the traditional family unit, seeing how both Winston and Offred state that friendships are no longer permissible and punishment is to be expected from carelessly spoken words or even looking someone in the eye (*NEF* 51; 72; *THT* 35; 176). Conversely, in *Brave New World*, it seems that the World Controllers fear that time spent alone would make their subjects think, and thinking might obviously lead to some discontentment. Hence, the citizens have little option but to spend all their time with other members of the alternative community they have been assigned to, their caste: everyone is conditioned to crave others' company and those preferring solitude are viewed as somewhat unpleasant and odd (*BNW* 38; 76; 207).

Far more commonly, however, the dystopian rulers are afraid that groups of likeminded individuals might meet in secret and orchestrate a hidden resistance to the prevailing system, which is also the motivation behind the Order of the Phoenix and Dumbledore's Army in *Harry Potter*. Such groups are common in YA dystopia (Hintz and Ostry 2003, 10) but also in the classics, where they either spread forbidden knowledge in the manner of the Brotherhood of Oceania (*NEF* 181–82) or help citizens escape the tyrannical state, as the women's network in Gilead does (*THT* 258). Because of the spies and surveillance methods, it is difficult for an individual to find out who else is discontent with the dystopian system of social organisation, as the wrong word to a true believer would guarantee severe punishment. Hence, Gilead's network, for example, has a password which reveals members to one another (212). Another common precaution is preventing anyone in the alliance from having a full list of its other members, which guarantees that if one person is captured, he cannot betray more than a couple of others to the rulers (212; 257–258; *NEF* 182–183). While the rumours of a network in Gilead are eventually shown to be true (*THT* 177), the existence of Oceania's mythical Brotherhood is never verified. Even the person who initiates Winston into the movement is later revealed as a prominent leader of the Thought Police (*NEF* 256), which emphasises the extent of a typical dystopian dictatorship's power and the difficulty its inhabitants face in standing up to it.

Indeed, one of the most prominent features of a dystopian society is its citizens' inability to escape the world in which they are oppressed, which links this tradition of writing to the concept of gated communities. According to Matthew Burke (2001, 115), this concept originates from rich suburbia, where the wealthy would build gates around their dwellings as protection from unwanted visitors, and has become a popular motif in fiction because of the possibilities it offers writers. Even though the common assumption is that the threat looms outside of the walls of a gated community, there are many fictive accounts of the community on the inside using the walls to hide illegal or unacceptable behaviour from the outside society (Burke 2001, 117), as well as depictions of gated

communities whose internal rules are so militantly followed that they have come to resemble a totalitarian society in miniature (120). Gated communities of each of these types can also be found in *Harry Potter*, particularly in the way the wizarding world exists in complete isolation from the Muggle world, but also in the relationships between various groups within the wizarding community.

What is common to all types of gated community is their use of barriers – physical or otherwise – to separate one community from others and having a select group in charge of who is permitted to enter or exit the gated community, which bears a great similarity to the societies of dystopian texts. In the classics of dystopia, there are various examples of gated communities, each serving a slightly different purpose. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Oceania is gated off from the rest of the world to promote patriotism and to avoid giving its citizens a comparison point (*NEF* 204), while in Gilead, the handmaids are gated in because they are deemed necessary for maintaining the population levels (*THT* 316–17). In Huxley's World State, on the other hand, physical barriers have been made redundant by the conditioning and most of its inhabitants do not see any reason for wishing to leave their society behind. Meanwhile, the Savage Reservations are surrounded by electric fences which allow visitors from the main society to observe the highly unorthodox mannerisms of the natives while containing them within specific borders (*BNW* 87–89). The different castes within each novel's main society could also be called gated communities, though on a more abstract level, considering how the division is permanent and members of one caste are not supposed to interact with members of the other castes (22; *NEF* 74; 86; *THT* 21; 225–26).

For a citizen of a dystopian society, having no escape can also mean not getting away with defiant behaviour within the society. As O'Brien tells Winston, "[n]o one who has once gone astray is ever spared" (*NEF* 268). Anyone not prepared to wholly conform to the will of the rulers is quickly removed from society, so as not to give him an opportunity to influence others around him. Such characters, who may inspire hope of a better future in their fellow citizens as well as the

readers, tend to be rare in dystopias and when present, are typically shown to fail in their efforts to challenge the rulers' power (Malak 1987, 11). Sambell (2003, 164–65) argues that the unequivocal failure of the protagonists of classic dystopian texts is a key element in making the reader take heed of the warning expressed by the text, and this is also what Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan (2003, 7) are referring to when they say that "dystopias maintain utopian hope *outside* their pages, if at all." The presence of hope is perhaps the biggest difference between the dystopian classics and dystopia for younger readers, seeing as hope and happy endings are generally perceived as necessary, if not compulsory, components in a work of children's literature (Sambell 2003, 165). As children's author Monica Hughes (2003, 160) puts it, "I may lead the child into darkness, but I must never turn out the light."

According to Sambell (2003, 164), the refusal to extinguish hope is another example of the hesitation and ambiguity often present in YA dystopia, which can easily lead to a somewhat compromised ending in these works. She argues that children's dystopias often replace the utter failure of the classics' protagonists with open or ambiguous endings (172), which is also how the conclusion of *The Hunger Games* could be described. At the end of the trilogy, Katniss is living largely in isolation from the main society and passes no judgment on its current political system, leaving the reader to guess whether the Capitol's tyranny was truly eliminated when power changed hands (*HGM* 454–55). Although such open endings leave room for different interpretations, Sambell explains that the accompanying tendency to compromise has often been criticised for evading the logical consequences of the storyline (2003, 173) – of which Harry's controversial survival at the end of the *Harry Potter* series acts as a prime example (see pp. 114–15) – and adds that by not following the example of classic dystopia in terms of the protagonists' fate, children's authors risk undermining the threat their text is supposed to portray (Sambell 2003, 164).

In the classics of dystopia, there is considerable variation as to what precisely the failure of the protagonist entails. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, for instance, all defiant individuals, including

Winston, are immediately incarcerated without trial and brutally tortured for as long as it takes to break their mind and then reshape it to align with the tyrants' world view. After this, if they are deemed harmless enough, they are released back into society like Winston; otherwise, they are apparently killed – judging by the many disappearances mentioned in the novel – and their ever having existed is denied, though never before the mind's conversion is complete (*NEF* 47; 267; 300). Winston's sentiment ending the novel sums up the rulers' objective of controlling their subjects' minds as well as bodies nicely: "He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother" (311). In *The Handmaid's Tale*, on the other hand, all criminals seem to be hanged in public gatherings and subsequently left on display as cautionary examples of the fate of rule-breakers (*THT* 42–43; 287–88). Despite the use of capital punishment on the rulers' part, death also frequently serves another purpose in dystopia. While Winston only contemplates suicide when he is in the prison cell waiting for the torture to commence, presumably to avoid the physical pain he dreads (*NEF* 241), in *The Handmaid's Tale*, several handmaids have opted to take their own lives to escape the conditions they are forced to live in (*THT* 144; 223; 297). Offred also keeps running through the alternatives for a quick escape, even though everything with which suicide could be accomplished has been removed from her surroundings in anticipation of this (17–18; 205; 220; 304). Viewing death as a means of escape is particularly clear in *Brave New World*, where John the Savage is unable to make his peace with the so-called civilised world and hangs himself once it becomes clear that there is no escaping it (*BNW* 229).

The outlook on death seems to be another difference between classic and YA dystopia. Both Bradford (2008, 111) and Hintz and Ostry (2003, 9) argue that many societies in dystopia aimed at children and young adults are dystopian specifically because of the rulers' control over life and death – with those citizens too weak to be of service often being indifferently disposed of – yet neither mentions suicide featuring in these works as a means of escape. Hence, it could be argued that in literature for younger readers, death seems to be treated as the worst possible fate for a

character, no matter what kind of world they live in, whereas classic dystopia often presents suicide as preferable to a controlled life in miserable conditions. In *Harry Potter*, for instance, despite the magical ways to interact with the deceased, death is always presented as a tragic destiny (see pp. 113–14). The *Hunger Games* novels, meanwhile, are largely presented as dystopian for the simple reason that the state of Panem annually sends 24 of its children to battle each other to death (*HG* 22). While Katniss does acknowledge a number of times that dying might be preferable to what is ahead in Panem (417; *HGCF* 148; *HGM* 147–48; 440), neither she nor her friends ever carry out their plans to kill themselves or each other to escape the rulers (393; 403; 436; 444). It seems that life is ultimately too precious for these teenagers.

The removal of a defiant individual from his dystopian society can also mean transferring him to some place outside of the main society, where he stands less chance of corrupting compliant minds. This softer approach is employed most notably in *Brave New World*, where those with differing opinions on the society's values are first encouraged to cure themselves by taking *soma* and, if this does not help, sent to one of the World State's Sub-Centres located on various distant islands – of which, according to World Controller Mond, there are fortunately many: "I don't know what we should do without them. Put you all in the lethal chamber, I suppose" (*BNW* 201). Although being sent to the islands are officially presented as a severe punishment (130), Mond explains to Helmholtz Watson that he and Bernard ought to be pleased about such a fate, seeing as the islands are inhabited by "the most interesting set of men and women to be found anywhere in the world. . . . All the people who aren't satisfied with orthodoxy, who've got independent ideas of their own. Everyone, in a word, who's anyone" (199–200). At least some women in Gilead have also been offered a choice of relocation, yet the conditions in the Colonies are so appalling that the majority opt to stay in the controlled main society, whether as handmaids or as prostitutes at an illegal den run by the Commanders (*THT* 20; 249–250; 260–261; 321).

A similar transition is also present in some dystopian works for younger readers, though from a slightly different perspective. Totaro (2003, 129) mentions several novels whose young protagonists feel so out of place in their community of origin that they deem it necessary to leave it behind. Their subsequent experiences within the new community help them decide whether their original judgment was right and which of the two communities they belong in. In *The Hunger Games*, Katniss' move from her original home in District 12 – where she lived under the tyrannical Capitol's rule – to the rebellion's base in the long-forgotten District 13 – ruled by a power-hungry president of its own – is, to some degree, comparable to this, though with the significant difference that Katniss did not abandon her home voluntarily but only after it had been bombed to the ground by the Capitol (*HGM* 7–8; 418). Totaro (2003, 132–33) names Harry's discovery of the wizarding world in *Philosopher's Stone* as another such transition; yet, interestingly enough, for her there seems to be no doubt that the Muggle world Harry leaves behind is the only dystopian society in the series and that Harry's new world is all utopia, perhaps occasionally tested by Voldemort's intrusion. While this seems an incredibly simplistic interpretation, her essay dating back to when only the first four instalments of the *Harry Potter* series had been published presumably largely explains her disregard for the countless aspects which show a dystopian side to the wizarding world, as detailed in the following chapter.

3 Dystopian Features in *Harry Potter*

The *Harry Potter* heptalogy consists of seven novels, each of which covers one year in the life of Harry, the adolescent protagonist, as he attends the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. While each novel has a fairly independent plot and can perfectly well be read on its own, by the end of the seventh instalment, the story ties together everything that has happened in the previous novels to form a coherent whole. As the full intricacy of the plot as a whole only comes to light when all seven novels are read in sequence, many readers prefer to think of *Harry Potter* as one book with seven parts, as opposed to seven individual novels (Thomas 2009, 40). Anne Hiebert Alton (2009, 199–200) suggests that part of the series' popularity can be explained by the large variety of literary genres incorporated into the novels. She names multiple genres – "fantasy, adventure, . . . quest romance," "pulp fiction, mystery, gothic and horror stories, detective fiction, the school story[,] . . . the sports story, and series books" – as all featuring in the novels but, interestingly enough, she makes no reference to dystopia. Indeed, it could be argued that as a whole, the storyline of the *Harry Potter* series is not dystopian as such – there are many other themes, such as love, courage and individual choice, which most readers would say the series is all about. However, on closer inspection, features of dystopia can be found in more or less every aspect of Harry's life, both in the wizarding world and in the Muggle world – Muggles being what wizards call non-magical people (*PS* 43). This chapter will investigate the novels from a dystopian point of view, identifying these dystopian themes and discussing their impact on Harry, the wizarding community and the readers of the series.

3.1 Tyranny of the Ordinary

The vast majority of the events in *Harry Potter* take place in various locations in the wizarding world, but the presence of the Muggle world is integral to the storyline and each novel begins with Harry staying at his aunt Petunia and uncle Vernon Dursley's house. The novels do not go into

much detail about the social organisation of modern-day Britain, but the description of Harry's position in the Dursley household is enough to demonstrate that what may, to a casual observer, seem like a suburban idyll can, on closer inspection, be revealed as a mere façade keeping the many injustices of the ordinary world hidden from sight. Harry's life with the Dursleys resembles life in a dystopian society in many ways, albeit on a smaller scale, with Mr and Mrs Dursley representing the dictators at the top and the household dynamic standing in for society as a whole. Like their dystopian counterparts, Petunia and Vernon judge fellow people according to their own version of a social hierarchy, with those displaying signs of being in any way out of the ordinary being ranked below the supposedly respectable and normal individuals like themselves.

In their eyes, the fact that Harry is a wizard makes him "as not normal as it is possible to be" (*CoS* 9) and automatically places him at the bottom of their hierarchy. The consequences of this are evident in Harry's everyday life in the Muggle world. For example, Harry is not allowed any of the privileges his perfectly ordinary – as judged by Petunia and Vernon – cousin Dudley enjoys, which demonstrates the two boys' different standing in the household. For instance, he is given less food than the already overweight Dudley (*GoF* 30) and has to make do with hand-me-downs from Dudley (*PS* 20). In addition, Harry is never taken on family outings (22), and whereas Dudley is swamped with an excessive amount of presents on his birthday (21), in the seven years covered by the series his aunt and uncle do not once acknowledge Harry's birthday. Throughout his childhood, Harry is made to sleep in a cupboard under the stairs and is only told to move his scarce belongings into the spare bedroom after Mr Dursley discovers that someone is watching the family and knows where Harry is sleeping (31–32). For the most part, however, all of the above happens behind closed doors, reminding the reader that social injustice can be happening right under their nose even if everything looks serene to the outside. In order to not stand out from the crowd, the Dursleys do their best to hide Harry's whole existence from visitors (19; *CoS* 13) and generally treat him as if he never existed in the first place. Overall, as Harry's Headmaster Albus Dumbledore tells Mr and Mrs

Dursley, "[Harry] has known nothing but neglect and often cruelty at your hands" (*HBP* 57) – a position similar to that of an oppressed citizen in any dystopian society.

In addition to his treatment as a lower-class citizen, Harry's life in the Dursley household resembles dystopia in the way his access to knowledge, whether in the shape of news, education or contact with fellow wizards, is limited. In classic dystopia, the rulers often restrict the kind of information that is available to the subservient citizens, typically by adjusting the education and news to promote patriotism and by weeding out any topics which contradict their will (see p. 14). Rather than drowning Harry in anti-wizard propaganda, his aunt and uncle – terrified of their neighbours finding out about their connection to the wizarding world (*PoA* 8; *GoF* 33) – have simply opted to ban everything related to wizardry from the house, including locking Harry's school books away for the summer (*PoA* 8) and forbidding him to communicate with his wizard friends (9–10; *CoS* 10). As in a classic dystopian society (see pp. 15–16), books are not read in the Dursley household either – even though in their case, this is not explicitly to stop Harry from getting dangerous ideas but because Uncle Vernon simply "[doesn't] approve of imagination" in general (*PS* 10).

Another dystopian trait in Harry's life with the Dursleys is the family setup. According to John Kornfeld and Laurie Prothro, Harry's situation in the Muggle world – of being alone and without a loving family unit around him – is very typical of coming-of-age novels (2009, 122), but this setting is also familiar from dystopian works, from whose societies the conventional family unit has often been abolished (see pp. 19–20). Although the orphaned Harry has lived with his aunt and uncle since he was a baby, their relationship with him is far from the loving family ideal usually encountered in children's literature. Petunia had branded her sister Lily a freak when her being a witch was revealed in their childhood (*DH* 537), and all of the Dursleys seem to believe that this automatically makes Harry a hopeless case too: "You see it all the time with dogs. If there's something wrong with the bitch, there'll be something wrong with the pup" (*PoA* 24). It was

mentioned above that in classic dystopia, the citizens have no means to ascend from their allocated place in hierarchy, and this is arguably also Harry's destiny in the eyes of the Dursleys. From these examples it is clear that Harry cannot rely on his supposed family for any support. At the same time, unlike most protagonists in YA dystopia, Harry in the Muggle world has not managed to form any alternative communities around himself to take the place of the traditional family unit, mainly because of his cousin Dudley intimidating the other children at their shared primary school into steering clear of him (*PS* 27). From an early age, Dudley has shown signs of being a small-scale tyrant – similarly to his parents, but extending his rule beyond the family home – by leading his gang of friends into using Harry as a punching-bag (20; 28) and generally terrorising the entire neighbourhood (*HBP* 8). Taija Piippo makes an apt comparison between Dudley Dursley and the obvious villain of the series, Lord Voldemort: "both are keen on terror and violence and like to exercise their will through other people" (2009, 71). The same could also be said of any dictator at the helm of a dystopian society.

Considering everything, the reader can wholeheartedly agree with Nicholas Sheltrown, who argues that the Potter series is so enjoyable as the reader gets to leave behind "the world of the Muggles, the control of the Dursleys, and the tyranny of the ordinary" (2009, 54). The novels exemplify the ways in which the supposedly calm suburbia, familiar to many readers from their own realities, can be full of injustice – particularly from the point of view of a teenager – despite outward appearances. For Harry personally, his reality in the Muggle world shares many features with dystopian societies: he is placed below others in the social hierarchy and is treated accordingly with no respect; he has no say in what happens in his everyday life and thus no free will to speak of; and he has neither a biological family nor an alternative community around himself to provide him with love and support. Like many protagonists in dystopia for the younger readership, Harry gets to escape the grim Muggle reality to an alternative Britain in the shape of the wizarding world where his position is dramatically different to the Muggle world (see Ch. 3.5). Yet, as the following

chapter will demonstrate, the magical world Harry is transported to is hardly a utopia. If life with the Dursleys can be called dystopian, there are numerous aspects in the wizarding world that put Mr and Mrs Dursley as dictators to shame.

3.2 Might of the Ministry

The most obviously dystopian aspect of the wizarding world in the *Harry Potter* novels is the tyranny of Lord Voldemort, which will be discussed below in detail (see Ch. 3.4). Nevertheless, even without Voldemort, all members of the wizarding community are forced to live in a highly controlled manner – much like the citizens of a classic dystopian society – with everything from where they live to what they are allowed to do being in many ways restricted. Rowling has gone to considerable lengths to create a credible governing body for the wizarding world in the form of the Ministry of Magic – led by the Minister for Magic – whose different departments impose strict rules upon wizards and various magical creatures living in Britain and ensure their subjects' adherence to said rules. The Ministry is modelled on existing real-life governments, with its departments and offices dedicated to specifically wizarding-related matters instead of the usual matters of the Muggle world. The similarities between the real and magical systems of social organisation enable the reader to compare the two worlds and to use the defects of the wizarding world, as identified below, to reflect upon his own society in the manner mentioned above in relation to any dystopian work of literature. This chapter will analyse which role dystopian themes play in the actions of the Ministry of Magic and how they affect the lives of wizards.

3.2.1 Gated Communities and Control

In the series, the wizarding world exists side by side with and yet in complete isolation from the Muggle society – in which only the Prime Minister, who is granted an introductory visit from each current Minister for Magic (*HBP* 12), and the odd non-magical parent of a wizarding child are even

aware of the existence of wizards – which makes it a good example of the gated communities mentioned above as often featuring in dystopian literature (see p. 22). Similarly to the traditional gated communities of suburbia, wizards originally hid their existence from the rest of the world to protect themselves – in the wizards' case, from the prejudice and persecution they encountered from Muggles during the Middle Ages (*CoS* 164). By the time Voldemort gains power, however, the situation has turned somewhat around as the Ministry of Magic is actively attempting to keep the Muggles safe from the danger that now lurks within the walls of the smaller community (*GoF* 457; *HBP* 18–19), resembling the use of the concept of gated communities in some dystopian works. In addition to this physical protection, gating the wizarding community off also serves a more practical purpose: it enables the wizards to enjoy the benefits of magic alone by not having to share them with another segment of the population. As the Hogwarts gamekeeper Hagrid tells Harry, if Muggles knew that wizards lived next door to them, "everyone'd be wantin' magic solutions to their problems. Nah, we're best left alone" (*PS* 51). This kind of attitude could be interpreted as the first of many signs that wizards see Muggles as a less worthy group, suggesting the presence of a classic dystopian social hierarchy in the novels' society.

Withholding the existence of the wizarding world from the Muggle community is named as the most important task of the Ministry of Magic (51), and a large part of this task is keeping the two communities apart as much as possible. The various ways to maintain the sense of gated community are presumably all covered in the piece of wizarding legislation called the International Statute of Secrecy. Apart from not telling Muggles about wizards – which gates them off metaphorically – there are certain places in the wizarding world that have been made physically inaccessible to Muggles, in which the secret community can congregate without the risk of being accosted by the above-mentioned prejudiced – or lazy – Muggles. For example, the entrances to the wizarding world's commercial centre, Diagon Alley, and the wizarding hospital St Mungo's, both located in central London, have been enchanted so that passing Muggles pay no attention to them,

and can only be accessed by wizards who know exactly what to do (54–56; *OoP* 427). Rather aptly, the premises of the Ministry of Magic lie hidden below ground level in London (116–17), reminding the reader of the wizarding world's need to metaphorically go underground in the old days of persecution. In addition to permanently gating off certain locations, the Ministry can utilise the practical Muggle-repelling Charms to temporarily restrict access to an area: "Every time Muggles have got anywhere near here all year, they've suddenly remembered urgent appointments and had to dash away again" (*GoF* 87). Considering how difficult it seems to be for wizards, who normally wear robes, to dress like believable Muggles (70–72), it is effectively only in the places which are inaccessible to Muggles that they can be themselves and do not have to worry about drawing unwanted attention – similarly to the members of some gated communities portrayed in classic dystopia.

