Hedwig Fischer

House Sorting in "Harry Potter": A Choice of Stereotypes?

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Contact author at hedwig.fischer@gmx.de.

Zusammenfassung

Innerhalb dieser Arbeit wird der Einfluss des House Sorting, das Einteilen von Schülern in Häusern, in den „Harry Potter"-Romanen von J. K. Rowling untersucht. Es wird die These aufgestellt, dass im Zusammenhang mit den Hogwarts-Häusern Stereotypen gebildet werden, die einer klaren Abtrennung von Gut und Böse dienen und zum Ende der Buchreihe teilweise durchbrochen werden.

Nach einer theoretischen Abhandlung über Stereotypen und ihrer Bildung wird auf die Struktur von Häusern innerhalb der Organisation von Internatsschulen eingegangen. Es wird gezeigt, wie die Häuser im Gleichklang zu britischen Boarding Schools auch im narrativen Text zu einem Gemeinschaftsgefühl, zu Rivalisierungen und zu einer gleichsamen Eintracht und Trennung von Schülern führen.

Im Anschluss wird dargestellt, wie der narrative Text die Einstellungen gegenüber den Hogwarts-Häusern mithilfe von mehreren stilistischen Mitteln manipuliert, steuert und damit Stereotype hervorruft. Durch eine Analyse der Einführung jedes Hauses wird deutlich, wie Slytherin mit Voldemort, faschistischen Ideologien und dem Bösen assoziiert wird, während Gryffindor durch den symbolischen Gegensatz zu Slytherin zum endgültigen Gutem und Rechtmäßigem wird.

Die Entwicklungen ausgesuchter, stereotypisierter Figuren, die sich in entscheidenden Momenten überraschend verhalten, brechen die Stereotype, die zu den Häusern gehören, leicht. Der Schwerpunkt liegt dabei auf Severus Snape und Peter Pettigrew, die mit unterschiedlichen Motivationen die Seite wechseln.

Im Anschluss wird argumentiert, dass die Haus-Stereotypen am Ende der Buchreihe nicht abgelehnt werden, sondern weiterhin innerhalb der Zaubergesellschaft bestehen bleiben. Allerdings ist die Möglichkeit der Wahl ein wiederkehrendes Motiv in „Harry Potter", welches deutlich macht, dass Lebensumstände keinen Einfluss auf moralische Entscheidungen haben.

Summary

This work examines the influence of House Sorting – the act of dividing pupils into school houses – in the "Harry Potter" novels by J. K. Rowling. Within the novels, stereotypes in connection to Hogwarts houses are established. The stereotypes then serve as a clear distinction between good and evil and are partially rejected at the end of the series.

After a theoretical investigation into stereotypes and their development, the work at hand focuses on the structure of houses within the organisation of boarding schools. It is shown how the houses in the narrative text lead to a sense of community and to rivalry among Hogwarts students – thus, similar to British boarding schools, both to unification and separation of students.

Following this, it is outlined how the narrative text manipulates and guides the character's and the reader's attitudes towards the Hogwarts Houses with the help of stylistic means, thereby creating stereotypes. An analysis of the introduction of every house shows how Slytherin is associated with Voldemort, fascists ideologies and evil, while Gryffindor becomes the ultimate good and rightful by its symbolic opposition to Slytherin.

The developments of selected, stereotypical characters who behave surprisingly in moments of choice partially break the stereotypes connected to the houses. The analysis focuses on Severus Snape and Peter Pettigrew who both change sides out of different motivations.

Finally, it is argued that the house stereotypes as such are not rejected at the end of the book series but rather persist within the magical society. However, a recurring motif in "Harry Potter" is the possibility of choice, which shows how personal (living) conditions do not confine moral decisions.

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1   Introduction

In "Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets", Harry Potter voices his doubts about his house sorting: "'[The Sorting Hat] only put me in Gryffindor,' said Harry in a defeated voice, 'because I asked not to go in Slytherin…'" (HP 2 245). Within this small utterance, the book series' approach towards houses is expressed perfectly. The Hogwarts houses are not perceived as equal, in fact, there is a strong, emotional bias against Slytherin – and, overall, personal choice is supremely important.