The necessity of hiding wizards' existence from Muggles also affects their home lives. While some wizards live in fully gated communities in which they can do magic unobserved – such as Diagon Alley (*HBP* 87) or the only entirely wizarding village in Britain, Hogsmeade (*PoA* 61) – most wizarding families live in or near Muggle villages and cities. Such close proximity to Muggles must impose a number of restrictions on their everyday lives. With some wizarding dwellings looking highly unusual and as though held together by magic (*CoS* 39; *DH* 322), and with all the obviously magical activities going on inside the houses or in the gardens (*CoS* 44–45; *GoF* 55–57), it is astonishing that Muggle passers-by do not notice anything odd going on. Arthur Weasley mentions that Muggles "[will] go to any lengths to ignore magic, even if it's staring them in the face" (*CoS* 46), which may explain how secrecy is maintained to some extent, but it is doubtful whether even the most ignorant Muggle could avoid noticing a table floating through the garden, for example. Thus, the need to conceal themselves must force most wizarding families to restrict their magical activities to within closed doors, which limits their freedom in a manner resembling the controlled societies of classic dystopia. It may also explain why, in general, most members of the

wizarding community are seen to follow rather more conservative lifestyles than those encountered in the modern real world, particularly in terms of the traditional family setups; perhaps it is easier for wizards to avoid unwanted attention if they make no unconventional choices in life.

As mentioned above (p. 22), in classic dystopia the society within the walls of a gated community can sometimes develop into a miniature version of a totalitarian state with rigidly followed rules and, to an extent, similar restrictions on free will can be detected in the Ministry of Magic's control over the wizarding world. The cautious manner in which wizards are forced to live is only one example of the consequences of the complex set of rules and regulations the Ministry upholds. These rules may also restrict where wizards are allowed to go – the different magical means of transport are controlled by the Ministry (*GoF* 63; *OoP* 51; 722) – and what they can do for a living (*DH* 182), for example. Similarly to the rulers of dystopian societies, the Ministry also seems to fear innovation as a potential source of upheaval, for all spells need to be approved by it before they can legally be used (*HBP* 226). Anyone who dares breach the wizarding law is highly unlikely to get away with it, as the Ministry keeps a record of all wizards' places of residence (*OoP* 131) and utilises various surveillance methods to keep an eye on their subjects, resulting in a high likelihood of all non-compliance being detected. For example, all underage wizards carry the Trace which instantly notifies the Ministry if they perform magic outside of school (*DH* 45). The Trace is a kind of highly efficient wizarding equivalent to the telescreen found in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (see p. 19), only much more practical as it detects rule-breaking wherever the underage wizard in question might find himself and, unlike the telescreen, it cannot be hidden from. The Ministry also has ways to track the movements of any adult wizard they please and even keeps records of individual wizards' known associates (*DH* 207), demonstrating how much information they have on their subjects' private matters. In times of unrest, they go as far as encouraging wizards to spy on their own family members and turn them in if they act suspiciously (*HBP* 45), which brings to mind another method of surveillance familiar from *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (*NEF* 140). Similarly to

Orwell's novel, then, wizards are forced to watch their every step and to adhere to all of the Ministry's rules for fear of punishment.

In classic dystopia, the sacrifice of personal freedom is often justified as being necessary for societal stability (see p. 17), and in *Harry Potter*, the Ministry seems to believe that hiding the wizarding community from Muggles is what guarantees such stability. This would explain why the Ministry is particularly strict with regard to performing magic in front of the Muggle population, which seems to be considered a much more severe offence than breaking the other laws. When Harry is thought to have breached this rule for the second time, he receives a reprimanding letter from the Ministry which expels him from Hogwarts, summons him to an official hearing and informs him that his wand will be destroyed as a consequence (*OoP* 29–30). In addition to punishing the offender, the Ministry employs an Accidental Magic Reversal squad who undo any undesired magic performed on Muggles and even modify the memories of any eyewitnesses (*PoA* 38), ensuring that knowledge of magic is kept within the closed community. There is also an Office of Misinformation at the Ministry, to be activated when the input of the Accidental Magic Reversal Department is deemed insufficient: "Some magical catastrophes are simply too glaringly obvious to be explained away by Muggles without the help of an outside authority. The Office of Misinformation will in such a case liaise directly with the Muggle prime minister to seek a plausible non-magical explanation for the event" (*FB* xxxiii). Modifying memories and spreading false information as fact bear a noticeable resemblance to the work of the Ministry of Truth in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (37), even if the wizarding community is generally given a truthful version of events, unlike the citizens of Oceania.

Apart from the rare big catastrophes, the misuse of magic is handled within the wizarding community by Ministry officials, as becomes apparent when Fudge first visits the Muggle Prime Minister and tells him that the Ministry of Magic takes full responsibility for keeping wizards in line (*HBP* 11). The presence of a fully autonomous justice system in the wizarding world further

emphasises its gated nature and complete separation from the surrounding society. While Harry is only threatened with expulsion and the confiscation of his wand, at least one adult wizard has received a three-year prison sentence for repeatedly performing magic in front of Muggles (200) – although his imprisonment was perhaps more due to using violence than breaching the Statute of Secrecy. And a prison sentence in the wizarding world is no laughing matter, as prisoners are sent to Azkaban, a fortress far from civilisation, where prisoners are guarded by perhaps the creepiest breed of creature in the wizarding world, Dementors. It is not apparent from the novels which offences earn the wizard in question a sentence in Azkaban, but performing one of the three Unforgivable Curses – used to torture or kill a person or bring them under total control (*GoF* 192) – is one such crime. The conditions in Azkaban are a far cry from the humane Muggle prisons of today and make it an utterly dystopian place, mainly due to the terrifying guards who are, by and large, the only company the convicts have.

The Dementors are faceless creatures which suck all happiness out of a person – whether innocent or guilty – leaving the victim soulless and reliving the worst experiences of their lives: "The fortress [Azkaban] is set on a tiny island, way out to sea, but they don't need walls and water to keep the prisoners in, not when they're all trapped inside their own heads, incapable of a single cheerful thought. Most of them go mad within weeks" (*PoA* 140). The Dementors are supposedly under Ministry control, as Minister for Magic Cornelius Fudge assures Dumbledore in *Order of the Phoenix* (134–35), but as soon as they sense "that their masters [are] no longer in control, they [seem] to . . . [abandon] restraint" (*DH* 216) and instinctively attack anyone in the vicinity. Once Voldemort has taken over and lured the Dementors onto his side, their breeding begins to cause even the Muggle community all over Britain to suffer from severe unhappiness and feelings of hopelessness (*HBP* 8; 20). As Kornfeld and Prothro put it: "any Muggle prison guard would seem positively benevolent compared to the terrifying Dementors of Azkaban" (2009, 123). The presence of such horrid creatures in the *Harry Potter* novels – supposedly aimed at the innocent child reader

– is a clear indication that the wizarding world is not quite as carefree as many readers would like to believe. It could, indeed, be argued that the Ministry's necessity to employ Dementors demonstrates how far from a utopian society the wizarding community is.

The restrictions and regulations listed above are just some examples of the many ways in which the Ministry of Magic controls its subjects and limits their free will. Every member of the wizarding community is bound by the same rules, as Dumbledore tells young Tom Riddle: "All new wizards must accept that, in entering our world, they abide by our laws" (*HBP* 256). This statement seems to suggest that at the age of eleven, when wizarding children are first contacted by Hogwarts, they have a choice in whether to join the gated community or to stay on the outside among Muggles. Once a wizard has been integrated into the community, he does not appear to have any opportunity to leave the wizarding world behind. The prospect of having no chance of escape from the controlled society was identified above as a prominent feature of dystopia (see p. 22), and similarly, in *Harry Potter*, it seems that the only ways to escape the wizarding community are a sentence in Azkaban or death. Apparently, wizards may lose their wands as a result of a Ministry hearing (*OoP* 136), but it remains unclear what is to happen to those who have had their wands snapped in half but have not been sentenced to prison. In *Deathly Hallows*, a few wandless wizards are seen begging on Diagon Alley (424), but no such beggars are encountered in the more peaceful times of the previous instalments. Throughout the series, no one is actually threatened with being sent to live life as a Muggle – although Hagrid at one point claims this is exactly what ought to be done to him as punishment for his blunder (*PS* 219) – or otherwise sent away from society, as was done to two characters in *Brave New World*, for example (*BNW* 199). Should anyone wish to leave of their own accord, they would probably find it challenging, considering the efficient surveillance methods the Ministry has at their disposal.

At the same time, much like the rulers of dystopian societies, the Ministry seems to have convinced its subjects that there is no reason to wish for an escape, that everything is perfectly well

in the wizarding world, and that the last thing anyone would want to do is to hide in the Muggle world (*DH* 136). This is arguably one of the side effects of growing up in a gated community: as wizards – and dystopian citizens – have very little contact with the world outside their own small community, they are not familiar with other ways of social organisation and thus have nothing to measure their own lifestyle against. Wizards' complete isolation from the Muggle world may provide them with protection but, as the above examples demonstrate, it also imposes many restrictions on their everyday lives and free will in general. In addition, wizards' lack of interaction with Muggles can easily lead to increased prejudice towards the other community, as will become apparent in the following chapter.

3.2.2 Social Hierarchy

As discussed above (p. 8), as well as the strict control imposed upon the citizens, a system of social hierarchy is a prominent feature of dystopian societies. In *Harry Potter*, the most clearly dystopian example of a caste system is the ranking of humans according to Voldemort's blood policies (see pp. 54–55), but the wizarding community as a whole can also be seen to have internalised a similar social hierarchy which influences their attitude towards fellow beings, human or otherwise. Although the rights of the various magical creatures are not as important a topic in the novels as those of Muggle-born wizards, in a world where various species have the ability to think, speak, act and feel like humans it is noteworthy how clearly they are treated as if they did not deserve the same respect as humans. This is also noted by Peter Dendle (2009, 164), who states that the way wizards treat the other magical creatures is a prominent topic throughout the series and raises some uncomfortable questions on morality. The statue in the entrance hall to the Ministry of Magic gives the observer a good idea of how wizards see themselves in relation to the so-called lesser creatures: "A group of golden statues, larger than life-size, stood in the middle of a circular pool. Tallest of them all was a noble-looking wizard with his wand pointing straight up in the air. Grouped around

him were a beautiful witch, a centaur, a goblin and a house-elf. The last three were all looking adoringly up at the witch and wizard" (*OoP* 117). As Harry is quick to point out, such a depiction is rather mistaken: "from what Harry knew of goblins and centaurs, they were most unlikely to be caught staring so soppily at humans of any description" (142).

The caste system does not only exist in wizards' perceptions, though. There is a Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures at the Ministry, which is in charge of the laws controlling what said creatures are allowed to do and through whom all non-wizards are expected to communicate their wants and needs to the rest of the wizarding community (*GoF* 390). This is the first indication that the creatures are placed below wizards in the social hierarchy, seeing how they are not granted the opportunity to make decisions for themselves but have to live their lives as Ministry officials deem appropriate. Wizards' lack of respect towards other magical beings is also evident in the way some lesser magical creatures are made laughable to amuse wizards (e.g. *CoS* 256; *HBP* 309) – or, in places, the reader (Dendle 2009, 164) – and particularly in the way wizards do not seem to recognise the intra-species laws and codes of conduct of certain species. Centaurs, for example, who consider themselves much more intelligent than humans, are branded "half-breeds" with "near-human intelligence" by the Ministry (*OoP* 664–65). They are expected to conform to wizarding law despite their repeated assurances that wizarding matters do not concern them and that they serve a higher purpose in life than servitude to humans (615; 667; *PS* 188). It could be argued that this is further proof of the Ministry's fear of the unknown: its officials do not understand the centaurs' unique wisdom, so they attempt to restrict it through legislation which prevents it being used against the Ministry. Like the centaurs, goblins are equally insulted when asked to do the wizards' bidding (*DH* 244) or to share their secrets and magic with wizards (395–96). It seems that much of the mistreatment of other magical creatures goes unnoticed by the larger community, seeing how "[w]izarding history often skates over what the wizards have done to other

magical races" (409). Such selective or beautified records of past events once again resemble Oceania's Ministry of Truth (*NEF* 222).

In terms of all magical creatures, the piece of legislation which most obviously places them below wizards in social hierarchy and most limits their personal freedom is clause three of the Code of Wand Use: "*No non-human creature is permitted to carry or use a wand*" (*OoP* 119). In a society so heavily reliant on magic instead of, say, technological gadgets, denying all non-wizards the use of a wand can certainly be said to constitute a breach of basic human rights. These creatures may not be exactly human but, as mentioned, in the wizarding world the classification into human and animal is a little more difficult than in the real world. How the various species are classified is not explored much in the seven novels constituting the actual *Harry Potter* series, but there is an enlightening explanation to be found in Rowling's accompanying book *Fantastic Beasts & Where to Find Them* – made out to be one of Harry's school books offering wizards insight into the various magical creatures – from which it is clear that wizards consider it their right to rule over all other life forms. In his introduction, the supposed author Newt Scamander explains that the current classification of creatures into Beings, Beasts and Spirits is based on the definition of *being* as "any creature that has sufficient intelligence to understand the laws of the magical community and to bear part of the responsibility in shaping those laws" (xxii). Apart from very few exceptions, the Ministry has classified all non-human species into the Beast category, which automatically gives them fewer rights than wizards, seeing how, for example, it denies them access to the meetings in which future laws are discussed (xix–xxii). Beasts – even the intelligent and particularly human-like species such as centaurs and merpeople – are thus excluded from partaking in the shaping of the wizarding community and left at the mercy of wizards, who evidently make very little effort at trying to understand their needs.

The Ministry's classification of certain species as dangerous can also be seen to increase general prejudice towards them which is, at times, highly unjustified and affects their lives in

negative ways. Although a footnote in *Fantastic Beasts* explains that centaurs are classified as dangerous "not because [they are] unduly aggressive, but because [they] should be treated with great respect" (11), when Firenze the centaur takes on the post of a Divination teacher at Hogwarts, he is called many derogatory names by a colleague who also openly undermines his abilities (*HBP* 297; 508). Giants, on the other hand, are universally seen as incurably vicious creatures (*GoF* 374) and many wizards, including Minister Fudge, are equally suspicious of half-giants like Hagrid and Madame Maxime despite evidence of their harmlessness (503). This prejudice is strong enough to drive Hagrid to hide from society for a time (384–85) and on one occasion even results in his false imprisonment (*CoS* 282). Despite the assurances of another footnote that werewolves are only dangerous while they are transformed at full moon (*FB* 83), prejudice towards werewolves means that they face extreme difficulties in finding employment (*PoA* 261) and are forced to remain on the outskirts of the wizarding community, shunning human contact (*HBP* 313). Even though recent advances in magical remedies enable willing werewolves to suppress their killing instincts (*PoA* 258) and to remain in close contact with wizards, they nonetheless seem pressurised to refrain from certain aspects of normal wizarding life. Remus Lupin, for example, who takes a potion to remain harmless during his transformations, is unwilling to have children of his own for fear of inflicting them with his condition (*DH* 175–76). Goblins are another species not used to much respect from wizards (394): "Dealings between wizards and goblins have been fraught for centuries . . . There has been fault on both sides, I would never claim that wizards have been innocent" (417). Online discussions among readers state that "goblins embody many caricatured traits of stereotypical Jews" (Dendle 2009, 165), which gives the goblin–wizard relationship an even darker level of meaning and further emphasises the conclusion that certain magical creatures in the wizarding world face unjustified persecution. The deep-rooted prejudice towards certain species can thus be seen to deny these creatures certain basic rights – such as work and family – as well as them being generally treated with suspicion by most wizards despite their many similarities to humans.

To be fair, the majority of the magical creatures do not seem to mind being granted fewer rights than wizards, but in some cases, their mistreatment threatens to hold serious consequences for the wizarding community as a whole. It seems that the Ministry's disregard for all non-human creatures has lulled its officials into forgetting that many species are highly intelligent and that, given a small push, certain creatures might use their intellect – or brute force, in the case of other species – to turn on the ruling class. For example, there are fears that the goblins – who effectively control the wizarding world's finances, being in charge of the wizarding bank Gringotts (*PS* 50) – might choose to rebel against the Ministry by joining forces with Voldemort instead: "I think it depends what they're offered . . . And I'm not talking about gold. If they're offered the freedoms we've been denying them for centuries they're going to be tempted" (*OoP* 81). It is in a similar way that Voldemort persuades the Dementors – whom he "can offer them much more scope for their powers and their pleasures than [Fudge] can" (*GoF* 614) – and most werewolves to join him shortly after his resurrection. Greyback, the evil werewolf whose "mission in life [is] to bite and to contaminate as many people as possible," is serving Voldemort in return for prey. His ultimate goal is to "create enough werewolves to overcome the wizards" (*HBP* 313–14), demonstrating that at least some species indeed harbour ill feeling towards humans in general. Not paying attention to the various creatures' natural instincts and denying them many basic rights can clearly be costly to the Ministry – and threaten the peace of the entire wizarding community – whose officials seem to underestimate the abilities of some of their subjects.

One particularly interesting magical species in *Harry Potter* is the house-elves, who dedicate their lives to unquestioning servitude to their wizard masters. House-elves are relatively prominent throughout the series, and the reader is given quite a lot of information on how they think and what motivates them. House-elves are intrinsically linked with wealth, living mostly in manor houses and castles and doing the bidding of rich wizarding families (*CoS* 36). They have to do whatever their master asks them, whether they like it or not (*GoF* 90; *HBP* 55), and must punish

themselves violently for speaking ill of their masters or breaking orders, even if the task given to them is impossible to complete (*DH* 163; *CoS* 20). Apparently this happens so frequently that the elves' masters do not even notice it when new self-inflicted injuries appear (20). House-elves are generally not treated with much respect, being called "elf" rather than by their given name (*GoF* 120–23) or a "dirty little monkey" for daring to disobey a witch (*DH* 384). Even goblins take offence when asked for services they consider more suitable to house-elves (244). Dobby, the house-elf befriended by Harry, actually breaks down completely when merely being asked to sit down politely by a wizard, as no one has ever spoken to him in a friendly manner before (*CoS* 19). In addition, elves are not supposed to be seen going about their duties (*GoF* 161), nor to get ideas above their place (89) or to enjoy themselves at the expense of getting the job done: "House-elves is not supposed to have fun . . . House-elves does what they is told" (90). All of these examples are clear indications of the particularly low status of the species in the wizarding hierarchy.

Harry's friend Hermione, in particular, is outraged by the wizarding community's treatment of house-elves, calling it slavery (*GoF* 112) and even starting a campaign she wants to call "Stop the Outrageous Abuse of Our Fellow Magical Creatures and Campaign for a Change in Their Legal Status" (198). There are, indeed, many indications that house-elves represent historical slaves in the wizarding world, including the fact that they even speak "racially charged pidgin" (Dendle 2009, 165). They are dressed not in clothes but in tea-towels or old pillowcases as "a mark of [their] enslavement" (*CoS* 193); they can be dismissed from their job at the slightest suspicion of disobedience – in the words of Mr Crouch Sr, "I have no use for a house-elf who disobeys me" (*GoF* 124); and they are even used to test wine for poison, so as not to harm the wizards wishing to enjoy a drink (*HBP* 454). Even Harry, who always takes pride in standing up for the weak, takes advantage of elf slavery when he commands his inherited house-elf, Kreacher, to follow a rival around Hogwarts around the clock in order to find out what he is up to (394–95). Both Sheltrown (2009, 58) and Dendle (2009, 167) raise the poignant question of why elf labour is even necessary

in a world where most household chores could just as well be taken care of by magic. For Hermione, the issue with elf slavery seems not to have so much to do with not using elves at all but more about granting them the same rights as wizards. Once she has found out that it is house-elves who are cleaning and cooking at Hogwarts, she makes multiple efforts to discuss elf rights with fellow wizards, arguing that they should get paid for their services (*GoF* 210) and pointing out that their situation "stems from this horrible thing wizards have of thinking they're superior to other creatures" (*OoP* 155), but she has very little success with her campaigning. Most commonly, she is not taken seriously in the first place (*GoF* 210) or faces the counterargument that house-elves simply like being in servitude (198).

Hagrid tells Hermione that wizards denying the elves their work would be much more unkind than allowing them to slave away, and that they would consider being offered a salary a great personal insult (233). Indeed, Dobby tells Harry that the other house-elves at Hogwarts have been so deeply offended by Hermione's attempts to trick them into freedom – they are freed when presented with clothes (*CoS* 193) – that they refuse to enter the Gryffindor common room for fear of accidentally picking up a hidden hat (*OoP* 342). When another house-elf is dismissed by her original master and finds another position, she is horrified by the idea of a salary: "Winky is a disgraced elf, but Winky is not yet getting paid! . . . Winky is not sunk so low as that! Winky is properly ashamed of being freed!" (*GoF* 331). Even Dobby, the only elf in the series craving – and achieving – freedom, prefers employment to idleness and seems terrified of the idea of getting paid too much money (331). For Dobby, one of the best aspects of freedom seems to be being able to obey the commands of any wizard he chooses (*HBP* 394), and the Hogwarts elves seem pleased like puppies when praised for a job well done (*GoF* 329). When Harry's best friend Ron is made to do endless chores at home, he makes an offhand statement that summarises the elves' position as willing slaves rather well: "It's like being a house-elf . . . Except without the job-satisfaction" (*DH* 91).

It could be argued that house-elves have been conditioned like the population of the dystopian World State in *Brave New World*: to accept their position without question and not even dream of challenging the ruling class. This is apparent, for example, from the fact that elves have powerful magic of their own (*DH* 161), with which they could easily fight back but choose not to. The Hogwarts elves actually turn almost aggressive towards Hermione when she encourages them to stand up for their rights, telling her that "house-elves has no right to be unhappy when there is work to be done and masters to be served" (*GoF* 468). (Incidentally, the lack of right to be unhappy was also named above as a feature of classic dystopia; see p. 17.) The conditioning of the elves may not be done as efficiently, using Neo-Pavlovian methods in early childhood, as in Huxley's world (*BNW* 15), but the conditioning process could be argued to have taken place over centuries, gradually teaching the species to internalise precisely what is expected of them. It could, of course, be argued that this is not dystopian conditioning but simply what the elves are like by nature, but considering that sentient creatures tend to do all they can to avoid pain, for example, it is worth asking why the house-elves are so keen to continue punishing themselves voluntarily if they have not been conditioned to accept it as part of their purpose in the world. Hermione seems to agree, proclaiming that the elves are "uneducated and brainwashed" (*GoF* 210–11) and that the unjust system is maintained because people are too complacent to take a stand (112).