When orientating ourselves in our world, we usually "do not first see, and then define, we define first and then see. […] [W]e pick out what our culture has already defined for us" (Lippmann 81). The influence of cultural definitions on our perception is especially crucial when it comes to literary works – and it does not spare the best-selling book series in history ("Harry Potter series to be sold as e-books").

"Harry Potter" has been classified as a coming-of-age story, detective story, fairy tale and school story (among others, see Fenske 7). While reasonable explanations have been made for each genre, "Harry Potter" being first and foremost a school story seems obvious at first glance: The main setting is Hogwarts, a boarding school for witches and wizards. Most of the narrative time takes place in the school as Harry and his friends spend most of the year there – within their houses, they learn, eat, relax, socialise, sleep. Houses are a typical element of British school stories. In "Harry Potter", the pupils get assigned one of the houses based on their character traits and values. They unify and separate the students at the same time.

But is there a different, narrative reason for the existence of the Hogwarts houses in "Harry Potter"? By stylistic and dramatic devices, Hogwarts houses are stereotyped. This work will show how that is a very conscious choice of the author in order to establish a black-and-white picture: The thesis is that stereotypical house images in "Harry Potter" initially serve the classification of rivalling characters into good or evil; but those stereotypes are challenged by the characters' contradicting behaviour in plot-turning moments. Additionally, it will be examined how house stereotypes are only limitedly rejected but mainly upheld.

Defining actions which break stereotypes occur mainly in the final volume during the Battle of Hogwarts. In the decisive fight against the antagonist's dominion, many characters are faced with the important question of which side they truly support. Therefore, the main interests of this analysis lie in the differences between house images at the start and at the end of the book series.

In the beginning, key concepts relevant for this work will be presented. After a definition of important literary terms, theories concerning stereotyping as well as examinations of the British house system will be outlined. In the second part, the methods of narrative manipulation used to create the stereotypes associated with the Hogwarts houses will be shown. Then, selected character arcs will be analysed, identifying the rebuttal of various stereotypes. The results of those close readings will be compared to the overall context of the series, followed by a summary and conclusion.

In order to simplify reading, the books will be abbreviated with a number in order of publication. Therefore, HP 1 refers to "Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone" (1997), HP 3 to "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban" (1999) and HP 7 to "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows" (2007).

PART ONE: DEFINITIONS AND THEORIES

The first part presents the theories relevant for this work. Besides definitions concerning 'character' and 'personality', it considers stereotypes from the viewpoint of psychology, social and cultural sciences. In the end, the life in British boarding school houses is examined.

2   Character, Figure, Personality

'Character' is an ambiguous term. Does it refer to a fictional person? To a set of traits? Or to a letter? The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary gives definitions for all of these meanings ("character"). In order to prevent confusion with everyday meanings and their German equivalents, I will define a distinction between how 'character' and 'personality' will be used in this work.

As a literary term, 'character' describes a "narrative agent (= NA), … an individual, human or human-like, of whom actions can be predicted" (Margolin 1983 1–2). While there are other approaches to the term (for an overview see Margolin 1983 2, Neumann and Nünning 52), this work will refer to *character* as an individual or a per-

son in a literary work: "The NA is seen in terms of inner states, mental properties, personality traits …, i.e. individual personality models or personality types." (Margolin 1983 2) 'Figure' will be used synonymously.

Each character is defined by their *personality*, consisting of *(character) traits*. These terms refer to the unity of "properties a character can possess" (Margolin 2007 72). Margolin separates character traits into a physical, a behavioural/communicative and a mental dimension, all of which are equally important (ibid.).

Characters only exist within their fictional time and space and therefore can only be perceived indirectly through textual descriptions (Margolin, "Character," 68). Due to the limitations of literary works, the given characterisations of "textually created characters" are "radically incomplete" (ibid.). Thus, characters are "partially indeterminate (schematic, not fully individuated) and … can be filled in (specified, concretized) in various ways and to different degrees" (68-69). While there are some "highly individualised" characters, others are reduced to "types" with "several general traits" closely connected to "culturally dominant stereotypes" (Neumann and Nünning 53). Thus, a distinction can be made between static and dynamic characters. The character traits of a static character "remain constant" during the narrative; in contrast, "dynamic characters develop in the course of the action" (ibid). It is also interesting to examine who is characterised by whom and in what way. Characterisation can take place explicitly or implicitly and each characteriser is reliable to a different degree.