For the rest of the wizarding community, however, there seems to be nothing wrong with the poor treatment of elves. Dendle (2009, 165) argues that the inclusion of Hermione's elf campaign in *Harry Potter* may have made young readers think about the rights of their fellow beings, but he is nevertheless disappointed that Rowling did not resolve the issue in a more satisfactory way in the storyline. In fact, once the final battle of Hogwarts is over, Harry is found expecting an evening meal in bed from Kreacher (*DH* 600), demonstrating that even newcomers to the wizarding world quickly internalise the elves' position at the bottom of the chain of hierarchy (Dendle 2009, 169). As discussed earlier (p. 9), dystopian literature depicts social injustice in order to make the reader

think critically about similar practices in the real world, and there is plenty to think about in the treatment of various magical creatures in the world of *Harry Potter*. Even if the rights of other creatures are not sufficiently prominent to draw the reader's attention, Hermione's elf campaign is likely to raise some questions which no reader can completely ignore and which can easily be extended to cover the poor treatment of the lowest class of any society.

While the non-human creatures constitute the lowest caste in the wizarding world's social hierarchy, there is also a clear division of people into various castes depending on their bloodline and magical ability which seems to persist even in the days when Voldemort is not in power. Peter Appelbaum (2009, 96) argues that racism is presented in *Harry Potter* through the comparisons between wizards with different parentage as well as the human–creature distinction. The wizarding community can be divided into three groups according to the parents' blood status: pure-bloods are born into a family where both parents are wizards, whereas half-bloods have one wizard parent, and those born to Muggle parents are derogatorily called Mudbloods (*CoS* 127). A further group are the Squibs: "A Squib is someone who was born into a wizarding family but hasn't got any magic powers. Kind of the opposite of Muggle-born wizards, but Squibs are quite unusual" (159). Apparently, in earlier times, quite a few parents wanted to keep quiet about producing a Squib child (*DH* 129), who was likely to be sent to a closed hospital ward by the Ministry of Magic (455). Interestingly enough, it was precisely for the opposite reason – for knowing magic – that the Dursleys wanted to hide Harry away from their neighbours in Little Whinging, which demonstrates that in both the Muggle and the wizarding communities, anyone out of the ordinary is considered something to be ashamed of. Then there are the Muggles, of whom extremely few are even aware of the existence of the wizarding world. Officially, in times of peace, the Ministry of Magic does not set itself against Muggles or distinguish between wizards with different parentage; yet the fact that the Ministry does not hold a register of the homes of Squibs despite them being children of wizards (*OoP* 131) seems to suggest that Squibs are not seen as equal to those with magical powers but

placed on a lower position in social hierarchy. Rather aptly, Nikolajeva (2009, 228) likens the position of the Squibs to the disregard directed at mentally impaired individuals in the real world.

In the wizarding community at large, there are many of those who regard wizards with Muggle parentage as inferior to pure-blood wizards. This is exemplified by Harry's fellow student and nemesis Draco Malfoy, who comes from an old wizarding family and who has been brought up to despise anyone with a Muggle background (*CoS* 127). Draco is quick to pronounce that he thinks Hogwarts should be reserved for the children of old pure-blood families alone (*PS* 61) and later mentions that he was almost sent to a wizarding school abroad because no Muggle-born students are admitted there (*GoF* 147). Another old family of the same opinion were the Blacks, whose family motto "Toujours pur" is inscribed on their family tree, out of which all family members with close connections to Muggles have been eradicated. One such person is Harry's godfather Sirius Black, who despised his parents' beliefs and chose to leave home at an early age because of their differences of opinion (*OoP* 103). Whereas Draco's father Lucius turns out to be a Death Eater, Sirius' parents had not been in Voldemort's employ, showing that some wizards believe in wizard supremacy instinctively, without a tyrannical leader feeding them anti-Muggle propaganda (for more on this topic, see pp. 91–92). Apparently some extremists in the wizarding world are still actively campaigning for Muggles to be placed into the Beast category in the Ministry's system of creature classification (*FB* xxii–xxiii). This seems incredibly prejudiced in a community whose members, in order to not die out completely, have been marrying non-magical people for quite some time, meaning that most wizards have at least some Muggle blood in them (*CoS* 127–28).

The prejudice towards Muggles may not have been institutionalised within the Ministry of Magic before Voldemort's rise, but glimpses of it can be seen throughout the larger wizarding community. A relatively harmless example of this is wizards – who rely solely on spells and potions for their medical care (*CoS* 134; 188–90; *OoP* 431) – calling Muggle remedies "complementary medicine" and viewing our most basic modern treatment methods such as stitching up a wound as

horrific concepts which should not be messed around with (448–49). This suggests that the Muggles' suspicions about wizards in the Middle Ages have now been reversed towards anything non-magical instead. There are also some slightly more concerning hints of Muggle prejudice among the wizarding community. Ron's father, Arthur Weasley, who works in the Ministry's Misuse of Muggle Artefacts Office, calls it Muggle-baiting when wizards bewitch objects and sell them to unassuming Muggles who end up injured – or at least baffled – as a result (*CoS* 38; 46). He tells Harry that "Muggle-baiting might strike some wizards as funny, but it's an expression of something much deeper and nastier" (*OoP* 140), indicating that many wizards find it acceptable to taunt Muggles as though they were of lesser value than wizards. Even if Mr Weasley claims to disapprove of Muggle-baiting, examples of this underlying hierarchy can also be found in his own home: his children read comic books called *The Adventures of Martin Miggs, the Mad Muggle* (*CoS* 48) which presumably make fun of Muggles, and Ron remarks to Harry that his one Muggle relative is never mentioned in the Weasley household (*PS* 75). A more serious instance occurs at the Quidditch World Cup – Quidditch being the most popular sport among wizards (61) – where a group of drunken wizards bring out their true colours by toying with a Muggle family, lifting them into the air by magic and turning them upside down while laughing underneath (*GoF* 107–8).

The fact that Squibs and Muggles are made laughable and considered inferior to wizards resembles the community's views on fellow magical creatures and demonstrates that prejudice towards Muggles lies as deep as that directed at certain creatures, and that the perhaps partly unconscious caste system has been accepted by most members of the wizarding community in relation to humans as well as non-humans. This is something also noticed by Dendle (2009, 166), who states that the novels include "nuanced and detailed . . . depictions of how racism and imbalanced power relations can form and persist for centuries." Dumbledore claims that even Minister Fudge, regardless of his official political correctness, places "too much importance . . . on the so-called purity of blood" (*GoF* 614). The presence of such an obvious caste system – accepted

even by the Minister for Magic – in the world of *Harry Potter* supports the view that this world is, indeed, dystopian.

3.2.3 Use of Power

Considering the wizard–creature caste system upheld by the Ministry and its laws which regulate the everyday lives of the wizarding community, the wizarding world could, in many ways, be compared to a totalitarian system of social organisation familiar from classic dystopian novels, with the Ministry of Magic as the ultimate authority. The full might of the Ministry only dawns on Harry when he attempts to defy its power by breaking in (*DH* 204), emphasising how difficult it is – in *Harry Potter*, as in any classic dystopia – for an individual citizen to challenge the rulers. What makes it even harder is the fact that like many dysfunctional governments in the real world, the Ministry of Magic is "predictably rife with incompetence, pettiness, hypocrisy, and ambition" (Sturgis 2009, 89) – which, in many ways, also applies to the totalitarian ruling class of any dystopia. There are many officials at the Ministry who are so hungry for personal power that they are not afraid to abuse their authority in various ways to prevent the established system, in which they have a comfortable position, from being changed. As discussed above (p. 11), the (mis)use of power can be seen as an elementary feature of dystopia, and *Harry Potter* contains plenty of evidence of the Ministry using questionable methods to cling to their power. These include twisting or changing longstanding laws solely for personal gain (*OoP* 137; *DH* 105) – meaning that the average wizard cannot be certain that the laws originally intended for catching Dark wizards and ensuring just proceedings in criminal trials will always be followed for the purpose of common good – and taking bribes in exchange for influence or classified information (*PoA* 215; *GoF* 150; *OoP* 141–42). Such corruption and abuse of power can, sadly, be familiar to readers from real life, which ought to make it easy for them to relate the injustices of the wizarding world to the political

practices in their own society and encourage them to challenge the system where necessary – as any classic dystopia is meant to do.

As the above examples demonstrate, rather than basing their decisions on what would be best for the wizarding community as a whole, Ministry officials seem to be "more concerned with preserving their power and maintaining a polished public image" (Sheltrown 2009, 61). The latter can be seen particularly in the way Minister Fudge reacts to the news of Voldemort's return. When Dumbledore calls for quick precautionary action immediately after Voldemort's resurrection, Fudge claims that he is making the news up simply to stir unnecessary trouble in the community (*GoF* 613), making Harry realise for the first time that for Fudge, comfort, order and staying in power are more important than protecting the common good of the wizarding community. As Dumbledore tells Fudge, "[y]ou are blinded . . . by the love of the office you hold, Cornelius" (614). Shortly afterwards, Fudge develops a serious case of paranoia about Dumbledore attempting to overthrow him as Minister for Magic (*OoP* 88), which includes irrational fears of the Headmaster of Hogwarts using his students to build himself a wizard army "trained in combat" to aid this mission (272). This drives Fudge to use his authority to bring the previously autonomous wizarding school under the Ministry's command by sending his Undersecretary Dolores Umbridge to Hogwarts to enforce new legislation and to gain insight into Dumbledore's plans (193). Fudge's paranoia also seems to have infected Umbridge, who is responsible for perhaps the most glaring example of twisting the law in the series: she justifies the use of an Unforgivable Curse – which would normally result in imprisonment – on innocent students by wrongfully claiming that they are threatening Ministry security (657). (For a detailed account of Umbridge's actions at Hogwarts, see pp. 73–77 below.)

In addition to the Minister desperately clinging to his personal power, there are many other examples in the novels of power abuse within the Ministry of Magic. The fact that innocent people are sent to the terrifying prison of Azkaban simply in order to maintain the image of an effective Ministry comes across as particularly dystopian. These wrongful arrests apparently occur rather

frequently once Voldemort has returned to power – Harry confronts the new Minister Rufus Scrimgeour about the topic after the young but foolish Stan Shunpike is jailed (*HBP* 324) – but the tactic is also employed during times of peace when Hagrid the half-giant is sent to Azkaban solely based on prejudice and old rumours (*CoS* 282). Both times, the Ministry simply wants to portray an image of "doing something" to appease the worried wizarding community (282; *HBP* 209). Scrimgeour admits as much to Harry: "[I]t's all about giving people hope . . . These are dangerous times, and certain measures need to be taken" (*HBP* 324). In *Prisoner of Azkaban* (267–73), it also becomes known that Sirius had spent twelve years in the wizarding prison for crimes he had not committed. When the wizard authorities have such means as Veritaserum – a potion forcing anyone to tell the truth when questioned (*GoF* 448) – at their disposal, it begs the question why Sirius' case was never thoroughly investigated or his name officially cleared once the truth came out. As a result of the Ministry neglecting to do their job properly and opting to jail the first suitable suspect instead, innocent individuals are stripped of their freedom and forced to endure the terrifying conditions of Azkaban, which is hardly a sign of a just society.

When Sirius is briefly caught after his escape from Azkaban, Minister Fudge immediately commands a Dementor's Kiss to be performed on him (*PoA* 285). He also has the Kiss performed on Bartemius Crouch Jr without even intending to question him first (*GoF* 610). The Kiss sucks a person's soul out and is "what Dementors do to those they wish to destroy utterly;" it does not kill but its effect is "[m]uch worse than that. You can exist without your soul . . . as long as your brain and heart are still working. But you'll have no sense of self any more, no memory, no ... anything. There's no chance at all of recovery. You'll just – exist. As an empty shell. And your soul is gone for ever ... lost" (*PoA* 183). Ordering a Dementor's Kiss on a suspected criminal thus denies him any chance of explaining himself before being sentenced to something considerably worse than a conventional prison sentence. All of the above examples suggest that the Ministry does not place much value on individual wizards' freedom or upholding a fair justice system, which brings to mind

the societies of classic dystopias. At the same time, while some people in the novels are wrongfully sentenced to prison or worse, there is also evidence that some criminals are spared a justified prison sentence if they cooperate with Ministry officials (*OoP* 541). Apparently, when Voldemort's supporters had been rounded up after his earlier phase in power, they had the opportunity to reduce their own sentence by testifying against those Death Eaters who had not yet been caught (*GoF* 510). While this may be an approved practice in real-life criminal trials, it certainly does nothing to make the surrounding society safer for innocent bystanders – nor can it seem justified to the relatives of those who had met their demise in the hands of the non-convicted criminals. It can therefore provide the reader with yet another chance to reflect upon the practices of his own society and evaluate whether change might be necessary.

All the while, the Ministry uses the tactic of controlling the media – identified above as a feature of classic dystopia (see p. 14) – in order to give the public an untruthful version of events, one which supports their goal of appearing to remain firmly in command (*GoF* 630; *OoP* 71; 486). Even after they are forced to admit to Voldemort being back, the Ministry relies heavily on the wizarding newspaper *Daily Prophet* to withhold enemy attacks from wizards (*DH* 25; 65; 80), so as not to have to admit to Fudge's mistakes in the first place. Thus, most wizards remain unaware of the dangers threatening them and have no way to prepare themselves for a possible attack, leaving them extremely vulnerable for a long while. Even Voldemort's eventual coup at the Ministry is hidden using the same tactics (171), resulting in a situation where the average wizard has no reliable information on who is behind the ensuing radical changes at the Ministry (see pp. 96–97). Sheltrown (2009, 62) links the role of the wizarding media to the concern that through a careful manipulation of the media, the people in charge have a dangerous potential to influence consumers' perception and even knowledge of the existing systems of social organisation. Naturally, this is all too familiar from the propagandist news spread by the governments in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Handmaid's Tale*, for example. Sheltrown praises *Harry Potter* for the attention paid to corrupt

news media, as this is likely to force the series' young readership to question what they are told in the news (2009, 63).

Very similarly to the situation in the dystopian classics, individual wizards, even if they are opposed to the new policies, have a hard time discussing the topic or forming an alliance among likeminded people to resist the leaders, as talking to the wrong person will result in accusations of treason (*OoP* 89; *DH* 171). In *Harry Potter*, lower-level employees at the Ministry are observed at all times – via a magical eyeball (205) instead of a telescreen – and any employee considered a traitor will quickly be captured and sent to Azkaban (487), demonstrating how difficult it is to defy Voldemort's will. What makes the situation even worse is that by controlling several high-ranking Ministry officials with the Imperius Curse – the Unforgivable Curse giving the wizard casting it total control over the victim's actions – Voldemort's supporters have absorbed all of the Ministry's power for their own purposes and utilise it brutally to enforce his will on the entire wizarding community: "[T]he Death Eaters have got the full might of the Ministry on their side now . . . They've got the power to perform brutal spells without fear of identification or arrest" (170–71). In other words, the basic rights of any wizard can be violated as best suits the Death Eaters, with them having no opportunity to challenge the authorities as this would likely result in torture, incarceration or even death – bearing another great resemblance to the society of Oceania (see pp. 24–25).

The group hit hardest by Voldemort's coup is Muggle-born wizards. The tyrannical leader of the Dark side takes full advantage of the Ministry's power by executing a number of new laws aiding his quest to make Muggle-born wizards the target of a brutal persecution. A new Muggle-born Registration Committee is appointed at the Ministry, in front of which all Muggle-born wizards must present themselves and prove they have not stolen their magical abilities from a true wizard (*DH* 171). These hearings are held in the highly secure courtrooms of the Ministry dungeons and Dementors are used to guard the wizards to be questioned (211). Seeing as the Dementors instil fear and desperation in anyone in their presence, the Muggle-born wizards can hardly be said to

stand a chance in the hearing, particularly as they have had their wands – with which they might be able to protect themselves – confiscated upon arrival at the Ministry (214). In the hearings themselves, Muggle-born wizards are clearly presumed guilty until proven innocent, and are often not even given a chance to prove their innocence (212–14), which is the opposite of the generally accepted practices of a justice system. Even if traces of an underlying feeling of supremacy over Muggles can be detected throughout the wizarding community (see pp. 48–49), the measures taken by Voldemort are too clearly discriminatory and unjust to be accepted by the general public. However, as Voldemort is using the Ministry of Magic to legalise the persecution of Muggle-borns – thus institutionalising their ranking below pure-blood wizards in the social hierarchy of the wizarding world – individual wizards opposing these measures dare not express their disapproval, let alone take an active stand against them, for fear of governmental punishment.

In addition to the active pursuit of all Muggle-born wizards, the Ministry employs subtler methods which reinforce the impression of a fundamental change in attitude towards the non-magical community. They keep records of the "unacceptable pro-Muggle leanings" of pure-blood wizards and track those considered a threat to the new order (*DH* 207), but more crucially begin to spread anti-Muggle propaganda aimed at brainwashing their subjects into adopting Voldemort's beliefs. There is a group of Ministry employees working in unison, producing pamphlets intended for general distribution entitled "MUDBLOODS and the Dangers They Pose to a Peaceful Pure-Blood Society" (205), resembling the work of the Ministry of Truth in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (*NEF* 155). The new stance of the Ministry of Magic towards Muggles and Muggle-born wizards is declared, loud and clear, to anyone entering its premises in the improved statue in the entrance hall:

> Now a gigantic statue of black stone dominated the scene. It was rather frightening, this vast sculpture of a witch and a wizard sitting on ornately carved thrones, looking down at the Ministry workers . . . Harry looked more closely and realised that . . . [the] thrones were actually mounds of carved humans: hundreds and hundreds of naked bodies, men, women and children, all with rather stupid, ugly faces, twisted and pressed together to support the weight of the handsomely robed wizards.
> 'Muggles,' whispered Hermione. 'In their rightful place.' (*DH* 198–99)

The statue is emblazoned with the Ministry's new slogan, "MAGIC IS MIGHT," which leaves the reader in no doubt that in the new wizarding order, Muggles are considered worthless and wizards ought rightfully to rule over them. The slogan brings to mind the similar slogans of Oceania in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, including the use of capital letters: "WAR IS PEACE / FREEDOM IS SLAVERY / IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH" (*NEF* 6); yet the message given by the Ministry of Magic is much clearer in its meaning and the positioning of people in the social hierarchy of the wizarding world.

This new situation at the Ministry becomes particularly interesting when it is taken into account that some power-hungry officials seem more than happy to comply with the new rules of the Death Eaters, suggesting that they share Voldemort's overtly racist views to a large extent. This is particularly apparent from the actions of Dolores Umbridge, who returns to her post at the Ministry after her somewhat failed mission at Hogwarts. During her time at the wizarding school, the reader gets the first glimpses of her true nature – it is she who openly ridicules Hagrid the half-giant (*OoP* 395–97) and calls the centaurs half-breeds (664) – but in the past she has apparently already used her position at the Ministry to draw up laws preventing werewolves from finding employment, and campaigned for merpeople to be tagged like cattle (271). When she returns from Hogwarts, her discrimination begins to affect a much larger segment of the population after she is named Head of the Muggle-Born Registration Committee (*DH* 206). She is the person overseeing the above-mentioned Mudblood pamphlet task force as well as the Blood Status hearings, where her joy over convicting Muggle-born wizards of made-up charges is enough to keep the guarding Dementors – who shy away from happiness – at bay (214).

Peter Ciaccio (2009, 42) argues that in the world of *Harry Potter*, the representation of good and evil is not as black-and-white as in many children's books and that the characters cannot be straightforwardly divided into good and evil people. Judging by Sirius' statement that Umbridge is not a Death Eater but simply "a nasty piece of work" (*OoP* 271), she seems to exemplify Ciaccio's

grey area quite well. Nevertheless, Ciaccio's opinion of Umbridge being "no more than a normal bureaucrat following the orders of the Ministry of Magic regardless of who is in charge" and his subsequent suggestion that she should not be held responsible for the evil consequences of her actions as she is only doing what her superiors told her (2009, 43) seem a bit of an underestimation. After all, she is a grown person who wilfully demonstrates her desire to suppress anyone physically or mentally different to herself by any means necessary, and who abuses her position in power to execute such discrimination, which surely makes her as bad a person as any authoritarian ruler in classic dystopia.

Besides Umbridge and Minister Fudge, Manlove (2009, 5) names Bartemius Crouch Sr and the eldest Weasley brother, Percy, as examples of "ruthless, ambitious and inhuman" Ministry officials who are more concerned with personal power than the good of society as a whole. Although neither of them actually shares Voldemort's politics, their keenness to act by the book results in them both disowning any family member seen as an obstacle to advancing their careers (*OoP* 68–69; *GoF* 516–18) and drives Crouch, in particular, to surprising acts of cruelty. Crouch's high position at the Ministry seemed to have gone to his head during Voldemort's earlier reign, when his eagerness to become Minister for Magic made him punish suspected Death Eaters with means as harsh as those used by Voldemort's troops, authorising them to be tortured and even killed, often before they were given any chance to defend themselves (457). The fact that Crouch was the person behind Sirius' long false imprisonment demonstrates that even innocent wizards could at times suffer from his actions (456). He is described as having become "as ruthless and cruel as many on the Dark side" and only allowing his son a trial to show the rest of the Ministry that, family or not, he would not be associated with a Death Eater (457–58). When Rowling's description of Crouch's appearance is also taken into account – he apparently has a "toothbrush moustache and a severe parting" (224), which is strikingly reminiscent of perhaps the most notorious dictator in history, Adolf Hitler – it could be argued that the character of Barty Crouch Sr

acts as a clear reminder that all is not well at the Ministry of Magic. With someone like Crouch in charge of the battle against Voldemort, all members of the wizarding community seem subjected to equally totalitarian rule. Percy Weasley, on the other hand, sees the error of his ways after nearly three years apart from his family and returns to fight alongside them at the final battle against Voldemort (*DH* 487). Evidently, his personal ambition never escalates to Crouch's level and hurts no one – except the feelings of his family.

All of the above examples considered, it is clear that the Ministry of Magic holds enormous power over the rest of the wizarding community and that quite a few of their officials are partial to abusing this power to serve personal goals. The use of power, along with the sense of a gated community and restricted freedom discussed earlier, was previously identified as a feature of classic dystopia, and under critical observation, *Harry Potter* can be seen to address this topic in many ways. Seeing as the power of the Ministry extends to every member of the wizarding community, the world they live in could, in many ways, be described as dystopian: the rulers use ruthless methods to cling to power, disrespecting individual freedom in the process, while the underlying attitudes of certain officials and the rigidity of the system enable the supposed true villain to appropriate the might of the government for clearly discriminatory purposes. As Manlove (2009, 5) puts it, "[The Ministry] share[s] with Voldemort's followers and even with Harry's guardian Vernon Dursley an obsession with purity that leads to cruelty. Because of the Ministry the world is not a safer, but a much more dangerous place."

3.3 Hogwarts

Throughout the seven novels, Harry spends most of his time at the wizarding school Hogwarts and, according to Manlove (2009, 3), the portrayal of the school environment and what goes on in there is just as important a theme in the series and contributes as much to its appeal as the battle between good and evil going on in the wider community. It could be argued that what happens at Hogwarts

is a normal part of every school experience – apart from the fact that here, the students are taught magic instead of the usual subjects of a Muggle school – and should therefore not be investigated in a study about dystopia. Nevertheless, when considered critically, there are aspects of life in any boarding school which may come across as dystopian to an individual student: the students are often divided into separate communities, which may create tensions between different groups, and various social hierarchies, resulting in the potential of misuse of power and various restrictions on the students' free will, naturally occur in this setting. The following chapter will investigate what role these features typical of dystopia play at Hogwarts and how they affect the lives of wizarding students.

3.3.1 Gated and Alternative Communities

In terms of its seclusion and internal system of social organisation, Hogwarts is perhaps the best example of a gated community in the series. It incorporates all of the features of a gated community identified above in relation to the wizarding community as a whole (pp. 32–39) – protecting the community within its walls by physical and magical barriers (*CoS* 164; *PoA* 123; *GoF* 148) and allowing them to be themselves while maintaining the Statute of Secrecy – yet the school environment adds to the significance of its isolation in small ways. For example, seeing how the wizarding school is full of young wizards in the first stages of learning spells, its gated nature not only ensures that the students' ample practice is not observed by Muggles but also helps confine the potentially disastrous consequences of magic-gone-wrong to a limited area where the teachers are at hand to rectify any mishaps. The protective function of the gated community is naturally enhanced in a setting where the majority of inhabitants are underage students and, thanks to the skilful teachers, the magical fortifications around the school grounds can be reinforced considerably when specific outside threats are expected (*PoA* 72; 199; *HBP* 152; 575; *DH* 483–85), making Hogwarts one of the safest places in the wizarding world (*PS* 50).

As mentioned above (p. 38), young wizards theoretically have a choice in whether to join the magical community or not when they are first contacted by Hogwarts, but in practice no British wizard is mentioned as having opted against this. According to Lupin, "nearly every witch and wizard in Britain has been educated at Hogwarts" despite the options of a foreign school or home education (*DH* 173), suggesting that not only joining the wizarding community but also attending Hogwarts is considered the norm for any British child with magical ability. In other words, it could be argued that wizarding children, like the citizens of a typical dystopian society, have been preassigned their place and have little choice but to comply – even if only due to social pressure. On the other hand, all wizards are welcome at Hogwarts regardless of their skill level (*PS* 93) or family background: the school has a fund providing financial help for those from poor families (*HBP* 256), and Dumbledore famously makes no difference between pure-blood wizards and those born to a Muggle family (*GoF* 147; *DH* 22). Neither does he judge the character of a potential student, believing that a proper education will weed out the evil in anyone (Manlove 2009, 1; *GoF* 395). At the same time, Hogwarts could be described as the most exclusive school in Britain, seeing how no child without the clearly necessary magical abilities stands a chance of being accepted as a student there (*DH* 537). Hogwarts is thus a strictly defined gated community with particularly selective entry requirements on the one hand and a tight grip on its chosen few attendees on the other, not only because they have little choice but to join the community but also with regard to the control they are subjected to throughout their time at the school (see pp. 67–70).

Whereas the citizens of a classic dystopian society are generally divided early in life into various castes which determine their standing in the social hierarchy, the company they keep and their purpose in life (see p. 10), at Hogwarts the students are instead divided into the four school houses – Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw and Slytherin – on their first evening at the school. Rather than determining their social standing or study opportunities, the house division can be seen to influence the students' personalities in subtler terms, seeing how it creates a distinct sub-

community around each member of the gated community of Hogwarts. As discussed above (p. 21), alternative communities often take the place of the traditional family unit in dystopian societies and are particularly prominent in dystopia for young readers as sources of companionship and support. In any school environment, friendships based on similar personalities tend to be more significant to students than their biological family, and the Hogwarts Sorting, which takes each student's inner qualities into account when deciding which house they belong in (*PS* 88), creates four distinct groups of somewhat likeminded individuals that can be seen as the first alternative communities the students enter outside of home. Biological family members may even be sorted into separate school houses (*GoF* 350; *DH* 148), emphasising that personality takes precedence over blood relation when forming new communities at the school.

The main positive impact of the house division is thus that it brings the students in each house together and helps them form closer relationships within that group than would otherwise be likely to happen in a large school. The replacement of family with friends is reinforced in what the first-year students are told before the Sorting ceremony: "[W]hile you are here, your house will be something like your family within Hogwarts. You will have classes with the rest of your house, sleep in your house dormitory and spend free time in your house common room" (85). For Harry, who has no real family to speak of, Hogwarts not only feels like his first true home (*PS* 126; *PoA* 74) but also provides him with a substitute family in his fellow Gryffindors. This has also been noticed by Kornfeld and Prothro (2009, 124), who suggest that his close friendship with Ron and Hermione forms "a sort of mini-family unit within the extended family of Gryffindor." They add that the "sense of security and community among house members" – traditionally provided by the biological family unit – is intensified by the fact that the houses' common rooms are out of bounds to students from other houses, providing each student with a location in which they can feel safe (127).

As discussed above (p. 22), gated communities are traditionally built primarily to protect their members, and it could be argued that the school houses are variations of gated communities within the larger gated community of Hogwarts – rather similarly to the thirteen districts in the dystopian state of Panem in *The Hunger Games* – considering how the entrance to each house's common room is not only hidden from sight but also protected by a password only known to the students in that house (*PS* 96; *CoS* 239–40; *DH* 472). Although the students in separate houses share some of their classes and are theoretically allowed to mingle with one another in their free time, the fact that their common rooms – where the majority of free time seems to be spent – are reserved for members of one house only makes interaction with the other students rather challenging. It could therefore be argued that while the Hogwarts house division may bring the students in one house closer together, it simultaneously separates the four student communities from one another to a large extent, resembling the separation between the different castes in classic dystopia (see p. 23).

More concerning, however, is the fact that being sorted into a particular house also seems to influence the futures and beliefs of the students to some degree. As soon as they arrive at Hogwarts, the students are divided into four distinct groups according to the qualities valued most by each house – Gryffindors are brave and bold; Ravenclaws smart and keen on book-learning; Slytherins cunning and willing to use any means necessary; and Hufflepuffs loyal and hard-working (*PS* 88) – which means that from the beginning, they are mostly surrounded by people with similar attitudes to life and separated from those with different world views. As discussed above, restricted or non-existent interaction with people who are classified as in some way different often leads to misunderstandings and prejudice towards otherness, both in classic dystopia (see pp. 14–15) and in the wizard–Muggle relations (pp. 48–49); similarly at Hogwarts, not being exposed to alternative ways of doing things ultimately only reinforces the students' old habits – for better or for worse – and prevents them from widening their understanding of the world.

Particularly in Gryffindor and Slytherin, it seems that the students also come to assimilate the beliefs of the long-gone founders of their houses during their time at Hogwarts. The assimilation of values may not be done as aggressively as the conditioning of citizens in *Brave New World* (see pp. 13–14), for instance, but it nonetheless has a great influence on the ideologies of the students. Following the lead of Godric Gryffindor, who had been a keen defender of the rights of Muggle-born wizards (*DH* 410), it is mainly old Gryffindor students who later form the Order of the Phoenix, the society devoted to battling against Voldemort's pure-blood ideas (*OoP* 65). Salazar Slytherin, for his part, only wished to teach children from pure-blood wizarding families (*CoS* 164–65), and the effects of this fundamental difference of opinion between the two houses can still be seen in Harry's days at Hogwarts. In the novels, the opinions of Slytherins are mainly voiced through Draco Malfoy, whose inherited disparaging views of Muggle-born wizards were already mentioned above (p. 48), but the fact that most Slytherins veer towards the pure-blood politics of Voldemort can also be spotted in some small details throughout the series (*CoS* 239; *GoF* 444; 627; *HBP* 144). Most significantly, all known Death Eaters, including Voldemort himself, had once been in the Slytherin house (*PS* 61–62). The lasting effect of Slytherin's views on the students in his house can ultimately be seen at the Battle of Hogwarts, where they all either flee the scene or join forces with Voldemort instead of fighting him alongside the rest of the school (*DH* 491; 516; 518). It is to be suspected that once a young wizard has been sorted into Slytherin – or any of the other houses, for that matter – peer pressure would prevent him from voicing any views he might have that are contradictory to the house's communal values, exemplifying the negative consequences of being bound to a specific house for life.

As the above examples illustrate, the Hogwarts house division can potentially carry significant implications for the students' lives well beyond their years at Hogwarts – just like caste division determines the destiny of citizens in classic dystopia – and it is questionable whether such a final decision ought to be made so early on in their lives. Whereas the different castes in *Brave New*

World are conditioned from birth to grow into predetermined character types (see pp. 13–14), the wizarding children are at a rather impressionable age when they enter Hogwarts, with their personalities arguably only beginning to take shape at the age of eleven. The fact that some students were nearly sorted into a different house upon their arrival at the school (*PS* 90–91; *OoP* 353) suggests that the decision is not always clear-cut and begs the question of how different the students might turn out if they were placed in another house. The Sorting Hat itself states its unwillingness to divide the students in the first place, calling for unity among the school instead (*OoP* 186–87), and even Dumbledore wonders if they might not sort the students too soon, before their true personalities have come out (*DH* 545). Rather ironically, Voldemort also wants to stop Sorting, although for very different reasons: he simply wants to impose Slytherin's pure-blood ideology on all young wizards (586). As things stand at the end of the series, however, Hogwarts students are still being divided into four separate houses and prejudices continue to run high – with Harry's son Albus terrified of being sorted into Slytherin (606) and Ron threatening to disinherit his children if they end up in any house but Gryffindor (604) – demonstrating that these alternative communities and their internal differences have become an established part of life at the wizarding school.

If political differences are a major factor in the separation of the four school houses from one another – or rather, the separation of Slytherins from the rest – it is shared political beliefs that also bring together a group of students from Gryffindor, Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff in Harry's fifth school year in what is perhaps the truest example of a gated alternative community within Hogwarts. Once the political climate of the wizarding world at large begins to infiltrate Hogwarts – when the Minister for Magic sends Dolores Umbridge to the school to keep Voldemort's return quiet – Harry and his friends start Dumbledore's Army, or the DA, whose role bears a great resemblance to the Brotherhood in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: a hidden alternative community of individuals who resist the official authoritarian rulers by way of secretly recruiting new members and performing rebellious acts (*NEF* 181–84). Initially, Harry uses the DA meetings to teach his

fellows the magic that is no longer taught in Umbridge's Defence Against the Dark Arts lessons but which has helped him survive his previous encounters with Lord Voldemort (*OoP* 303; 348) and, as with the Brotherhood, only students who are considered trustworthy to keep the secret are invited to join the society (298). After Death Eaters have taken over Hogwarts in the seventh novel, the group evolves into an underground battle force fighting Voldemort's newly enforced politics at the school (*DH* 463) and, as gated communities sometimes do, becomes a sanctuary for anyone who has been forced into hiding for openly challenging the rulers (467).

What further emphasises the DA's likeness to a gated community is that it congregates in perhaps the only space at Hogwarts that can be made entirely inaccessible to unwanted people: the Room of Requirement, "a room that a person can only enter . . . when they have a real need of it. Sometimes it is there, and sometimes it is not, but when it appears, it is always equipped for the seeker's needs" (*OoP* 343). In the past, this room has merely provided solutions to ordinary problems to do with hiding and finding objects (*GoF* 363; *HBP* 492), but for members of the DA it takes on the role of traditional gated communities: it is a safe haven that protects them from the surrounding society, whether because they are in actual danger or because they want to hide what they are doing from the outside community. Harry's Defence Against the Dark Arts lessons must be held in such a location because Professor Umbridge – like many rulers in classic dystopia (see p. 21) – has made it punishable for students to form groups or societies (*OoP* 313; see also p. 74 below), and in *Deathly Hallows*, the room provides the ultimate hiding place for the students who would be tortured by the Death Eaters on the outside, enabling them to sneak in and out and continue their underground battle against Voldemort's troops without the enemy being able to gain entry (465). The importance of the DA as an alternative community providing support for its members is emphasised by Luna Lovegood, a student shunned by many of her fellows for being rather odd and unusual, who laconically states that for her, taking part in the DA meetings had been the closest thing to having friends (*HBP* 132); more importantly, however, it provides the oppressed

students with a platform to do their share in the political resistance. Even the star pupils declare that the group is more important to them than homework or exams (*OoP* 291; 307), reinforcing the latter purpose of this particular gated community.

As the discussion in this chapter indicates, gated and alternative communities feature in various forms at Hogwarts, with their purpose and consequences resembling the use of these concepts in both classic and children's dystopia: they alternately separate and bring together different groups of people, protect them from perceived threats on the outside and allow them to act a certain way without being disturbed. Membership of a particular community can also be seen to influence the students' lives in many ways, not only while they attend Hogwarts but also far into the future, through the relationships they build and the sometimes strong political beliefs they come to adopt from their allocated community. The house division, in particular, bears some resemblance to the caste division in classic dystopia, but as the following chapter will demonstrate, there are some key differences between the two concepts.

3.3.2 Social Hierarchy and the Use of Power

Megan Birch, who states that the Hogwarts house division "affects students' experiences in and out of classrooms, and it affects the social order and learning at the school" (2009, 114), seems to agree with the similarity of the Sorting to the dystopian caste division, but on closer inspection, evidence from the novels only supports her argument in relation to the students' personal relationships and where they sleep at night, as detailed above. In classic dystopia, a key consequence of the caste division is the different standing of the castes in the system of social organisation (see p. 10), and this aspect is clearly missing at Hogwarts, where social hierarchy is not based on one student community being ranked above another but instead follows the conventional teacher–student division of any school environment. All students enjoy equally comfortable living conditions and the same excellent food at every mealtime, for instance, and although the study opportunities at the

wizarding school seem somewhat concerningly limited – only magic is taught at Hogwarts, and it is doubtful whether the young students can have developed all of the other skills necessary for a balanced adult life by the time they finish primary school – they are nonetheless the same for everyone, regardless of which house they are in. The only hints of discrimination at the school – as in the wizarding world at large – seem to be based on the blood status of individuals, but even this only affects the students' personal opinions of one another and has no bearing on how they are officially treated by the Hogwarts staff.

All students are also subject to the same rules, and it is the teachers who set these rules and ensure that the students comply with them. It was mentioned above (p. 9) that the concentration of power in the hands of a chosen few is typical of dystopian societies, and the division of people into students and teachers in any school environment, including Hogwarts, creates a natural system of hierarchy in which the teachers – who hold the official power in their hands – could be seen as the authoritarian minority and the students as the ordinary citizens of the society within the school. In most cases, the comparison of the Hogwarts teachers to dystopian tyrants is a gross overstatement, but their position nonetheless offers them the potential to misuse the power they have been entrusted with (see pp. 71–77). Nonetheless, the majority of rules in all schools are presumably in place simply to maintain an orderly structure to daily life and the safety of the young students, and in a wizarding school, the teachers need to control their teenage subjects with perhaps even more care than in an ordinary school, because of all the damage that could be done with the various spells and magical flora and fauna at their disposal.

However, when considered from the dystopian point of view, many of the Hogwarts rules can be seen to restrict the students' lives in similar ways to the control imposed on the citizens of classic dystopia. For example, as in Oceania and Gilead, the possession of countless mundane objects is forbidden at Hogwarts (*NEF* 8; 99; *THT* 218–19; *GoF* 162) and everyone's clothing is of a predetermined type (*NEF* 4; *THT* 31; *PS* 52; *HBP* 153–54). Access to thought-provoking

literature is also equally limited in the wizarding school and the classic dystopian societies (see pp. 15–16), seeing how the big library at Hogwarts seems to only contain educational or historical volumes (*PS* 145). It seems that wizards are even more wary of literature than the rulers of classic dystopia: the Ministry has been confiscating books that have been classified as dangerous, although – in a rather clever twist of the role of literature in classic dystopia – not for the ideas they might awaken in their readers but for actually doing them physical or mental damage (*CoS* 250), expanding the definition of the dangers of literature considerably. Furthermore, it is apparent from the novels that there are no televisions or computers in the wizarding world which might fuel the imaginations of wizarding children or, alternatively, provide some escapism from their homework-filled everyday lives.

There are also a number of rules at Hogwarts that restrict the students' free movement both within and outside of the school, again resembling the classic dystopian societies. Most notably, there is a curfew in place at Hogwarts which forces the students to remain in their common rooms in the evenings (*PS* 115; *OoP* 345) which, similarly to the situation in many dystopian societies (see p. 12), not only binds them to a specified location but also prevents them from socialising with members of the other school houses. The gated nature of Hogwarts as a whole is emphasised by the fact that the school is rarely exited during term time: apart from the Christmas and Easter holidays and very limited opportunities to visit Hogsmeade (*PoA* 16), the students are confined to the school grounds for the majority of the year. That no one leaves the castle unauthorised is carefully monitored by the school caretaker, Argus Filch, who seems exceptionally keen to restrict the students' movements (114). Within the grounds, there are certain areas which are always out of bounds for the students – usually, as with the Forbidden Forest and the third-floor corridor in the first novel, to protect the students from the potentially dangerous creatures within (*PS* 94; 119) – but there are also areas within the castle which are reserved for groups of a certain rank only. The Hogwarts Prefects, for instance, have a luxurious hidden bathroom reserved for them alone (*GoF*

399), suggesting that they represent a slightly higher caste at the wizarding school and, like the elite groups in classic dystopia (see p. 10), are able to enjoy benefits unavailable to others, even if such benefits are rather meagre in the bigger picture. On the other hand, even the lowest caste at Hogwarts, the house-elves, have their own space gated off from the remaining community in the school kitchens (*GoF* 327), but it is uncertain whether this is to grant the elves the opportunity to do the work they love without being disturbed or simply to hide the servants from sight (see p. 45).

One pastime that is not forbidden in the wizarding school is dating, which makes the Hogwarts community very different to the classic dystopian societies where emotional attachments to fellow citizens are seen as a threat to the rulers (see p. 19). While the students are allowed to date whom they choose – after all, it would be difficult to prevent this in a closed community of several hundred teenagers with little else to do – the series as a whole seems to agree with dystopian dictators in seeing love as a dangerous thing: Dumbledore describes it as being "at once more wonderful and more terrible than death, than human intelligence, than the forces of nature" (*OoP* 743), and Professor Slughorn names the love potion Amortentia as one of the most dangerous potions there are, warning his students "not [to] underestimate the power of obsessive love" (*HBP* 177). Considering how love can result in reckless behaviour (367–71) and antidotes to it are hard to come by (286), the series actually shows love to be potentially dangerous in more ways than merely by making the inflicted person stand up for their loved ones, as in classic dystopia. Potions like Amortentia and spells like the Cheering Charm (*PoA* 217) could perhaps even be counted as the wizarding equivalent to *soma* in *Brave New World* (see p. 17), seeing how profoundly they can alter the behaviour and influence the mood of wizards.

Even if the students are permitted to expose themselves to the dangers of love, there are countless rules at Hogwarts that they are subject to and the teachers, in addition to their teaching duties, have the important task of making sure these rules are followed, and of disciplining the rule-breakers accordingly. Under normal circumstances, the students are not as efficiently monitored as

in many dystopian societies, although the Hogwarts caretaker Filch and his cat, Mrs Norris, provide a powerful substitute to the spies of Gilead and Oceania (see p. 19). The pair has devised a terrific system of catching rule-breakers which involves Mrs Norris patrolling the castle corridors night and day and fetching Filch the instant someone is doing something they ought not (*PS* 99). In addition to Mrs Norris, the students are constantly under observation from the occupants of the many paintings hanging on the walls, who may not report every illegality they witness to the teaching staff (*PS* 120; *GoF* 290; *HBP* 460) but nonetheless help news travel fast around the school thanks to their tendency to gossip (*GoF* 249) and their ability to move between paintings (*PoA* 78; *OoP* 414). Another handy tool for surveillance at Hogwarts is the Marauder's Map, which shows not only the layout of the school but also the exact location of every student, teacher and other being within the school grounds, including Mrs Norris the cat and the Hogwarts ghosts (*PoA* 144). Unlike the surveillance methods in classic dystopia, though, the map is not used to detect rule-breakers; on the contrary, it was devised to aid "Magical Mischief-Makers" get away with their rule-breaking (144) and to insult any teacher attempting to use their authority to reveal its secrets (211). Incidentally, the Room of Requirement seems to be the only part of the Hogwarts castle not pictured on the map (*HBP* 424), further emphasising its status as the ultimate hiding place for those wishing to avoid detection (see pp. 65–66).

If students are caught in mischief, it is solely their teachers who can discipline them. Not even the Ministry of Magic is authorised to punish students for their activities within Hogwarts (*OoP* 136), which reinforces the school's earlier classification as a gated community. In the majority of cases, the Hogwarts justice system comes across as much more just than in classic dystopia and even in the wizarding world at large: the students are presumed "[i]nnocent until proven guilty" (*CoS* 158) and, if rule-breaking is proven to have occurred, it typically results in nothing more ominous than detention. Similarly, an individual teacher's power as enforcer of rules only extends to handing out small punishments for minor misdemeanour in their own classroom or

in the corridors (*OoP* 224; 322), whereas all more serious punishments require the involvement of a higher authority, such as the student-in-question's Head of House (*CoS* 91) or even the Headmaster (221–22). Under normal circumstances, then, the Hogwarts students are justly disciplined, only receiving appropriate punishments for crimes they have actually committed – unlike the citizens of Oceania, for example, who may be evaporated at the slightest suspicion of merely thinking along the wrong lines (see p. 18).