3   Genette: Narrator and Focalizer

In his narratology "Discourse du récit" (1972), Gérard Genette offers models to define narrative structures and focuses – amongst other things – on the "regulation of narrative information" (Genette 162). He differentiates between narrative voice and narrative perspective (or mood) in order to prevent "regrettable confusion" in earlier classifications (186). Therefore, he separates the question of "who speaks?" from "who sees?" and labels the latter as "focalization" based on the term "focus of narration" (ibid.).

Genette describes three types of focalization. In a "nonfocalized" narrative or a "narrative with zero focalization", the narrator "says more than any of the characters knows" and is omniscient (189). If he says "only what a given character knows", the focalization is "internal" (ibid.). The third type, "external focalization", describes a situation where "the narrator says less than the character knows" (189-90).

In the course of a narration, focalization can change ("variable focalization") and

violates the dominant mood, a process Genette calls "alteration" (194-5). If the reader gets more information than predetermined by the overall focalization, it is called "paralepsis" (195). Examples for paralepsis are expressions of consciousness in an external focalization or a report of thoughts of a non-focal character (197). However, if the reader receives *less* information than necessary, it is "paralipsis". Paralipses are for example caused by leaving out important actions or thoughts during an internal focalization, although both character and narrator are aware of them. This is often the case in detective stories.

Moreover, Genette distinguishes between different kinds of narrators, of "who speaks", based on their narrative levels ("extra- or intradiegetic", 248, cf. 228-9) and participation in the story ("hetero- or homodiegetic", 248). Thus, there are "four basic types of narrator's status" (248): The extradiegetic-heterodiegetic narrator is outside the text's universe and "tells a story he is absent from" (248). The extradiegetic-homodiegetic narrator, however, is present as a character in the story. The intradiegetic-heterodiegetic narrator tells a story (he is not part of) from within the text's universe, framed by the extradiegetic narrative level. And lastly, the intradiegetic-homodiegetic narrator often tells his own story, denoting a story within the text's universe that he is part of.

4 Stereotypes

In every culture, stereotypes and prejudices are common phenomena. They seem to be unalterably connected to human interaction. Stereotypes influence our attention and interpretations and colour our memories and conclusions (Petersen and Six 22). This chapter focuses on explanations of stereotypes by various disciplines. How do stereotypes arise, what are their functions? Is there a way to avoid them?

4.1 Defining Stereotypes

Derived from Greek *stereos* ("firm, solid") and *typos* ("outline, pattern, pressing"), the term "stereotype" first occurred in printing (Petersen and Six 21). Since the late 19th century, the term has existed as a metaphor and found its way into the humanities and other disciplines.

Journalist Walter Lippmann introduced the term into the social sciences. In his work "Public Opinion" (1922), he describes how people are perceived as part of a group instead of individuals. The mismatch between inner perception and outer environment, influenced by our cultural surroundings, was crucial to him: "We are told about the

world before we see it. We imagine most things before we experience them. And those preconceptions … govern deeply the whole process of perception" (Lippmann 91). A culture's definitions of the environment are passed down to individuals. They access the stereotypes in their minds as soon as they "notice a trait [of an observed individual] which marks a well known type", which results in "fill[ing] in the rest of the picture" (89). Those stereotypes represent an image of a world that we see as an universal foundation. The image is neither complete nor corresponding to reality; however, we interpret it as adequate and assimilate to it in such a way that "[a]ny disturbance of the stereotypes seems like an attack upon the foundations of the universe" itself (95).

In 1935, the psychologists Daniel Katz and Kenneth W. Braly published their influential study about "Racial Prejudices and Racial Stereotypes" and defined stereotypes as "a fixed impression, which conforms very little to the facts it pretends to represent" (Katz and Braly 181). Influenced by Lippmann, who wrote that "we define first and then see" (Lippmann 81), Katz and Braly argue as well that stereotypes result from "our defining first and observing second" (Katz and Braly 181).

Over the years, research about stereotypes has taken different directions, focusing on various definitions, aspects and concepts. Based on Lilli's summary of predominant ideas in stereotype research (1982), the tendencies relevant for this work will be pointed out shortly.

One of the most popular viewpoints is the notion of stereotypes as wrongful generalisations (Waldemar Lilli 8). Thereby, they can either be incorrect in direction or extent, e.g. the credited trait of a member of a group can either be fully non-existent or not existent to the asserted degree (ibid). A consequence of this is the distinction from common generalisation by denoting stereotypes as a result of flawed thinking processes (9). Those processes can for example be caused by information from a questionable source like hearsay, rumours or anecdotes (ibid.). Another accepted approach perceives stereotyping as based on the use of categories which I will outline in the next part (4.2 B).

Additionally, researchers have focused on different kinds of stereotypes. Due to the Hogwarts sorting being based on character traits, national and racial stereotypes are less relevant for this work. However, stereotypes based on personality and character as well as ideological stereotypes will play a significant role in Part Two.

4.2   Functions of Stereotyping

Why is stereotyping so appealing? First and foremost, stereotypes make the outer world more accessible. They are both cognitive and social regulation frameworks. How

do psychology and the social sciences explain their formation and function?

A   Cognitive Categorisation

From a psychological point of view, stereotypes can be explained with the help of the basic structures of our cognitive system.

Lilli defines effects of stereotyping as "systematische Urteilsverzerrungen" (124), caused by an overemphasis of differences and similarities in situations of insecurity (13 f.).

Perceptual judgements are reactions to stimuli and are encoded on reference scales in the cognitive system in order to increase the reaction whenever the stimulus is repeated (Lilli 13). To encode stimuli or circumstances distinctively, they are compared to each other on the reference scale (ibid.). The comparison leads to two kinds of overemphases. Either the differences between the stimuli become overemphasised (dichotomisation) or, in the case of a high amount of stimuli or complexity of environment, "komplexitätsreduzierende Orientierungskriterien" or labels are created in order to develop categories (14). In that case, *similarities* between stimuli are emphasised and groups are distinguished (generalisation, ibid.). Both ways of overemphasis – reciprocally connected – can lead to biases in judgement of circumstances (124).

However, it is required that the evaluated property directly relates to the classification or category. Additionally, the classification needs to be emotionally relevant (14). Lilli theorises that emotions are always significant when judging social circumstances (125). Those requirements increase the consistency of judgement. Within the categories, certain contradictions are possible without the need to change the cognitive system: "So kann das Urteil auch bei einer gewissen Widersprüchlichkeit aufrecht erhalten werden." (ibid.) Therefore, the stereotypical judgement stays consistent and safe in the mental system.

B   Social Categorisation and Social Control

On an intergroup level, categorisation and stereotyping can help to simplify a complex, overcharging social environment (Klauer 26).

The general willingness of people to categorise provokes the formation of social categories. Klauer defines social categories as "Gruppen von Menschen, die im sozialen Miteinander häufig zusammengefasst gesehen, diskutiert und bewertet werden" (23). People are separated into in- and out-groups based on characteristic traits or social categories (Petersen and Six 21). With the help of categorisation, it is easier to judge and evaluate lesser known individuals or to interpret ambiguous situations since certain ex-

pectations are connected to each category (Klauer 24).

These expectations have their origins in perceived correlations between two variables – group membership and an observed trait – on the basis of spot checks (Meiser 54). The concluded correlations can exist fully, partially or not at all in reality. Wrongful or contorted correlations are learnt and can induce stereotypical expectations, influencing perception and judgement (ibid). Therefore, "[k]ategoriespezifische Erwartungen" about typical traits and behaviour of group members form "sozial geteilte Wissensstrukturen": Stereotypes (Klauer 23). Usually, the presumptions about group characteristics turn out to be more negative for out-groups than in-groups.

The repetitive use of a category causes increased access to it and eases the use of the respective category (Klauer 26-7). On the one hand, this kind of increased accessibility can be traced back to cognitive effects like priming, where the recent activation of knowledge increases the probability of renewed activation. On the other hand, the significant role of the category in the person's self-perception and world view can lead to its repetitive use (27).

Klauer makes it clear that stereotypes are bound to categories – however, categorisation does not necessarily cause stereotyping, it is merely a condition necessary for channelling perception and judgement (28).

To Pickering, the difference between categories and stereotypes is more essential. He agrees that categories and stereotypes both create "a sense of order" in the world in our minds and the social world respectively (Pickering 2–3). However, only categories remain flexible and disputable. Stereotypes "deny any flexible thinking … in the interests of the structures of power" they long to uphold (3). He thereby addresses a fundamental function of stereotyping: maintaining order and power.