Nevertheless, there are examples throughout the series of teachers misusing their position in power for various purposes. As already suggested, a hierarchical society always stands at risk of the ruling class taking advantage of its power for personal ends, and the discussion above has demonstrated that high-ranking wizarding authorities are no strangers to abusing power. A similar tendency can also be detected at Hogwarts, where the affected community may be smaller but nonetheless subjected to various forms of power abuse which influence the students' lives in negative ways. At the wizarding school, where student life is fairly regimented as is, the most immediate resemblance to dystopia – before Voldemort's involvement – comes in the shape of Professor Snape, who on countless occasions utilises his position to make everyday life miserable for the students at his mercy. Snape's dislike of Harry and his fellow Gryffindors is particularly apparent from the novels, with him using any – often rather questionable – excuse to penalise various Gryffindor students (*PS* 134; *PoA* 127–29; *HBP* 494) and point-blank ignoring some blatant sabotage directed at them (*GoF* 263; *OoP* 354) in favour of Slytherin, the house he is Head of (*PS* 100–1; *PoA* 94).

Somewhat similarly to Minister Fudge, Snape also seems keen to emphasise his position on top of the chain of hierarchy, in his case by deducting house points from students if they do not obey his every command and threatening them with worse consequences if they dare criticise his teaching methods (*PoA* 127–29). Being a teacher responsible for the education and, to an extent, the overall wellbeing of his students, the methods used by Snape often seem rather counterproductive,

with him "making waspish remarks about the Gryffindors' work" in front of other students (*CoS* 203) and loudly telling fellow teachers what a terrible student Neville is (209; *PoA* 100). Birch argues that such comments "must chip away at student confidence and imbue more fear and intimidation" (2009, 111), adding that Snape is a prime example of teachers abusing the power they have been entrusted with, seeing how he uses methods which are likely to discourage students from learning instead of offering them the tools to grow (112). Similarly to the citizens of a dystopian society (see p. 23), the students at Hogwarts have very little opportunity to challenge the unfair disciplinary decisions made by teachers like Snape, as this would likely result in more severe punishment rather than them being justly heard.

At the same time, while Snape's authoritarian methods may force students to face certain injustice and intimidation in their daily lives, the consequences of his actions are relatively harmless and short-lived in comparison to other forms of power abuse encountered at Hogwarts which may influence the students' futures well past their school years. Most notably, the teachers' personal beliefs, ambitions and abilities as educators can play a large role in shaping the lives of wizarding children. Sarah K. Cantrell (2011, 201) mentions certain professors as examples of why, despite all the magical elements of life at Hogwarts, "Rowling's school is no utopia." Most of the teachers she names are merely not very good at their job – with a Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher, for example, opting to flee from the school instead of fighting the monster threatening students' safety (*CoS* 319–20) and the Divination teacher only ever having made two correct predictions (*PoA* 311) – which largely undermines the students' reason for attending the wizarding school in the first place. Nonetheless, such incompetence can potentially limit the career options of the students, who must gain sufficient exam results from an external board of examiners in specified subjects in order to pursue certain careers after Hogwarts (*OoP* 578–79).

More concerning than the incompetence of certain teachers, however, is the fact that all of them have the potential to influence their students' beliefs through their role as educators. They are

responsible for the content of their own lessons, which leaves them free to choose – rather like the propagandist leaders of a dystopian society (see p. 14) – what type of knowledge and potentially accompanying ideology to impart to and withhold from the next generation, thus having a great influence on the way their young students come to see and understand the world surrounding them. This is named by Dumbledore as a reason for Voldemort – then known as the gifted student Tom Riddle – having coveted a position as a Hogwarts teacher, which would have given him access to countless young minds in the hope of recruiting them in his personal campaign for power and persuading them to adopt his blood politics along the way (*HBP* 404). While Voldemort was never given a job at Hogwarts, in *Order of the Phoenix* the school has to conform to another kind of political agenda when the Ministry of Magic imposes Dolores Umbridge upon them. Minister Fudge seems intent on counteracting Dumbledore's supposed plans to brainwash the students to distrust and eventually overthrow the Ministry (see p. 51) by sending in his own agent to convince the community within Hogwarts that Harry and Dumbledore are lying about Voldemort's return and that the Ministry has everything under control. In other words, Fudge is attempting to battle imagined resistance by feeding the Hogwarts community a set of more convenient lies, similarly to the dystopian rulers of the classics (see p. 14).

With the pretence of improving the quality of education at Hogwarts – as mentioned above (p. 12), dystopian rulers often justify their drastic actions as a means to bring about improvement – Fudge appoints Umbridge the school's first ever High Inquisitor, giving her unprecedented power over practically everything that goes on within the Hogwarts walls. As suggested by the earlier discussion of Umbridge (see pp. 56–57), she is not afraid to utilise her power to suppress any behaviour she sees as a threat to her high position in the wizarding world, and her actions at Hogwarts provide plenty of further evidence to support this argument. As High Inquisitor, Umbridge is authorised to inspect the lessons of all Hogwarts teachers to ensure their compliance with the new Ministry-approved curriculum and to replace any unsatisfactory teachers with a more

suitable candidate (*OoP* 274–75). In practice, however, her inspections simply ensure that anyone in Dumbledore's close circle is kept in line and cannot rally the students against the Ministry (388–89). In addition, her decision to ban students from forming groups amongst one another (313) suggests that she – like the rulers of dystopia – views alternative communities as potential threats; somewhat rightly so, even if Dumbledore's Army was not founded to dethrone this particular tyrant (see p. 65). Equally, it could be argued that her rather irrational determination to stop Harry from pursuing a career as an Auror (586) – a wizard whose job it is to hunt down Dark wizards (*GoF* 144) – is simply an attempt to eliminate in good time the person most likely to challenge the corrupt Ministry in future years.

Many of the methods Umbridge uses to maintain her position of power at Hogwarts resemble features familiar from classic dystopia. In addition to withdrawing the students' right to assemble, her newly established Educational Decrees and other rules impose various limitations on the Hogwarts community's freedom of speech (*OoP* 220–24; 486) and access to impartial news and knowledge (512), as well as ultimately leaving it up to Umbridge what they are allowed to do in their spare time (313). To ensure that her rules are not broken, Umbridge appoints "[a] select group of students who are supportive of the Ministry of Magic" as members of her newly conceptualised Inquisitorial Squad, who monitor their fellow students and are even authorised to deduct points from them if they as much as criticise her rule of Hogwarts (551). With the help of the Squad, Umbridge reads all post sent to and from the school – violating the students' privacy and right to communicate – and her connections to the Ministry enable her to control all travel in and out of Hogwarts (556), ensuring that the students cannot form unacceptable alliances with the Ministry's supposed enemies outside of the school. (Rather ironically, the Inquisitorial Squad seems to comprise mainly of students from the Slytherin house, many of whom were previously identified as children of known Death Eaters (514) who, in turn, are only supportive of the Ministry as far as is necessary for them to gain influence there.) Prior to appointing the Squad, Umbridge has already

taken a leaf out of Big Brother's book by encouraging anyone who hears the forbidden topic of Voldemort's return discussed to come forward and turn in the people spreading alleged rumours (*NEF* 140; *OoP* 221) – although as these examples demonstrate, the recruitment of spies is hardly the most dystopian of her actions.

The way students are punished for misbehaviour also takes a drastic turn when Umbridge becomes the Hogwarts High Inquisitor. As Harry's week's worth of detentions for merely refuting the Ministry's official line in class (220–24) demonstrates, Umbridge is quick to hand out relatively harsh punishments to anyone defying her authority and seems to pay no regard to whether the punishment is justified or not, which is in stark contrast to prior practices at Hogwarts. Perhaps the most telling of her dystopian tendencies is her plan to bring back corporal punishment – familiar particularly from *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as an effective means to guarantee obedience (see pp. 24–25) – at the wizarding school (*OoP* 554). Until her reign, the students would typically spend their detentions doing tedious yet harmless chores (*CoS* 130; *PoA* 130), but Umbridge takes a more direct approach to discipline. Even before her Decree allowing physical punishment is passed, she makes the students in her detentions write lines using a terrible invention, a quill that etches the written words onto the writer's hand and uses their own blood as ink (*OoP* 240; 486–87), to ensure that they cannot forget their punishment in a hurry. In addition to causing immediate pain in the victims, the scars made by the quill – which Harry still has on the back of his hand two years after his detentions (*DH* 110) – also act as a lasting marker of someone having defied the ruling group at some point in his life. When another teacher attempts to override Umbridge's will, she executes another Decree which gives the High Inquisitor ultimate control over all punishments handed out to students, making her the sole authority in terms of discipline at the school (*OoP* 368–69). A justice system with only one person as decision maker can hardly be called just, emphasising the resemblance of Hogwarts to a dystopian society.

A further characteristic which can be detected in both Umbridge and many dystopian rulers is a certain resistance to change, expressed in Umbridge's opening speech to the school through her – and the Ministry's – desire to prune any unnecessary progress from teaching methods and to stick to "tried and tested traditions" instead (192). Together with her call for "openness . . . and accountability" (193), Umbridge's speech can be interpreted as a further demonstration of certain Ministry officials' desire to remain on top of hierarchy, seeing how innovation – particularly if done in secrecy – can potentially lead to an uprising among the oppressed citizens of a dystopian society (see p. 15). At Hogwarts, the resistance to change manifests itself in Umbridge's aforementioned enforcement of the Ministry-approved curriculum in all classrooms, but the most drastic changes occur in her own subject, Defence Against the Dark Arts. Whereas Harry's previous Defence teachers had had their students try out various countermeasures to Dark magic in practice, Umbridge's lessons consist of theory only. The reason she gives for denying her students any hands-on experience is that, according to the Ministry, there is nothing out in the real world to threaten them (220) – a claim bearing a striking resemblance to the Party telling the citizens of Oceania "to reject the evidence of your eyes and ears" (*NEF* 84) – whereas not being allowed to practise defensive spells actually makes the students as vulnerable to Voldemort's impending attacks as Fudge's denial makes the rest of the wizarding community (see p. 51). The theoretical approach to lessons naturally also fulfils Umbridge's true aim: it strips her students of any real chance to fight their oppressor, solidifying her position at the top for some time. Essentially, all of Umbridge's actions turn Hogwarts into a dystopian setting, "a thinly disguised arm of the Ministry, stamping out students' civil liberties, [and] prohibiting freedom of speech and assembly" (Cantrell 2011, 203).

It ought to be mentioned, however, that while some of her fellow teachers have been dubious of Umbridge ever since her arrival at Hogwarts (*OoP* 192) and finding subtle ways to defy her (513; 558; 596), the dystopian state of affairs at the school is less obvious to the majority of the

students, for whom the only worry in life is the amount of homework they have to complete (482). On the one hand, this acts as a reminder of the fact that what comes across as dystopia to one person can seem perfectly unproblematic to the next (see p. 7); on the other, it suggests that the students are somewhat conditioned to accept their teachers' supreme authority over all their actions and to not care about the politics behind the teachers' decisions – and perhaps with good reason, considering the average age of school children. Nevertheless, the Ministry's line also means that the Hogwarts students remain blissfully ignorant of the slow ascent of Lord Voldemort and the related political disputes taking place in the wider wizarding community, strengthening the perception of Hogwarts as a gated community protected from outside threats. Until Minister Fudge is forced to admit to the Dark Lord's return at the end of the fifth novel (745), only the students involved in Dumbledore's Army seem to be concerned about either Voldemort – whom they intend to fight using the magic learnt at their meetings (303) – or Umbridge – whose authority they defy by meeting up in the first place (315). It is not until Harry's sixth year at Hogwarts that the dangerous political situation in the outside world begins to influence life within the school, when even the strengthened security measures (*HBP* 152; 221; 228; 575) cannot prevent two students from nearly losing their lives in incidents involving Dark magic (234; 372–73). Throughout that year, a number of students leave Hogwarts, some after their family members are found dead and others because their parents no longer feel that the school is the safe haven it used to be (209–10). After some Death Eaters manage to infiltrate Hogwarts and kill Dumbledore (556), the entire future of the wizarding school is questioned (585), its gated community having proven less secure to its inhabitants than expected.

Hogwarts does not close its doors after Dumbledore's death, however; instead, life within its walls changes drastically when Voldemort sends three of his Death Eaters to take over the school in *Deathly Hallows* and appoints Snape – who had just revealed his (supposed) true allegiance to the Dark Lord by killing Dumbledore (*HBP* 556) – as Headmaster (*DH* 186). Cantrell (2011, 203) likens the Death Eaters' abuse of power at Hogwarts to the actions of Umbridge two years prior but,

as Neville Longbottom remarks, they actually "make her look tame" (*DH* 461). Their new policies add to the wizarding school's similarities to the classic dystopian communities in many ways. Firstly, the students no longer have even a theoretical choice in terms of joining the Hogwarts community, as Voldemort makes attendance compulsory for all British underage wizards – except Muggle-borns, who are automatically refused entry as part of his new political scheme (173). Secondly, there are some significant changes to the curriculum: Dark Arts no longer teaches students to defend themselves against Dark magic but to use it instead, and if anyone refuses to use the Cruciatus Curse – the Unforgivable Curse used to torture someone – on their fellow students, they are punished heavily (462). Similarly, the purpose of Muggle Studies changes from helping young wizards relate better to the non-magical community (*CoS* 272) to compulsory anti-Muggle propaganda sessions where the students are told "how the natural order is being re-established" by Voldemort driving Muggles into hiding (*DH* 462). Umbridge's Decree forbidding students from meeting in groups larger than two has also been reinstated (257), making it very difficult for the students to form any kind of resistance movement, and the other teachers – who previously held the highest authority at Hogwarts – are left powerless against the Death Eaters, as the alternative to watching them torture the students from the sidelines would be a lengthy sentence in Azkaban (186). The physical and magical barriers separating Hogwarts from the outside world have been reinforced even further than under Umbridge's rule (452; 461), yet their function has changed completely: instead of protecting the gated community within (see pp. 59–60), the barriers now prevent anyone opposed to Voldemort's ideology from escaping the school or, alternatively, coming in to interfere with the new, brutal educational methods.

If Hogwarts had its flaws before the arrival of Dolores Umbridge and the Death Eaters, their intrusions certainly make it into a place that greatly resembles a dystopian society. From the beginning of the series, the students of Hogwarts live in isolation from the rest of the world – wizarding or otherwise – and are forced to submit to the often irrational will of the teachers with

little chance of questioning their authority. Their movements and freedom of speech are restricted, they are constantly under surveillance and they have little say in choosing to be a member of the Hogwarts community. Nevertheless, the students are not in any danger of being physically hurt – apart from some very rare occasions and perhaps on the Quidditch pitch – or being used as political pawns. This changes and all of the above-mentioned dystopian aspects are intensified in the fifth and seventh novels, when the school falls under the rule of highly prejudiced, power-hungry tyrants doing their utmost to control every aspect of life at Hogwarts. Were it not for the death of the school's longstanding superior authority and benign ruler, Dumbledore, in the end of the sixth novel (*HBP* 556), it is doubtful whether Voldemort could ever have turned Hogwarts into such a political battlefield.

3.3.3 Dumbledore

Until the intrusions of the Ministry of Magic and Voldemort, Hogwarts is reigned by a much more positive authority, the school's Headmaster Albus Dumbledore, whose presence has long kept the wizarding school a relatively safe environment for its students. He is "the only one [Voldemort] was afraid of" and thus the main reason for the Dark Lord having left the wizarding school undisturbed during his previous reign of terror (*PS* 45). In some ways, Dumbledore could be called the benign dictator in *Harry Potter*: in addition to holding the greatest authority at Hogwarts, he is also highly regarded and influential in the wizarding world at large (42; *DH* 22–25) and a regular adviser to the Minister for Magic (*PS* 51; *OoP* 89); yet his fundamentally different approach to leadership makes him less like a dystopian ruler than either Minister Fudge or Voldemort. Most crucially, Dumbledore does not crave personal power – which is particularly apparent from him having repeatedly refused the title of Minister for Magic (*PS* 51; *HBP* 414; *DH* 22) – but prefers to strive towards the greater good instead by concentrating on the education of future wizarding generations and the relentless battle against Dark wizards.

Dumbledore nonetheless seems to have nearly as much authority among the wizarding community as Fudge, with the significant difference that he uses his authority to ensure that the existing law is abided by instead of bending the rules like the Minister to solidify his own position at the top (*OoP* 131; 134–37). Similarly at Hogwarts, Dumbledore only seems to take advantage of his status as Headmaster to overrule the other teachers when he feels they are treating the students unfairly (*PoA* 313; *OoP* 334), and to ensure that the students are told the truth about the affairs of the wider wizarding world and not just the Ministry's adapted version of them (*GoF* 626). The fact that the Headmaster seems to be aware of "more or less everything that goes on" within his school (*PS* 219) and even where his students spend their summer holidays (36; *CoS* 51) might suggest that Dumbledore employs an extensive surveillance network similar to those encountered in classic dystopia (see p. 18), but even if this were the case, he clearly uses the information he gathers for other purposes than catching his subjects stepping out of line – as dystopian rulers do – judging by the amount of mischief the students get away with at Hogwarts.

On several occasions, Dumbledore is called the greatest wizard of his time (*PS* 77; *CoS* 338; *DH* 25), suggesting that should he wish to take over the wizarding world, he would be as capable of accomplishing this as Voldemort. Indeed, in terms of their magical abilities, Dumbledore and the Dark Lord seem equally powerful, yet the former's refusal to use Dark magic on principle (*PS* 14) makes these two great wizards very different kinds of leaders. The pair also has equally strong – if opposing – views on judging individuals based on their bloodline, but apart from insisting upon admitting Muggle-born and pure-blood children alike into Hogwarts despite opposition from certain quarters (*CoS* 241–42; *GoF* 147), Dumbledore never uses his leadership position to force his personal beliefs onto others in the manner of Voldemort and the rulers of classic dystopia (see pp. 13–14). A further difference between Dumbledore and Voldemort can be seen in their respective approaches to the official rulers of the wizarding world, the Ministry of Magic, with whom they both have their battles. Despite certain disagreements regarding Fudge's political decisions (*CoS*

282; *PoA* 54; *OoP* 137) and the Minister's desperate attempts to discredit him in the eyes of the wizarding community (89–90), Dumbledore continues to acknowledge the Ministry as the rightful rulers, whereas Voldemort, as discussed above (pp. 53–54), opts to infiltrate the ruling class at the first opportunity in order to direct its might against his personal enemies – in a manner resembling the birth of many classic dystopian societies (see p. 12). There are a number of incidents in the series which might imply that Dumbledore considers himself to be above the Ministry's legislation (*OoP* 34–35; 419; 722; *HBP* 59), yet he openly admits to not having enough authority to overrule their decisions (*PoA* 287) and respectfully adheres to their laws, only breaching them when lives are in danger.

One leadership aspect which Dumbledore shares with Voldemort is a group of devout followers obeying their every word. The former's aura of power and allure as a leader is evident from Voldemort's concerns that his Death Eaters – known for blindly following the commands of the most powerful wizard around (see p. 101) – might have turned towards Dumbledore during his own absence (*GoF* 562). Dumbledore does not have to resort to the Dark Lord's leftovers, however; he has a following of his own which consists of both individual wizards who admire and trust him unconditionally (*OoP* 490; *DH* 128) and, in a more organised and active manner, the members of the Order of the Phoenix, who willingly put their lives at risk to follow Dumbledore's orders in the resistance against Voldemort (*OoP* 91; 421). Similarly to the DA (see p. 65), the Order acts as a wizarding equivalent to Orwell's Brotherhood, with Dumbledore replacing the mysterious Goldstein as the leader and the members performing the secret tasks and recruitment (65; 89–90; *NEF* 15; 181–4). The Order seems to be as committed to their leader as the Death Eaters are to Voldemort, yet the use to which these groups of followers are put once again differentiates Dumbledore's leadership style from his more dystopian counterparts: whereas Voldemort's Death Eaters, Big Brother's Thought Police (*NEF* 5) and Gilead's Guardians (*THT* 30) are used by their respective leaders to control the rest of society and to brutally force them to comply with the

dictatorial rule, the Order exists to prevent such tyranny from affecting innocent lives in the first place. It is not apparent from the classics of dystopia how voluntarily the above-mentioned law enforcers take part in the suppression of human rights, but the members of the Order of the Phoenix – unlike many of Voldemort's followers (see pp. 101–2) – have certainly signed up to Dumbledore's service of their own volition and see his political beliefs as something they personally wish to fight for.

Dumbledore's number one disciple, however, is Harry, whose position and treatment differ in certain ways from the benign dictator's other followers and, particularly in the last novel, reveal a slightly darker side to Dumbledore. It is largely from his Headmaster that Harry learns everything he knows about Voldemort and his own role in the Dark Lord's downfall, both past and future, which would theoretically enable Dumbledore to feed him a version of events heavily influenced by personal opinions and ambitions, resembling the propaganda spread by dystopian rulers; yet the fact that parts of the tale are confirmed over the years by other members of the Order – and Dumbledore admits to much of the rest being merely educated guesswork (*HBP* 187) – provides some assurance that he is being truthful with Harry. Either way, until he discovers certain difficult truths about Dumbledore's past, Harry never questions his mentor's word and continues to use Dumbledore's suspicions as a guideline for his own actions long past the Headmaster's death, arguing to his doubters that "Professor Dumbledore never told me to stop following his orders if he died" (584). As the new Minister for Magic observes, Dumbledore had successfully trained Harry to obey him and no one else, making him "Dumbledore's man through and through" (326) – almost as the Inner Party teaches all citizens of Oceania to obey Big Brother (see pp. 24–25).