Stereotypes are portrayals of a social group as a homogeneous unit. Its members are "reduced to the characteristic isolated by the stereotype" (Pickering 3). The attribution of a trait taken out of context to every member of the group creates an illusion of accuracy and precision, resulting in the impression of order, certainty and security – "convenient for existing relations of power" (4). Associated characteristics and power relations become "inseparable", as those who are stereotyped are "fixed into a marginal position or subordinate status and judged accordingly" (5). Producing this "sense of fixedness", norms and conventions are upheld and reproduced. In that form, stereotypes function as a way of social control.

4.3   Criticism of Stereotypes: Contradictions and Dilemmas

Besides social control, the concept of stereotypes has been criticised for being contradictory in itself. To Lippmann, the media scene manipulates the public environment so that there is no possibility for an "individualized understanding … between two human beings" without the limitations of types and classifications (Lippmann 76; 88-9). With this dual notion, Lippmann on the one hand claims that stereotypes are a way of processing information, vital for creating sense and order, but on the other hand they are criticisable for "rationalis[ing] prejudice" (Pickering 19).

By commenting on Lippmann's work, Michael Pickering illustrates the dilemma he sees in stereotyping. In a constantly changing world, previously fixed stereotypes become imprecise and able to be modified (Pickering 3). This causes a conflict: It is either possible "to resort to one-sided representations", thereby maintaining order and power structures, "or to allow for a more complex version", endangering superior status (3-4). However, stereotyping tries to "annul the dilemma" it contains and causes, for example when it establishes illusionary accuracy regardless of imprecise referencing (4). Contradictions like these indicate the dilemma of stereotyping and make critical understandings of the matter possible.

4.4   Activating and Controlling Stereotypes

This dilemma becomes explicit when stereotypes and their composition are impugned. If the stereotype is for example challenged due to contradictory observations, a person reflects more or less consciously on a stereotype. In light of the dilemma of stereotypes, there are two possible outcomes: Either the stereotype is maintained or it is consciously suppressed.

In order to comprehend the possible solutions of the dilemma, it is crucial to understand how stereotypes are activated. Stereotyping is an automatic process. Based on information processing research, Devine (1989) defines automatic processes as "involuntary", "unintentional", "spontaneous" and unavoidable (Devine 6). They are bound to a repetitively used, "well-learned set of associations or responses" which are activated by the presence of a stimulus (ibid.). Stereotypes are thus unconsciously and automatically activated responses to a member or symbol connected to the target group. Their activation can directly influence social perception and behaviour (Schmid Mast and Krings 33).

In contrast, controlled processes of information are intentional, flexible and "require the active attention of the individual" (Devine 6). Therefore, they are a valuable

part in "decision making … and the initiation of new behaviours" (ibid.). This is crucial for suppressing an automatically activated stereotype and instead activating a newly created "cognitive structure that represents his or her newer beliefs", thereby consciously initiating new, non-prejudiced responses to stimuli (6-7).

A way of maintaining a stereotype while similarly explaining inconsistent group members, outliers, is the process of subtyping. Those members "who disconfirm, or are at odds with, the group stereotype are … set aside as 'exceptions to the rule'" (Maurer, Park, and Rothbart 812). In that way, the stereotype is protected from change, stays secure and upholds its power. In order to maintain the stereotype and to justify subtyping, people actively search for additional, often pseudo-relevant, information about group members who frequently behave inconsistently (Machunsky 47). Isolating those members from the stereotype leads to a group representation "that does not reflect its actual diversity" (Maurer, Park, and Rothbart 812).

In conclusion, categorisation is a system that benefits us by helping our minds orientate in new surroundings. From categories and flawed thinking processes, stereotypes arise. Seen as an universal foundation, they propose both illusionary accuracy and a dilemma within themselves. Stereotypes deny flexible thinking in order to maintain order and power and suppressing them requires controlled thinking processes.

Within the educational context for example, categorisation of students into houses simplifies every-day school life.

5   House System in Britain

Houses traditionally play a major role in structuring the life at a British public school. While they vary in organization and construction from institution to institution, "practically all the major public schools" group their students in this way (Walford 115).