As the storyline gradually reveals, Harry does not actually have a say in whether to adopt the role Dumbledore has planned for him on his quest to bring down Voldemort: based on an old prophecy, Harry has been singled out before birth as "the person who has the only chance of conquering Lord Voldemort for good" (*OoP* 741–44). He is thus not as voluntary a follower as the

members of the Order, even though Dumbledore's general emphasis on personal choice instead of authoritarian coercion (*CoS* 358; *GoF* 628) nevertheless means that the ultimate decision to act lies with Harry himself. Dumbledore's preference for an advisory role again reinforces his difference to a dystopian dictator: both admittedly tell their subjects what they ought to do, but dystopian rulers rarely leave it up to individuals whether to follow their orders or not (see p. 23). In Harry's case, the realisation that he would be permitted to flee from Voldemort and consciously chooses to fight him regardless makes it much easier for him to embark on the quest Dumbledore laid out for him, despite being fully aware of the dangers ahead (*HBP* 479).

There are times, though, when Dumbledore does not ask Harry for his opinion or share all of the relevant information with him, and although the reasons behind these instances are later explained to Harry, viewed as isolated deeds they show a more controlling side to Professor Dumbledore. During their private discussions preparing Harry for his oncoming mission, the Headmaster demonstrates by way of certain small comments that he does not consider his disciple as quite his equal (*HBP* 336; 401; 528), and as the series progresses, it turns out that Dumbledore – just like Voldemort or the Minister for Magic – is not afraid to abuse the power he has been entrusted with (Nikolajeva 2009, 231). The first signs of this can be seen in the second novel, when Dumbledore is suspected of controlling the wizarding media in the vein of dystopian rulers (see p. 7) to withhold the trouble at Hogwarts from the outside community (*CoS* 241). After Voldemort's return, he seems to direct similarly dystopian tactics at Harry, whom he seemingly inexplicably isolates from the wizarding world for the summer, forbidding his friends from sending him any news (*OoP* 14–15) and having all his movements carefully observed by various helpers (25; 62). More concerning than such passive control, however, is Dumbledore's demand that Harry do anything and everything he asks as they go on the search for a Horcrux – an object of immensely Dark magic containing a part of Voldemort's soul (*HBP* 464) – which results in Harry being forced to act against his own instincts by having to cause someone he cares about extreme pain and

suffering (532). Dumbledore also chooses to withhold it from Harry that it was Snape who had told Voldemort about the prophecy which led to the deaths of Harry's parents, Lily and James (509), which Harry seems to take as a personal insult and a gross misjudgement on the Headmaster's part. The shock of this discovery, along with Dumbledore's refusal to reveal to Harry why he trusts Snape unconditionally (513), drives the first wedge between mentor and disciple and plants a seed of mistrust in Harry which eventually causes him to question everything Dumbledore had told him.

Harry first begins to get frustrated with Dumbledore some way into *Deathly Hallows* when he feels like he has not been given sufficient information to proceed with his quest (229), but it is not until he reads parts of Dumbledore's biography that Harry truly loses faith in his former mentor for a time. The book, written in a typically scandalous manner by the tabloid-style reporter Rita Skeeter, reveals that soon after graduating from Hogwarts, Dumbledore had become the best of friends with Gellert Grindelwald, a foreign wizard who was to become one of the best-known Dark wizards of all time and who already had some very questionable ideas as a young man (290–93). Skeeter's text suggests that Dumbledore and Grindelwald were planning to "[overthrow] the Statute of Secrecy, and [establish] wizard rule over Muggles" (292) and includes a letter written by Dumbledore to his friend which mentions "wizard dominance," "the right to rule" and using force to subdue potential resistance (291). The content of the short letter alone makes it appear undoubted that the great and righteous Dumbledore had once been on the verge of becoming one half of a dictatorial pair of rulers in a world bearing a striking resemblance to a dystopian society; where Muggles would be at the bottom of hierarchy and the social order would be upheld by violence. This is certainly how Harry understands it and, combined with his uncertainty regarding his mission, the story makes his anger boil over as he shouts how Dumbledore "shared a damn sight more of what he was really thinking with Gellert Grindelwald than he ever shared with me" (295).

Ciaccio likens the young Dumbledore's plans to the reign of terror actualised by Voldemort (2009, 43) but, despite the obvious signs, Dumbledore's letter could also be read as an attempt to

mollify Grindelwald's cruel plans: it mentions the wizard rulers' responsibility to their subjects and not using any more force than is absolutely necessary – both of which are an integral part of a just system of social organisation – and the ambiguous slogan "FOR THE GREATER GOOD" (*DH* 290) could be understood to genuinely mean the good of everyone rather than, in the dystopian sense, meaning the suffering of the majority for the good of a select few others. This alternative interpretation of the letter would suggest that Dumbledore had been a thoroughly good man after all, were it not for the open admission he makes to Harry in their dream state encounter near the end of the series: of him indeed having desired a position of power over Muggles and lesser wizards (573) – everything that Rita Skeeter scandalously claims. Taking into account Dumbledore's off-hand comment two years prior, whereby he declared his indifference to "numbers of nameless and faceless people and creatures [being] slaughtered in the vague future" at the expense of him protecting Harry from harm in present time (*OoP* 739), it certainly seems like the benign dictator had come surprisingly close to crossing over to the dystopian side in his lifetime.

It remains a mystery whether Dumbledore would have gone through with these radical plans or not, seeing as his brief but intense friendship with Grindelwald came to an abrupt end before any of their early plans had been realised. The latter went on to pursue these sinister goals abroad, resulting in a period of "some five years of turmoil, fatalities and disappearances" (*DH* 293). Dumbledore blames himself for some of the terrible ideas he had given Grindelwald (574), the most notable of which was perhaps the slogan his former friend adapted and, in a manner which strongly brings to mind the concentration camps of the Nazis, had inscribed over the entrance to the prison meant for his political enemies (294). Meanwhile, Dumbledore quickly abandoned any dreams of world domination and devoted the remainder of his life to fighting the Dark forces in Britain and protecting the rights of Muggle-born wizards (295), perhaps in an attempt to make up for his earlier phase of flirting with tyranny. Nevertheless, he admits it was precisely his once-apparent desire for

power that had made him turn down the post of Minister for Magic in later years, knowing he might be tempted to abuse such a high position (575).

For many readers grown to love and respect both Harry and Dumbledore as the story progressed, the most shocking revelation about Dumbledore and the secrets he has been keeping comes very close to the end of the series, when Harry discovers in Snape's memories that Dumbledore has known all along that Harry ultimately has to die to finalise his plans of defeating Voldemort. This information makes even Snape, who has never shown anything but contempt for Harry, question Dumbledore's motives: "You have used me . . . I have spied for you, and lied for you, put myself in mortal danger for you. Everything was supposed to be to keep Lily Potter's son safe. Now you tell me you have been raising him like a pig for slaughter" (551). Interestingly, Harry himself takes this piece of news surprisingly calmly and although he is shocked at first, it appears that he is merely afraid of the process of dying rather than feeling any disappointment towards Dumbledore (554). After the initial shock has passed, he reasons with a remarkably clear head how it all makes sense and almost blames himself for not understanding the big picture earlier:

> Dumbledore's betrayal was almost nothing. Of course there had been a bigger plan; Harry had simply been too foolish to see it, he realised that now. He had never questioned his own assumption that Dumbledore wanted him alive . . . How neat, how elegant, not to waste any more lives, but to give the dangerous task [of destroying the Horcruxes tying Voldemort to life] to the boy who had already been marked for slaughter, and whose death would not be a calamity, but another blow against Voldemort. (555)

This is some very cold-blooded calculation from Dumbledore, who knew that Harry would not refuse the task but would be happy to die if it meant saving the lives of countless others (555). The late Headmaster's brother Aberforth warns Harry of the dangers of being associated with Dumbledore, saying that "people had a habit of getting hurt while he was carrying out his grand plans" and advising him to go into hiding rather than continuing on his quest (452). For Harry, however, running away was never an option, as proven when he voluntarily walks towards his own death, determined to follow Dumbledore's orders until the end (557). He may choose to do so, and

Dumbledore's reasoning may prove wise in the end, but it is nonetheless rather ruthless of the trusted leader to ask someone – let alone the protagonist in a series aimed at young readers – to volunteer to die, justifying the title of the good side's dictator for Dumbledore.

As this chapter has demonstrated, Dumbledore is an extremely powerful wizard with all the potential to take the wizarding world into his grasp and turn it into an equally dystopian setting as the tyranny which Voldemort attempts to achieve. Dumbledore may once have dreamt of world dominance and may occasionally cross the boundary between a benign and a dystopian ruler in his mentorship of Harry, but considering everything the novels reveal about his nature, Dumbledore must ultimately be categorised as belonging to the good side, not least because of his relentless battle against Voldemort. Despite the many qualities he shares with his dystopian counterparts – both in *Harry Potter* and in the classics – Dumbledore's fundamentally different approach to leadership and his general aspiration for universal equality and justice make him a much more agreeable leader, one whom his subjects genuinely want to obey – even Harry, who is willing to give his life to fulfil his mentor's plans.

3.4 Voldemort's Reign of Terror

If Albus Dumbledore is a dictator whom most wizards respect and voluntarily obey, trusting his decisions to result in a more peaceful society, the leader of the Dark side is a prime example of a dictator in the dystopian sense: Lord Voldemort is power-hungry, ranks people according to their blood status, demands absolute obedience and ruthlessly punishes anyone failing to do exactly as he wants. A description of his previous years in power gives the reader a good idea of how miserable life was for the average wizard at the time:

> You don't know who his supporters are, you don't know who's working for him and who isn't; you know he can control people so that they do terrible things without being able to stop themselves. You're scared for yourself, and your family, and your friends. Every week, news comes of more deaths, more disappearances, more torturing ... the Ministry of Magic's in disarray, they don't know what to do, they're trying to keep

everything hidden from the Muggles, but meanwhile, Muggles are dying too. Terror everywhere ... panic ... confusion ... that's how it used to be. (*GoF* 457)

The state of affairs in the wizarding world improves for a number of years after Voldemort is forced into hiding, and until his return becomes public knowledge at the end of the fifth novel, the only dystopian leadership the wizarding community has to contend with comes in the shape of the power-hungry Ministry officials, as discussed above (pp. 50–51). As soon as the Ministry acknowledges Voldemort's return and he begins to build his terrible empire anew in earnest, conditions in the community take a turn for the worse again, with Dumbledore declaring that "the wizarding community is currently in a state of open warfare" (*HBP* 57). That Voldemort gaining more and more power influences the overall mood of wizards can be seen, for example, in the worried and fearful demeanour of the shoppers on Diagon Alley (109) and the fact that the Weasleys' clock, which generally shows the physical location of each family member, is now constantly indicating that they are all in mortal peril (85). The terror of Voldemort's earlier reign has remained so vivid in the wizarding community's collective memory that more than a decade after his disappearance, most wizards still cannot bring themselves to speak his name (*PS* 44–45) or even hear it said without shuddering or wincing (*HBP* 552), demonstrating how much the entire wizarding community fears Voldemort and his methods.

It was mentioned above that dystopian literature tends to revolve around a dictatorship and the merciless use of power (see p. 9), and Voldemort can be seen as a prime example of a literary totalitarian ruler in that he wants to hold ultimate power in his hands and to impose his own beliefs on all of the wizarding kind. An integral part of this campaign is Voldemort's enforcement of a strict social hierarchy on the wizarding world. Whereas the Ministry of Magic recognised the existence of the various non-human magical creatures by writing laws which ensured they were placed below wizards in the official hierarchy (see pp. 40–41), Voldemort's social hierarchy is mainly concerned with humans and their blood status. It seems that he has so little respect for all other creatures that he rarely spares them a thought, which automatically places them beneath

wizards on his ladder of hierarchy. Although house-elves, for example, can perform powerful magic that is impossible for wizards – such as Apparating in places wizards cannot (*HBP* 392) – Voldemort considers them to be "far beneath his notice, just like all the pure-bloods who treat them like animals" (*DH* 161). The contempt for house-elves among Voldemort's close circle can also be seen in the treatment of Dobby by his original masters, the Malfoys, who literally kick their servant around (*CoS* 361) and keep reminding him to punish himself for the littlest mishap (20).

As discussed above (p. 43), Voldemort manages to bring certain magical species onto his side by granting them the freedom to follow their instincts by attacking humans, and indeed, in the final Battle of Hogwarts, there are werewolves, giants, Dementors and giant spiders fighting on his side (*DH* 513–14; 520–21; 562). For Voldemort, however, their use as weapons is the only thing that makes them any more valuable or appreciated than house-elves: he jokes disparagingly about Muggle-lovers breeding with werewolves next (18) and has not deemed the werewolf Greyback worthy of being branded with the Dark Mark – a kind of interactive tattoo the Dark Lord uses to distinguish and summon his Death Eaters (*GoF* 616) – despite their tactical pact (*DH* 368). Even though the goblins eventually choose to remain impartial in the wizards' war, some of them are forced into hiding for not fulfilling the Death Eaters' orders (243–44) and, according to the goblin Griphook, for every non-human species, Voldemort reigning over the wizarding world would mean an even lower position in the social hierarchy than under the Ministry's rule – although for him, it seems goblins having to obey any wizard is as bad a fate as the slaughtering of house-elves (395).

Hermione points out to Griphook that her position as a Mudblood in the new wizarding order would be no higher than his (395) – and in fact, hers would actually be much worse than the goblins' position: Muggles and Muggle-born wizards face active persecution during Voldemort's reign, whereas the goblins would presumably be free to carry on with their accustomed lives as long as they do not openly oppose him. The extent of Voldemort's campaign against Muggle-born wizards has already been made apparent above (pp. 53–56), and it has been identified by many

critics as a literary counterpart of the historical events in Nazi Germany (Appelbaum 2009, 94; Ciaccio 2009, 43; Nikolajeva 2009, 228) – with Ciaccio adding that "the Death Eaters' hooded outfits are a clear reference to the Ku Klux Klan" (2009, 43). The persecution of people with Muggle blood in them – very reminiscent of the Nazis' oppression and attempted eradication of the Jews and other ethnic groups during World War II – extends to their relatives being blackmailed into obeying the Death Eaters under threat of the entire family suffering serious consequences for disobedience (*DH* 200) and leads to them being advised to flee the country because they "won't get anything like a fair hearing here" (216).

Other signs of Voldemort and his supporters' views of Muggles and Muggle-born wizards – which to them are one and the same – as scum include the killing of random Muggles essentially for sport (356), a Death Eater proclaiming that he would never even consider marrying a woman suspected of having Muggle blood in her (200), and a wizard who has not been granted a blood status and has been reduced to begging on the streets being called "it" by another Death Eater (425). Although Voldemort announces twice during the final Battle of Hogwarts that he has no desire "to spill magical blood" as this would be "a loss and a waste" (490; 529) – instead of killing the pure-blood students who oppose them, the Hogwarts Death Eaters just "torture [them] a bit if [they]'re mouthy" (462), which is little consolation – he is nevertheless ruthless towards those pure-bloods whom he considers too affectionate towards Muggles. He advises his Death Eaters to kill such members of their own family who have married the wrong type of wizard (16–17) and murders the prior Muggle Studies teacher from Hogwarts in cold blood for writing pro-Muggle propaganda and "corrupting and polluting the minds of wizarding children" in her lessons (17–18). With being born into a certain kind of family and using the supposedly universal freedom of speech to express opinions that differ from the rulers' views having become offences punishable by death, Voldemort's system of social organisation can rightly be called dystopian.

For most wizards, the above-mentioned irrational fear connected to the name seems to be the only emotion they associate with Voldemort; generally, only those who dare speak the name ever discuss their disapproval of his politics. This begs the question of how many wizards might actually, deep down, agree with Voldemort's ideas of pure-blood supremacy and wizard rule over Muggles, with their fear being merely a side-effect of Voldemort's brutal methods. When Sirius tells Harry about his own youth, he mentions that "there were quite a few people, before Voldemort showed his true colours, who thought he had the right idea about things" (*OoP* 104). His promise to bring wizards out of hiding was what had drawn many wizards, including Sirius' brother, Regulus, to join Voldemort (*DH* 159), which supports Ciaccio's (2009, 45) argument that "[i]n human history no dictator has come to power without presenting himself as someone who would bring order and good." (Interestingly enough, Ciaccio relates his statement not to Voldemort but to Dumbledore's "For the Greater Good" campaign, which emphasises the certain similarities between the leaders of the good and evil side; see pp. 84–85 above.) It may be understandable for wizards to wish they could openly live their lives as wizards, without having to conceal themselves from the Muggle community, but it is a little more disconcerting to hear that the people Sirius mentions "were all for the purification of the wizarding race, getting rid of Muggle-borns and having pure-bloods in charge" (*OoP* 104). This demonstrates that Voldemort's dystopian views on social hierarchy and the oppression of certain groups were shared by many individuals in the wizarding community – even if, as Sirius tells Harry, most of them "got cold feet when they saw what he was prepared to do to get power" (104). As discussed above (pp. 48–49), some sense of supremacy over Muggles can be detected in the behaviour of nearly all wizards; however, for the majority it appears to be a subconscious feeling, whereas for those who actively choose to follow Voldemort, the display of supremacy is a conscious decision.

Besides the strict social order they impose, another characteristic of a dystopian tyrant is the desire for power, and Voldemort's hunger for power is evident from the beginning of the series. In

Philosopher's Stone, his servant Quirrell tells Harry how meeting Voldemort had made him re-evaluate his life: "A foolish young man I was then, full of ridiculous ideas about good and evil. Lord Voldemort showed me how wrong I was. There is no good and evil, there is only power, and those too weak to seek it" (211). Even before he knew he was a wizard, Voldemort – who had grown up in a Muggle orphanage – had felt superior to other children (*HBP* 254), and learning of his wizard status only reinforced this sentiment and in part gave rise to his contempt for Muggles, who in his opinion could never be as special as someone with magical abilities. It seems that his years at the wizarding school – where, according to Dumbledore, "he was probably the most brilliant student Hogwarts has ever seen" (*CoS* 353) – made Voldemort realise what potential magic has as a means to control other people, which in turn drove him to pursue as much knowledge of magic as possible (*HBP* 337). This also made him respect the school institution to a high degree for the benefits it could potentially award him. Draco Malfoy's claim that Voldemort is not going to care for school achievements when he takes over (145) is proven wrong only a year later when attendance at Hogwarts is actually made compulsory – although this has equally much to do with Voldemort wishing to keep an eye on the younger generation of wizards as them learning the secrets of magic (*DH* 173). Unlike in a classic dystopian society, then, access to education and knowledge as such is not restricted in the wizarding world even as led by Voldemort but, similarly to a dystopian system of education, the content of the studies is highly customised to only teach the students the skills and information which best serve the tyrannical leader (see pp. 14–15).

Voldemort's years at Hogwarts lay the foundation of his quest for learning as much about magic as possible, and by the time he was thwarted by Harry for the first time, his "knowledge of magic [was] perhaps more extensive than any wizard alive" (*OoP* 736). He comes to use this knowledge and the power it brings to establish himself in a position of the highest authority through hurting and controlling others, but also to pursue his ultimate goal of conquering death (*GoF* 566). For Voldemort, presumably, immortality would be the only guarantee that no one will ever take

away his place at the top of hierarchy, and he is prepared to do terrible things to achieve this goal. These include performing multiple murders to create the Horcruxes which preserve a segment of his soul even if his body is destroyed (*HBP* 464–65), possessing Quirrell to pursue the Philosopher's Stone which makes its owner immortal (*PS* 161; 213), and killing one of his Death Eaters to gain true ownership of the Elder Wand – one of the three Deathly Hallows which "make the[ir] possessor master of Death" (*DH* 333; 527).

Voldemort's final hurdle on his quest to immortality is what much of the storyline of *Harry Potter* revolves around: killing Harry, the sole person "with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord" (*OoP* 741). Essentially, this leads to the conclusion that the heptalogy is all about one person's hunger for power and desire to rule the world which, together with the methods Voldemort uses to gain and cling to power along the way, are arguably signs of a dystopian work of literature. Even Dumbledore seems to agree with this conclusion as he explains that by singling Harry out as the most likely person to bring an end to his reign of terror, Voldemort has "created his worst enemy, just as tyrants everywhere do! Have you any idea how much tyrants fear the people they oppress? All of them realise that, one day, amongst their many victims, there is sure to be one who rises against them and strikes back!" (*HBP* 477). The dystopian connection of this quote is emphasised by the fact that, in addition to hunting down Harry, Voldemort focuses much of his energy on controlling his subjects in various ways, as the discussion below will demonstrate – just like the rulers of classic dystopian societies (see p. 12).

To control and punish his subjects, Voldemort mainly uses various Dark Arts, a branch of magic which – until his reign – is not taught at Hogwarts, where students learn to defend themselves against the Dark Arts instead. There are, however, several books on the Dark Arts in the school library's Restricted Section (*PS* 145–46), where Hermione suspects that Voldemort learnt about the Horcruxes (*DH* 89). In addition, he had travelled the world after his schooldays and "consorted with the very worst of our kind" (*CoS* 353), enabling him to gain the kind of knowledge the rest of the

wizarding community wants their members to remain ignorant of. The way Snape describes the Dark Arts suggests that Dark magic is much more likely to evolve into new forms than other branches of magic (*HBP* 169), and evidence from the novels proves that, apart from the products of the Weasley twins (*GoF* 52; *HBP* 113–14), nearly all of the innovations encountered in *Harry Potter* – such as the Levicorpus and Sectumsempra spells (224; 484) – belong in the Dark Arts category. It remains unclear whether Voldemort invented some of his favourite Dark spells himself or merely dug them out of a long-forgotten book but, in either case, he was the first wizard ever to create multiple Horcruxes (467) and he and his Death Eaters are the only wizards to use magic like the Unforgivable Curses, the Dark Mark or Tabooing, which enables them to instantly find anyone using a specific word or name (*DH* 316). It was mentioned above (p. 15) that the rulers of a dystopian society often want to restrict innovation and their subjects' access to knowledge for fear of these inciting rebellion in the subservient citizens, and in a manner this is precisely what happened when Voldemort discovered the Dark magic he could use to take over the wizarding world – even if it only led to a different kind of dictator replacing the previous dysfunctional government. (Whether Voldemort's ascent makes the wizarding world a more dystopian society than the one ruled by the Ministry of Magic depends on the reader's perception of which is worse, open violence towards a specific segment of the population or universal misuse of power while pretending that everything is ok – dystopia can be perceived on both sides of the coin, after all.)

The most popular Dark magic among Voldemort and his Death Eaters are the three Unforgivable Curses, which they use without hesitation despite the fact that using "any one of them on a fellow human being is enough to earn a life sentence in Azkaban" (*GoF* 192). Apparently, in order for the Curses to work properly, the wizard casting them needs to want to hurt their victim and enjoy the suffering they cause (192; *OoP* 715), which further emphasises the grim nature of these Curses. As already discussed (p. 54), the Imperius Curse is an easy method for the Death Eaters to control the behaviour of any wizard and turn them against their own. It has been used to

"[force] countless people to do horrific things" (*GoF* 512), and the Curse normally being undetectable makes it very difficult for the Ministry to decipher whom to hold accountable for the crimes they commit and who has been Imperiused and is acting involuntarily (188). It could be argued that the Imperius Curse is a kind of short-term version of the conditioning encountered in classic dystopia (see pp. 13–14), in that it makes the victims do as they are told without question and everyone else suspicious of even the people closest to them. Meanwhile, the Cruciatus Curse is used both to punish or weaken enemies (*HBP* 558; *GoF* 570) and to torture information out of them (523; *DH* 170). Using physical pain to make people cooperate is also familiar from the chambers of the Ministry of Love in the classic dystopia *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (see pp. 24–25).

Like the other two Unforgivable Curses, the third and killing Curse, Avada Kedavra, is at times also used to force or frighten people to obey Voldemort, as is the case in the Battle of Hogwarts, where Voldemort instructs his Death Eaters to kill as many of Harry's friends as possible because this is likely to lure Harry out in order to protect the others (*DH* 526). Additionally, Avada Kedavra is used to dispose of those enemies Voldemort believes he cannot bring to switch sides, such as Dumbledore and Harry's parents, but he also shows his disregard for human lives by killing people who merely happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, such as Cedric Diggory, whom Voldemort simply deems unnecessary to his plans (*GoF* 553). In addition, the deaths are used to warn other wizards of what the consequences of disobedience can be: when Voldemort was last in charge, his sign, the Dark Mark, would be sent into the sky every time they had killed someone, causing terrible fear among the wizarding community who worried about whom they might find dead (127). Similarly, when Voldemort believes he has finally killed Harry, he displays the latter's body to the enemy in an attempt to convince everyone else to surrender and submit to his rule at last (*DH* 583–84). This tactic is reminiscent of the hanging as war criminals of supposed enemies of the state in *The Handmaid's Tale* and leaving their bodies on show as warning examples to other citizens (*THT* 43).

Overall, it seems that the Death Eaters are just as keen on violence as Voldemort and that it matters very little to them whom they hurt along the way, as can be seen in the way one of them is firing curses in a battle so haphazardly they could hit anyone in the vicinity (*HBP* 558) and another is planning to blame his own blunder on innocent children in the hope that Voldemort will punish them instead of himself (*DH* 477). The same mentality is also behind their sending a cursed necklace and some poisoned wine to Hogwarts and not caring who might get hurt before they reached their intended destination (*HBP* 240; 376). The Unforgivable Curses are not used exclusively on wizards but affect the Muggle population as well; for example, the Death Eaters attempt to place an Imperius Curse on a close associate of the Muggle Prime Minister to gain influence in the Muggle government (23), and a large number of Muggles are killed by Voldemort's supporters in an attempt to blackmail Fudge to stand aside as Minister for Magic (17).

Voldemort also applies a more subtle form of control when, similarly to the Ministry of Magic before him (see p. 53), he takes over the wizarding media and restricts the kinds of information the wizarding community has available to them. Nearly all of the wizarding wireless stations and newspapers are adjusting their reports to what suits Voldemort and leaving out news of the deaths of Muggle-born wizards and goblins, for instance (*DH* 355–56). The *Daily Prophet*, which had previously been used by the Ministry to smear Harry and Dumbledore's names (*OoP* 71; 90), is now spreading anti-Harry propaganda in an attempt to make the wizarding community suspicious of their symbol of resistance (*DH* 172). Those wizards wishing to hear the truth about what is happening have to rely on a pirate radio station which is difficult to find and password-protected (319) and the magazine published by Xenophilius Lovegood, who is eventually persuaded to abandon his support of Harry when the Death Eaters kidnap his daughter to force him to cooperate (246; 340). Voldemort controlling the media can be seen as a dystopian trait, seeing how he customises the output of the main channels of communication to spread propaganda and restricts the flow of information available to his subjects (see p. 14). Another subtle form of control

employed by Voldemort is Legilimency, a magical form of mind-reading he is particularly skilled at, which gives him the upper hand on most wizards by informing him whenever someone is telling him lies and enabling him to extract valuable information from them (*OoP* 468–69). Not only does this make it very difficult for people to hide anything from Voldemort, but the Dark Lord can also use his Legilimency skills to plant false ideas and visions into Harry's mind to manipulate Harry into doing things he is unable to do himself (693–94; 723) and potentially even to use Harry as a spy (729).

In addition to using Harry as a pawn and taking full advantage of the Imperius Curse, Voldemort also likes to use his Death Eaters to do much of his work for him – in fact, most of the Unforgivable Curses are performed by them under Voldemort's instructions. In this sense, he is reminiscent of the dystopian leader in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the mysterious Big Brother whom no one has ever seen but whose name the rulers swear they are acting in (*NEF* 216–17). In *Harry Potter*, after his return Voldemort mostly chooses to remain in the background while his minions do the dirty work for him, at first because he does not wish to draw too much attention to his renewed existence (*OoP* 87) and later because this arrangement leaves him "free to extend his power beyond the Ministry" (*DH* 171). What the latter actually means is Voldemort pursuing those goals he does not wish to share with anyone else – such as his search for the Elder Wand, which would make him not only immortal but also unbeatable (331–33), should any of his followers attempt to defy him – or does not trust to anyone else, as is the case with killing Harry, which Voldemort has made sure his Death Eaters know he wants to do himself (374; 526). In other words, the statement made a few times in the novels of Voldemort preferring to act alone (498; *HBP* 259) does not so much refer to him doing everything on his own but rather to having the Death Eaters obey his orders without letting them in on his most valuable secrets and himself not being dependent on anything or anyone (469). Rather surprisingly, although the core storyline of *Harry Potter* revolves around Voldemort and the opposing side's attempts to bring him down, for the most part of the series the Dark Lord

himself remains off-stage; that is, he is only encountered in person in four of the seven novels, and after his resurrection he only comes into direct contact twice – not counting the glimpse he gets of the disguised Harry and Hermione in Godric's Hollow (279) – with Harry, from whose point of view the majority of the story is told. The fact that Voldemort can sit tight in a secure environment while his Death Eaters are doing all the work to rebuild and re-establish his empire emphasises the amount of power he holds over his supporters, particularly as they know they will always remain subordinate to their leader.

Voldemort's need to be in control and independent of other people seems to stem from his childhood which he had spent in a Muggle orphanage, having lost his mother and been abandoned by his father as a baby (*HBP* 249–50). Conversely to classic dystopia, where traditional family units are often abolished in an attempt to discourage individuals from striking against the ruling class in defence of their loved ones, in *Harry Potter* it is specifically the absence of Voldemort's parents that instigates his journey to become the tyrannical leader of the wizarding world. Undoubtedly, having no one to protect or support him meant that the young Tom Riddle – as Voldemort was known as a child – had to learn to stand up for himself at an early age, and this, combined with his inborn feeling of superiority and instinctive command of his magical skills (*HBP* 254), had already driven him to terrorise his fellow orphans even before he knew he was a wizard (250–51). The first signs of the future tyrant Voldemort were apparent in the boy whom Dumbledore met in the orphanage: "he was already using magic against other people, to frighten, to punish, to control" (259). Once Riddle had joined the magical community at Hogwarts, he eventually discovered certain truths about his family background which came to have an equally strong influence on his future: firstly, as Kornfeld and Prothro remark, the fact that Voldemort had been rejected by the Muggle side of his family reinforced his contempt for Muggles and his ideas of the supremacy of wizards (2009, 128), and secondly, it seems that his witch mother "[succumbing] to the shameful

human weakness of death" (*HBP* 339) instead of using her magical skills to stay with her son was the first push towards Voldemort's quest for immortality.

It could be argued that the bad example from his own parents also explains the adult Voldemort's unwillingness to form close relationships, which can be seen in him not having a family of his own and thinking it stupid of people to trust their supposed friends (*DH* 281). Even though the Death Eaters Voldemort gathers around himself may believe to have gained his trust and friendship, Dumbledore claims that "[t]hey are deluded. Lord Voldemort has never had a friend, nor do I believe that he has ever wanted one" (*HBP* 260). Voldemort's distrust of even those closest to him is evident not only from him not revealing all of his plans to the Death Eaters, as discussed above, but also from the Death Eaters never knowing the identities of all of their fellows, so as to prevent them from betraying the entire group to the Ministry of Magic (*GoF* 511) – similarly to the policies of the resistance groups in the dystopian classics (see p. 22). According to Dumbledore, the Death Eaters are "more in the order of servants" than friends to Voldemort (*HBP* 416), even if he introduces them to Harry as his true family (*GoF* 561). In classic dystopia, the traditional family unit is seen as a potential source of powerful emotions which the rulers want to suppress by dismantling said units, and in the case of Voldemort, the absence of his parents has certainly led to him feeling less emotion than his fellow wizards. Most importantly, he despises and underestimates the classic – if rather kitschy – power of love (*OoP* 736) and thus never bothers to learn all of its secrets (*DH* 568), which ultimately leads to his final demise. He does, however, understand that many other people can be persuaded to cooperate through threatening or attacking their family members (33; 340; 463; *HBP* 602) – even if this sometimes backfires, as Molly Weasley's uncharacteristically aggressive attack on the Death Eater threatening her daughter's life demonstrates (*DH* 589) – and his strategy being based on dividing people by "spreading discord and enmity" (*GoF* 627) seems to likewise suggest that Voldemort is not completely unaware of the importance of family for most individuals – he just prefers to use it against them.

Having grown up in less than ideal conditions in the orphanage, Hogwarts was the first place where Voldemort felt at home (*DH* 238), and it is at the school where he took the first steps towards bringing the wizarding world under his command. As soon as Tom Riddle had discovered the identity of his parents and his relation to Salazar Slytherin – the founder of Hogwarts with the strongest anti-Muggle tendencies – he shed the name he shared with his despicable Muggle father and came up with the title of Lord Voldemort, which is the name the wizarding community came to know and dread in years to come (*CoS* 337). According to Dumbledore, Voldemort's early dislike of the commonplace name of Tom Riddle is further proof of his hunger for notoriety and power always having been part of his personality (*HBP* 259). Hogwarts was also where Voldemort began to build his own alternative community – a typical replacement for the traditional family unit in dystopian literature (see p. 21) – around himself. It seems that even though he personally felt no need to form close friendships with his fellow wizards, Voldemort had a natural gift for attracting supporters – in the shape of the teachers, most of whom felt sympathy for the orphaned young student and were impressed by his outwardly modest demeanour and natural magical talent (337) – and followers – fellow students, who were "a mixture of the weak seeking protection, the ambitious seeking some shared glory, and the thuggish, gravitating towards a leader who could show them more refined forms of cruelty" (338). Voldemort's natural leadership skills can be seen in the way this group of followers, who would later develop into the Death Eaters (339), "cast him admiring looks" and generally seemed to regard him as their leader despite him being younger than many of the others (462–63), which can be called very unusual among a group of teenage boys. Although Hogwarts is equally important to Harry as it was for Voldemort, the communities they build there are remarkably different in nature (Kornfeld and Prothro 2009, 130): whereas Dumbledore's Army, for example, is founded by Harry to bring together likeminded students who are willing to fight for the benefit of the entire wizarding community (see pp. 65–66), the Death Eaters are merely acting as Voldemort's servants on his quest for personal power.

After leaving Hogwarts, Voldemort continued to expand his troops in the wider community, not only by seeking out those wizards who shared his political views on Muggles – of whom there were quite a few, as discussed above – and those desiring a share of his power for themselves, but also by employing some of his nastier tactics to intimidate people into doing his bidding (*PS* 45). It could be argued that these three types of people are what the citizens of any dystopian society can be divided into, with the latter – and largest – group constituting the subordinate masses who are too afraid to stand up for their rights and who obey orders just to avoid punishment, and the ruling classes consisting of the power-hungry and those few who genuinely share the tyrannical leader's ideology. In *Harry Potter*, the average dystopian Joe is perhaps best personified in Peter Pettigrew, who admits to having joined forces with Voldemort for fear of his powers and for not seeing what could "be gained by refusing him" (*PoA* 274). As mentioned above, Voldemort also used the Imperius Curse to force many wizards into his servitude, but his closest group of supporters, the Death Eaters – with the apparent exception of Pettigrew – consists of wizards like Lucius Malfoy who simply agreed with his pure-blood ideology and "didn't need an excuse to go over to the Dark side" (*PS* 82). It seems, however, that during Voldemort's absence of thirteen years nearly all British wizards have come to the conclusion that whether they agree with the ideas of wizard supremacy or not, his tyrannical rule brings with it too many negative side-effects for them to want to join him voluntarily – forcing Voldemort to resume his recruitment efforts in secrecy and to resort to the Imperius Curse and blackmail to gain any new followers (*OoP* 90). The fact that a substantial part of Voldemort's new army consists of wizards he had to force onto his side is rather telling of the dystopian nature of his reign.

As the series progresses, it is brought into question whether even the Death Eaters truly want to remain in Voldemort's service. Despite having sworn him their eternal loyalty, most of them had fled when the Dark Lord was defeated by the baby Harry instead of attempting to find their leader and discover what had really happened to him (*GoF* 562). When the Ministry of Magic

subsequently rounded up all known Death Eaters and brought them to trial for the crimes they had committed during Voldemort's reign, most of them denied ever having followed his commands willingly: "they worked really hard to keep out of Azkaban when [Voldemort] lost power, and told all sorts of lies about him forcing them to kill and torture people" (128). Because of such treachery, it is to be suspected that the Death Eaters fear Voldemort's possible return even more than the rest of the wizarding community (128) – and with good reason. Dumbledore's remark about Voldemort "[showing] just as little mercy to his followers as his enemies" (*PS* 216) is proven on a number of occasions, with the Dark Lord wantonly torturing, humiliating and even killing various Death Eaters for their mistakes (*GoF* 500–1; 562; *HBP* 103; *DH* 381; 443; 547). In fact, considering that Voldemort personally barely enters the fight scenes between the Dark side and the Order of the Phoenix, it seems that most of the blood on his hands comes from punishing his supporters, not his enemies. Dumbledore suspects that the Death Eater who had twice failed to fulfil his master's wishes had actually preferred his stint in the relative safety of Azkaban – regardless of the prison's inhumane conditions – to having to face Voldemort's wrath (*HBP* 475). Nevertheless, as long as Voldemort lives, the Death Eaters have no choice but to return to their leader's service because of their fear of how they might be punished for disregarding his summons (Kornfeld and Prothro 2009, 130); in Sirius' words, "you don't just hand in your resignation to Voldemort. It's a lifetime of service or death" (*OoP* 104).

As the discussion above demonstrates, Voldemort fulfils the criteria of a dystopian tyrant in a much more obvious manner than the wizarding leaders portrayed in earlier chapters, particularly because of the strict social hierarchy he enforces on his subjects and the brutal means he utilises to achieve and hold on to power. The general public seems to fear the Dark Lord above anything else, even if many of them at one time shared his beliefs on wizard supremacy. What makes Voldemort a truly ruthless dystopian tyrant, however, is the fact that even his closest supporters face death or merciless torture if they dare defy him in any way, fail to complete every task he assigns them or

even think about leaving his service. Throughout the series, Voldemort appears to be as invincible a tyrant as the rulers of classic dystopia – were it not for those crucial oversights which inadvertently enable one person to challenge him: Harry Potter, whose role will be discussed in the following chapter.

3.5 Harry as a Dystopian Protagonist

The previous chapters have demonstrated that all of the themes and features typical of classic dystopia can also be found in various forms in the wizarding world; however, without a protagonist who is sufficiently at odds with his allocated position in society, the negative effects of these features might be less conspicuous to many readers and not inspire them to use the flaws of the fictional society to change their own world for the better, as dystopian literature is generally meant to do (see p. 8). In *Harry Potter*, Harry takes the place of Winston Smith in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Offred in *The Handmaid's Tale* and John the Savage in *Brave New World* as the person against whose beliefs the prevailing system of social organisation is reflected, and it is mainly through his experiences that the wizarding world is shown to be less idyllic than it at first glance appears. Harry's fate may ultimately be much less hopeless than those of the protagonists of classic dystopia – which can largely be explained through the young age of the series' intended readership – but he nonetheless shares much of their disappointment with the way the surrounding society is led and has to deal with equally severe hardships along his journey, which creates a noteworthy connection between *Harry Potter* and all dystopian literature. When the protagonist is young, as is the case with YA dystopia, particular emphasis is often put on the effects the surrounding dystopian society has on the protagonist's developing personality, and this is also a key aspect of Rowling's heptalogy. Along the seven novels, readers get to witness Harry's growth from boy to man and from ignorance to the knowledge of some painful truths, while the setting alternates between three worlds in each of which Harry's social status is very different: the Muggle society, where Harry stands at

the bottom of hierarchy; the wizarding school Hogwarts, where he – at least in principle – is regarded as an ordinary student; and the wizarding community at large, both in times of peace and under Voldemort's reign, where he is known to all and, particularly after Dumbledore's death, viewed by most as the leader of the resistance. As Harry moves from one world to the next, his experiences and the varyingly dystopian aspects of each world can be seen to influence his personality in various ways.

Because of the events in his early childhood – Harry is the only person ever to have survived the Avada Kedavra Curse which backfired on Voldemort instead, reducing the latter to an existence as something "less than spirit, less than the meanest ghost" (*GoF* 566) and liberating the wizarding community from his earlier reign of terror for the next several years (*PS* 42–44) – Harry has been famous in the wizarding world his whole life and seems destined for greatness and leadership. Several Death Eaters, for example, had hoped that the person responsible for their original leader's disappearance would grow up to be the next great Dark wizard and replace Voldemort as their master (*HBP* 36). Even the Dark Lord himself wonders whether the similarities between him and Harry – both are "half-bloods, orphans, raised by Muggles" and have the rare ability to talk to snakes – might make Harry a potential competitor for his dominion (*CoS* 340). Instead of embracing the expected leadership role from an early age, however, Harry remains ignorant of his celebrity status until his eleventh birthday and, as a result of his aunt and uncle consistently treating him as a lesser person than his cousin Dudley (see p. 29), grows into a remarkably humble young man. As he is also unjustly punished for any magic he performs instinctively but completely unawares as a child (*PS* 23–24; 26), it is no wonder that Harry never learns to see himself as special in any way or thinks of magic as a means to control other people as Voldemort had done. His outlook does not change even when he enters Hogwarts at the age of eleven and discovers his extraordinary history, and rather than using the magical skills he learns there to claim back his

superiority, Harry is generally found selflessly putting himself at risk or defying the rules in an attempt to help others around him (e.g. 110; *CoS* 323; *GoF* 435; *OoP* 646–47).

If the use of power over fellow (human) beings is an important theme in dystopian literature (see p. 11) and the previous chapters have demonstrated that the wizarding world contains several individuals who are willing to do anything to possess such power, Harry's approach to leadership differentiates him in many ways from the dystopian authorities. That Harry does not crave personal power is proven a number of times in the novels: by his encounter with the Mirror of Erised, which shows that his deepest desire is to defeat Voldemort instead of becoming rich, powerful and immortal himself (*PS* 212; *HBP* 478); by Dumbledore's deduction that Harry is rare among wizards in being able to bring together the three Deathly Hallows and use them for the common good instead of selfish purposes (*DH* 576–77); and even by Harry's early reluctance to take on the leadership of the DA (*OoP* 292–93). Harry cannot evade leadership forever, though, as after Dumbledore's death he replaces his mentor in the eyes of the wizarding community as the rallying point for the resistance against Voldemort (*DH* 357–58) and, by the final Battle of Hogwarts, he is the person around whose orders the fighting is organised at the castle (482–83). The key difference between Harry and the wizards – or dystopian rulers – who are actively pursuing authority is the way in which they use the power they are entrusted with.

Harry clearly takes on his leadership role much more responsibly than Voldemort or the Ministers for Magic and demonstrates to the reader through his actions that a leader does not have to abuse power or threaten others to be successful. Unlike Voldemort, who likes to have his Death Eaters do much of the fighting on his behalf, Harry never willingly puts his friends at risk; on the contrary, he actively tries to discourage them from joining him on his more dangerous forays (*PS* 197; *OoP* 672; *HBP* 607; *DH* 467). In addition, when he is asked to act as a poster boy for the Ministry in disarray, Harry refuses to associate himself with people whose leadership methods he strongly disapproves of (110; *HBP* 324–25). He also refuses to use Voldemort's ruthless but

efficient methods in battle, preferring to Disarm opponents over killing them (*DH* 64) and opting to evacuate all students from the Battle of Hogwarts rather than keeping the children of known Death Eaters hostage (500). Harry might promise Dumbledore to kill as many Death Eaters as possible on his quest to defeat Voldemort (*HBP* 78), but this is merely idle words: he personally never uses the Avada Kedavra Curse – he is not even the one to cast the spell which ultimately destroys Voldemort (*DH* 595–96) – but actually eventually does quite the opposite when he sacrifices himself by allowing Voldemort to (supposedly) kill him in order to protect the other people fighting on his side (591).

Rather surprisingly, though, Harry does try his hand at the other two Unforgivable Curses. Immediately after Sirius and Dumbledore's deaths, he tries and fails to use Cruciatus on their respective killers (*OoP* 715; *HBP* 562) and later successfully performs it on another Death Eater for rather petty reasons (*DH* 477), and he also Imperiuses two characters in the last novel (428–29). While it is somewhat disappointing to find an otherwise righteous Harry stooping to the Death Eaters' level on these occasions, there are somewhat mitigating circumstances behind his actions: the Imperius Curses are necessary for him to gain access to a Horcrux and do not actually harm their victims, and his usage of Cruciatus could be put down to his apparently incontrollable teenage anger; whether this makes it acceptable is a different matter. On the whole, then, when Harry borrows Dumbledore's infamous words and proclaims to be fighting for "the greater good" (458), it seems that unlike his late mentor in his youth, Harry genuinely means the good of as many people as possible and not just the good of himself or an elite group of pure-blood wizards at the expense of Muggles. (For Voldemort, as demonstrated in Chapter 3.4, the greater good was never a concern; his only desire is for others to obey him.) Based on Harry's overall leadership style, then, it is easy to agree with Dumbledore's assessment that "those who are best suited to power are those who have never sought it" and who, like Harry, do not use their power merely for their own ends (575).

Dumbledore explains Harry's ability to remain the good and just person he is through the love he possesses, it being "[t]he only protection that can possibly work against the lure of power like Voldemort's" (*HBP* 477). As discussed above (p. 19), the rulers of classic dystopia often attempt to suppress the emotions of their subjects in order to reduce the chance of an uprising, and this is often done by means of a systematic abolishment of the traditional family unit. In contrast, the family setup in *Harry Potter* comes across as very traditional and the ties between immediate family members can be seen to invoke some strong emotions, of which Harry's love for his late parents is a prime example. Not only is love the reason for Harry to refuse joining the Dark side or pursuing personal power, as Dumbledore's statement suggests, but in a more fantastical way it also protects him physically against Voldemort's touch on two occasions (*PS* 216; *OoP* 743) and enables him to protect his friends at the Battle of Hogwarts just as his mother's love had protected him as a baby (*DH* 591). According to Kornfeld and Prothro (2009, 135), Harry has the love and protections provided by his parents to thank for growing up to resist the likes of Voldemort instead of turning cruel himself. This demonstrates that emotions are indeed something all tyrants should fear – and in *Harry Potter* with even more cause than in classic dystopia.

Harry's family is the source of his most powerful emotions, then, but it is nonetheless specifically their absence from his life that actually sets the events of the series' storyline in motion – the depiction of a happy family idyll would hardly hold the readers' suspense for long, even if its setting were the exotic wizarding world. As discussed above (p. 20), the protagonists of literature aimed at younger readers, just like the protagonists of classic dystopia, are often left to survive without the support of the traditional family unit, and Harry is no exception. Even his mentor Dumbledore and his godfather Sirius, his two strongest father substitutes – the adult characters who often replace the biological parents as the people to whom the protagonist can turn for some security (Nikolajeva 2009, 230) – are taken from Harry relatively early on, particularly Sirius, who dies a mere two years after Harry discovers his true identity (*OoP* 711). Yet Harry's reaction to the

removal of his parents – and, later on, his father substitutes – can be taken as further proof of his story utilising elements from YA dystopia, where family often remains an important motivator for the protagonist's actions (see p. 21). Like Katniss Everdeen in *The Hunger Games*, and unlike the average citizen of a dystopian society who has never experienced familial love, the orphaned Harry refuses to settle for an apathetical solitary life and instead dedicates his life to ensuring that no one else will have to suffer his fate in the future, not only by fighting the obviously tyrannical Voldemort – the killer of his parents and so many more – but also by challenging the other unfair authorities of the wizarding world in order to improve its conditions for all. While Voldemort was also mentioned as reacting strongly to his own orphanhood (p. 98), the way in which he directs his energy once again emphasises his difference to Harry: the Dark Lord simply seems to want to avenge his parents' absence on the entire universe by making everyone suffer.

As suggested above (pp. 20–21), in comparison to classic dystopia, family nonetheless tends to play a larger role in literature aimed at the young readership, seeing how the young characters are often still reliant on their parents not only for shelter and sustenance but also for moral support. Like many young protagonists – particularly in YA dystopia – Harry attempts to replace the companionship of his biological parents by building and joining various alternative communities consisting of likeminded people, both at Hogwarts and in the wider wizarding world. Kornfeld and Prothro (2009, 124–25) mention the Gryffindor house, the Weasley family, the Order of the Phoenix, Dumbledore's Army and, most notably, his friendship with Ron and Hermione as being the most significant such communities and reasonably suggest that if Harry's parents had still been alive when he entered Hogwarts, he may never have sought to join as many alternative families (135–36). These communities stand by Harry until the end and play a crucial role in many of his successes throughout the series, even if the novels suggest a number of times that his actions alone can bring down Voldemort (*OoP* 744; *HBP* 478; 601; *DH* 555).

Indeed, it seems that Harry's regret at Dumbledore's burial over having to face Voldemort on his own is not so much due to no one being willing to help him but rather Harry deciding that he will not put his remaining loved-ones' lives at risk by involving them on his quest to track down Voldemort's Horcruxes (*HBP* 601). As mentioned above, Harry has always been reluctant to allow his friends to endanger themselves, and it takes Ron and Hermione some elaborate scheming to convince him that they cannot be talked out of joining him (*DH* 84–86). Even though Harry at times yearns for someone else to take charge of the situation (258), he nonetheless refuses to share the details of his quest with anyone but Ron and Hermione (77; 109–10; 173–74; 467; 557–58), at least in part in case the people close to him were caught by the Death Eaters and tortured for information. Rather interestingly, the only person Harry voluntarily does ask for help is the goblin Griphook (393), which could be taken to mean that Harry has less reservations about endangering a goblin than he has about his fellow humans' lives. However, apart from Harry's dreams of Kreacher serving him sandwiches in bed as the series draws to a close (600), there is no evidence of Harry ranking the other magical species beneath humans in social hierarchy; the more viable explanation for asking Griphook for help is the fact that Harry knows he stands has no chance of breaking into Gringotts without assistance from a former employee (396).

In some part, Harry's reluctance to accept help from the adult members of his alternative families might also stem from his multiple negative experiences of the adults in charge leaving him disappointed. Throughout the series, Harry comes across a wide array of adult characters who attempt to exert their authority over him and force him to conform to the rules they set, and as the previous chapters have demonstrated, their motives and methods are often so unjustified and ugly – particularly in the case of Vernon Dursley, Professors Snape and Umbridge, the Ministers for Magic and Voldemort – that Harry feels he has no choice but to defy them. It was mentioned above (p. 20) that the absence of trustworthy adults is typical of YA dystopia, and the prominence of characters possessing as many dystopian traits as those listed above acts as another indication of *Harry Potter*

utilising elements from this tradition of writing. Like Harry, the young protagonists of dystopia can observe the adults in charge of and responsible for the world they live in, which will help them form their own opinions on its justness as they grow older and potentially inspire them to decide to take action against the prevailing system.

In addition to the more obvious adversaries named above, Harry also has to face some difficult truths about some of his positive parent substitutes, showing him that even his greatest role models had their flaws. Perhaps the most notable such discovery for Harry is learning posthumously about the young Dumbledore's plans for wizard supremacy, which left him to reassess his late mentor's motives (see p. 84), but he also struggles with the legacy of his own father after witnessing a memory of the teenage James abusing his popularity and mistreating a fellow student (*OoP* 568–72). Similarly, it is mainly Harry's disappointment with what he believes to be the compromised morals of Lupin – who wants to leave behind his expecting wife and join Harry's reclusive quest instead – that makes Harry decline Lupin's offer of help, rather than his desire to act alone (*DH* 174–76). When even the people he trusts the most are exposed as having such significant flaws, Harry is ultimately forced to rely on no one but himself and to continue his battle against the evils of the wizarding world as defined by his own values.

In YA dystopia, the absence of trustworthy adults is closely linked to the concept of child empowerment, which in turn enables the young readers to look to the brave and resourceful protagonists for inspiration on how to handle the difficulties they might face in their own lives (see p. 8). The empowerment of wizarding children in *Harry Potter* is emphasised by the fact that they spend the largest part of the year in a boarding school in separation from their parents and are thus forced to cope relatively independently, and Harry's orphanhood further increases his independence and empowerment. Based on all of the evidence given above, Harry is undoubtedly a good role model for readers in many ways: he does not shy away from the frightening task ahead of him (or from any of the more minor challenges which do not involve destroying Voldemort, for that

matter), and always promotes non-violence, fairness and justice – even if he has his personal and not necessarily fully justified vendettas against Draco Malfoy and Professor Snape, for instance, and at times sulks like any normal adolescent. Harry's decision in *Deathly Hallows* to send the Dursleys into safety despite their past treatment of him (31–35) sets an equally good example to the readers about forgiveness, just like his disappointing experiences with the Ministry of Magic demonstrate that even the supposedly good authorities might sometimes be acting on false pretences. In addition, the series reminds the young readers that empowerment also calls for responsibility, as demonstrated, for instance, by the tragic consequences of Harry's insistence on recklessly charging into the Ministry at night which results in Sirius' death and multiple injuries to his friends (*OoP* 674–722). Danielle Tumminio argues that "looking at the choices the characters make throughout the series highlights the privilege and danger of free will" (2009, 77): Harry might be empowered to make even big decisions for himself, but he must also learn to live with the consequences of his poorer decisions.

The importance of personal choices is highlighted early on in the series by Dumbledore, who points out to Harry – and the reader – that everyone is free to use their lives and personal qualities for a purpose they consider fit. He tells Harry that "it is our choices . . . that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities," and that despite sharing certain qualities with Voldemort, Harry's decisions have already proven the two to be very different (*CoS* 357–58). The fact that Harry has the option to choose not to adopt Voldemort's beliefs or to do his bidding could be interpreted as proof that the wizarding world does not qualify as a dystopian society – where citizens have very little say in what they must believe and do – but it could also be argued that any protagonist (or, in fact, any citizen) in classic dystopia is faced with the same choice: whether to adapt to the miserable conditions of his society by suppressing his desire for change, or to stand up to its injustices by defying the rulers – while accepting that to choose the latter would likely lead to further and more personally directed trouble. Harry chooses to fight Voldemort, then – and it is a

conscious choice, not merely his fate (see p. 83) – but, crucially, not to replace him as the all-powerful leader of the wizarding world but to protect those who stand at the bottom of Voldemort's hierarchy and to make the world around him a more just and, essentially, democratic society.

While much of the evidence given above suggests that Harry is fully empowered to decide for himself how to proceed on his quest, Nikolajeva (2009, 231) argues that along the way he still has to conform to countless rules that were, in fact, set by adults. It was, after all, Dumbledore who had laid out the plans which Harry keeps following in the final novel – all the way to obediently walking to his death (see pp. 82; 86–87). According to Nikolajeva, this can be seen as an indication of a contradiction that often features in literature for children and young adults: the child character may be seemingly empowered to make his own decisions and act according to them, but behind the scenes there is often an adult character whom he must ultimately obey. She also mentions that Dumbledore is the person who saves Harry and friends at the Ministry of Magic in *Order of the Phoenix*, which suggests that regardless of his empowerment, the child protagonist nevertheless tends to remain somewhat dependent on an adult to rescue him from a particularly tricky situation (Nikolajeva 2009, 235). The same principle can be seen at play in the Battle of Hogwarts: had the teachers not been there to place their magical protections around the castle (*DH* 482–83) or the members of the Order of the Phoenix to organise the fighting (491), the resistance would have been left in the hands of a small group of barely-of-age, mostly unqualified youngsters, and the battle would most likely have been a very short and ugly one. It is also doubtful whether Harry would be able to face his most difficult task – walking to his assumed death and choosing to return to the world afterwards (*DH* 560–61; 578) – if the magical quality of his world did not enable his parents and closest father substitutes to appear to him as kinds of memories and support him through it. In Nikolajeva's opinion, *Harry Potter* successfully navigates the common dilemma in children's literature by simultaneously managing to give the impression that the young protagonist is perfectly empowered and in charge, and yet protecting the innocence of the child by having adult characters

surreptitiously do the dirtiest work that would otherwise force the child to enter adulthood himself (2009, 235).

Whether Harry actually manages to hold on to an innocent childhood as the story progresses is questionable, though, considering the tough decisions he needs to make and the amount of close accomplices he loses to Voldemort along the way. He is barely fifteen when he finds himself worrying over topics most people his age never have to consider, such as the likelihood of many of his friends dying in the oncoming war, if the survival rate of the old Order of the Phoenix is anything to go by (*OoP* 162). There is, indeed, a rather surprising amount of death in *Harry Potter*, considering that the books are extremely popular even among very young children, and the deaths are not restricted to anonymous or less-familiar characters whose removal might be easier for the young readers to handle. As discussed above (p. 25), YA dystopia seems to view death as a much worse fate than being forced to succumb to the miserable living conditions, and a similarly simplistic outlook arguably applies to *Harry Potter* – perhaps because the wizarding world's dystopian features remain far less noticeable to most characters (and readers) than in the classic dystopian societies. Dumbledore's assertion of there being "far, far worse things in the living world than dying" (*DH* 577) suggests that he might have other ideas, but he and the wise old Nicolas Flamel (*PS* 215) appear to be the only wizards who are not afraid to die.

Although copious characters die in the novels, there is actually very little physical violence in *Harry Potter*, particularly if compared to the wholly dystopian world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Instead of being beaten into oblivion, the characters in the wizarding world typically die as a result of the Avada Kedavra Curse, which is completely painless and leaves no visible marks on the body (*GoF* 9; 191; *DH* 560–61). The way Sirius is disposed of – he simply falls through a deadly veil during the battle at the Ministry of Magic (*OoP* 710–11) – is similarly non-graphic and, according to Nikolajeva (2009, 237), a typical example of how death in children's literature is often depicted as a symbolic rather than a physical event, making it easier for the young readers to digest than

realistic deaths. In *Harry Potter*, of course, the concept of death is made even easier to handle by the fact that the dead can under certain circumstances be seen and interacted with later on, whether as ghosts (*OoP* 759), memories (*CoS* 330), echoes (*GoF* 606) or the imitations of their past selves summoned using the Resurrection Stone (*DH* 560), as well as in their personal portraits (*DH* 599) and the Mirror of Erised (*PS* 153), all of which help lessen the finality of death a great deal. The tactics used in *Harry Potter* may make it easier for the young readers to cope with the prominence of death, even if they stand a chance of undermining the series' credibility in the eyes of some older readers.

The relatively gentle handling of death in *Harry Potter* can be read as an example of authorial hesitation which, alongside ambiguity and plot compromises, was mentioned above (p. 24) as being typical of dystopia for younger readers. While the seven-volume story as a whole is written with admirable attention to detail, enabling the plot to progress logically from one volume to the next and become more and more intricate along the way, the way Rowling chose to end her story – more specifically, her decision to keep Harry alive – has been the topic of much discussion among the series' fans before and after the release of the final novel. Some of the more controversial views of the fanatical readers on the series and particularly its culmination were collected from a popular *Harry Potter* fan site on the internet and published in a book entitled *Harry Potter Should Have Died*, and as the title suggests, some of the slightly older readers have felt that a more logical conclusion to the series would have been accomplished if Rowling had killed Harry off instead of devising a number of rather incredible strategies which enable Harry to not only survive but to miraculously finish off Voldemort without actually resorting to violence himself. Another particularly unconvincing turn of the plot is the long-awaited revelation of Snape's true loyalty and motives near the end of the series: surely a traitor's proclamation of love alone is not enough to convince even the ever-trusting Dumbledore (*DH* 544–45)?

Even though Rowling does her best to provide an explanation in her text to every incredible event in the final instalment, it can easily be argued that some ambiguity persists in *Deathly Hallows*. Each reader can, for instance, decide for themselves whether Harry's being prepared to die but yet not quite dying would actually suffice to cast a protective spell over his friends (591), and whether such a plot turn leads to an entirely logical conclusion to the heptalogy. At the same time, much of the beauty of the series lies in each reader's ability to interpret the plot differently and draw their own conclusions as to what the story was about and what they can learn from it. Naturally, the same principle applies to all literature, including dystopia – the system of social organisation in *Brave New World*, in particular, could just as well be read as a model of utopia as dystopia (see p. 7). Arguably, the fate Rowling chose for Harry is a much more child-friendly ending to the story than the alternative, suggesting that she may have wanted to take into account the wide age range of her readers and perhaps did not dare disappoint the youngest ones more than necessary. After all, if Harry had been killed by Voldemort – the former, as mentioned, being the only person with any chance of defeating the latter – the wizarding world would most likely have remained under the immortal Dark Lord's evil reign for the rest of time and all of the loveable characters introduced throughout the series would likely have died as well, and that would have been too gruesome an ending for any child reader to take who had grown up alongside Harry – and quite possibly for many adult readers too.

Either way, Harry's survival is in stark contrast to the dystopian classics which tend to end with the failure and demise of their protagonists (see pp. 23–24), and perhaps best exemplifies why *Harry Potter* is generally classified as a children's story rather than a dystopia. Its thoroughly happy ending also differentiates the series from dystopias for children and young adults, in which the protagonists may also survive but the otherwise open endings leave it up to the readers to decide whether all of the dystopian issues of the novels' societies have truly been resolved. The ending of *Harry Potter*, for its part, seems far from open: the last paragraph of the heptalogy explains that

there had been no trouble for nearly two decades and the very last sentence explicitly states that "[a]ll was well" in the wizarding world (*DH* 607), leaving no doubt that Harry's past actions have resulted in a near-perfect society. At the same time, it ought to be remembered once again that what may seem utopian to one reader can come across as dystopian to the next, and that not everyone might be happy with Harry settling into the same conservative family life as every generation before him, with the same prejudices and distinctions running high as those which essentially gave rise to Voldemort some decades earlier (see p. 64).

As the discussion in this chapter demonstrates, Harry's role in the heptalogy is much the same as that of the protagonists in YA dystopia. The lack of a biological family and other trustworthy adults in his life forces Harry to act independently and assess the world(s) he lives in according to his personal principles, even if his family and social relationships remain as important motivators for his actions. It is largely through Harry's eyes that the wizarding world's problems are brought to light, and his personality traits provide the comparison point to the ruthless adult authorities which shows the readers that the established system of social organisation does not necessarily serve the best interests of all of its subjects. The circumstances around Harry may not be as dystopian as in *The Hunger Games* – unlike Katniss, he does not have to kill in order to survive, for instance – let alone the classics of dystopia, but what he has to deal with over the course of the series is nonetheless arguably worse than in children's literature typically, reinforcing the argument that *Harry Potter* is not quite as innocent as it might at first glance appear. The fact that Harry manages to remain thoroughly good despite the difficulties thrown his way can, much like the more obviously dystopian novels, act as a fruitful example for readers to evaluate their own societies and personal choices in life and encourage them to attempt to change the world for the better.

4 Conclusion

This thesis set out to read the universally loved and supposedly innocent *Harry Potter* heptalogy from a dystopian point of view. After comparing the social and political structures and practices of the wizarding world to those portrayed in the classics of dystopia, it is clear that the world Harry is transported to from his dystopian Muggle reality in the beginning of the series is, in fact, not nearly as utopian as many readers would like to believe. The influence of the young primary readership of the series can be seen most notably in the way the novels incorporate features from a variety of literary genres, which may hide some of the dystopian themes underneath the more prominent layers of magical exoticism, adventure and friendship, for instance. Similarly, the quaint portrayal of wizarding life, with its traditional values and magical solutions to many problems, helps to hide a fair amount of social commentary within the storyline on the very topics which are under scrutiny in classic dystopia. Nonetheless, these themes are present in the novels for all readers to discover, drawing their attention to a number of serious topics and encouraging them to think about even difficult matters.

Some of the dystopian themes in *Harry Potter* are put in the spotlight more clearly than others, particularly as the story progresses, while equally unjust practices may be harder to detect in people of whom they may not be expected. For instance, it is easy to see Voldemort as the only true villain in the series, and his discriminatory beliefs and brutal methods for ensuring compliance certainly make him the clearest example of a tyrant in the novels. Nonetheless, a detailed analysis of the practices of the Ministry of Magic suggests that the lawful authority of the wizarding world is, in certain ways, more reminiscent of the rulers of the classic dystopian societies than Voldemort. Like the dystopian rulers, it has convinced everyone – the wizards, its own officials and the readers alike – that there is nothing wrong with how the wizarding world is run, and that it is a thoroughly idyllic place to be. None of the wizards seem to realise the extent of the control to which they are subjected which, in places, restricts their freedom as much as in classic dystopia. Nor does anyone

seem to pay much attention to the fact that turning the wizarding world into a gated community has resulted in a wide-spread underlying prejudice towards the non-magical community, seeing as these two communities have very little contact with – and even less knowledge of – one another.

It is also clear from the analysis that the distribution of power among wizards offers great potential for the misuse of this power. While the Ministry justifies much of its control over the wizarding community as a means to protect them from a Muggle intrusion – in other words, to maintain stability within the society, precisely as in classic dystopia – several of its officers are seen to take advantage of their power simply to solidify their own position on top of the hierarchy. This is particularly apparent from the actions of Dolores Umbridge, whose methods both at Hogwarts and at the Ministry bear a perhaps stronger resemblance to the tactics of classic dystopian rulers than those employed by Voldemort. The fact that most wizards do not see her actions as troubling seems to indicate that the Ministry's long-standing practices have conditioned the wizards to view their world as a place in which the suppression of basic human rights and disrespect towards other magical creatures is perfectly acceptable.

Because of the softening influence of the conventions of children's literature, it is rather misleading to classify the *Harry Potter* heptalogy as belonging in the dystopian tradition of writing; yet the series clearly lends itself to a dystopian reading. Most importantly, from the point of view of transformative utopianism, the series arguably fulfils the purpose of dystopian literature: it can instigate change. Through Harry, the protagonist, the readers' attention is drawn to the defects of the wizarding world, forcing them to contemplate, alongside Harry, alternative solutions and practices which might lead to improvements in the novels' society. The fact that the Ministry of Magic is organisationally very similar to many real-world governments is likely to help the readers relate these issues to their own societies which, in turn, may ultimately result in a better future for themselves. It could even be argued that *Harry Potter* can achieve this goal more efficiently than classic or YA dystopia, whose worlds are generally too grim for the youngest readers to stomach.

The fantastical elements of the heptalogy may, at times, overshadow the darker, dystopian aspects of life in the wizarding world, but they also broaden the age range of the prospective readership considerably. Indeed, it is likely that the series' popularity among readers of all ages is largely due to its multiple layers of storytelling, with each age group finding different aspects of the books appealing and each reread revealing something new, not just about the characters but also the social and political systems of the wizarding world – and, through that, the real world.

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