The house system historically originated from off-campus residences where house owners provided pupils with shelter and food for additional income (Brennan 332). Increasingly taken over by the schools, their profits, masters and pupils became centralised.

In his empirical research about "Life in public school", Walford defines houses as "both a physical building, a grouping of people and an ideology" (69). Today, pupils are not only physically connected to a house for organizational reasons. Due to various mechanisms, they also identify with their house on a personal, emotional and collective level. House members form a tightly-knit community:

> Each house provides a unique environment which, like a castle, is closed to

uninvited guests and regulates itself with its own set of rules, traditions and precedents. The pupil's first loyalty is still usually to his house rather than to his school. (Walford 116-7)

Brennan agrees that houses develop a "strong community climate" (Brennan 332). Houses have their own identity, culture and diversity within the school that students identify with (335). Due to individual support by housemasters as well as due to friend-ships which mostly "still develop from within the houses" (Walford 71), the house sys-tem fights "feelings of anonymity" (Brennan 334) and creates "a sense of belonging within the culture and identity of the school" (335).

The influence of houses is prominent from the start. To Walford, the "influence is so great that it is almost as if the boy joins a house rather than the school" (69). House-masters mostly select their students independently and often interview pupils with their parents before accepting them "into his house, and thereby to the school" (ibid.). The selection is regarded as a "competition with others" and winning "is an honour" along with "a prime responsibility to his own house" (ibid.).

During every-day boarding school life, housemasters are an important contact per-son for the students as they have the "ultimate responsibility for the welfare of those boys" (Walford 118). Housemasters not only supervise their academic success and ex-tra-curricular activities but also stand in contact with parents and impose punishments.

In houses, pupils of mixed age are hierarchically arranged. Originally established to experience responsibilities and leadership, the prefect system serves as a way of pupil self-monitoring. Prefects, older pupils in higher positions, are expected to ensure rule-compliant behaviour and "have the ability, and indeed duty" to give "paltry punish-ments" for minor breach of the rules (50). Additional to school rules, there are house rules, usually about chores (49). Those regulations organise the house as well as create a sense of unity and a self-responsible, dependent collective. As those rights have tradi-tionally been exploited for fagging, "brutality and squalor", there has been a shift to-wards "a closer, more caring and concerned role" of the headmaster since the 1960s (118).

Another mechanism are school-wide competitions: According to Walford, stu-dents compete with each other "practically always under the banner of their houses" (69). These competitions are mainly of sportive nature but can also be artistic and aca-demic. As there are teams for all ages, abilities and sports, every pupil is expected to participate. The awards won are publicly displayed and constantly remind of the com-munity's current success and failure.

Each individual house member is dependent on the collective the same way the collective depends on each individual in turn. Walford concludes that "self-image and peer group pressure" lead "towards a collective strategy" (70). As Brennan puts it, "intimacy and closeness among students and colleagues" is created through those "unified divisions in school, though semantically contradictive" (333).

PART TWO: ANALYSES

The second part of this work focuses on close readings. The theories and concepts outlined in Part One will be applied to the context of "Harry Potter". The way the narrative constructs stereotypes related to Hogwarts' houses by using particular stylistic devices will be shown. It will then be analysed how stereotypically classified characters challenge solidified house images by their choices and conclusions will be drawn.

6   Establishments of Stereotypes

In Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, house sorting vitally influences a student's life directions. However, it also serves as a stereotypical basis for the introduction of characters and the rivalries between them, both within the context of the novels and to the reader. I will analyse the way the Hogwarts houses are described and in what way this establishes stereotypes.

6.1   Influence of Narrative Style

The most prominent stylistic device which transfers magical stereotypes to the reader's mind is certainly the way of narration. It is crucial to analyse who narrates the novels and in what way.

Using Génette's terminology, the narrative of the "Harry Potter" novels is extra-diegetic-heterodiegetic. The narrator neither takes part in the story nor belongs to the text's world. The reader is influences through the focalizer – Harry Potter. His point of view "is dominant throughout the series" (Fenske 34). Fenske describes the connection between Harry and the reader as "intense" (35). The insight into Harry's mind is – compared to other characters – enormous since his impressions are "directly communicated to the reader" (35): "The reader experiences the events through his eyes – Harry's enemies are his, Harry's friends can be trusted" (41). In order to achieve this close connection, free indirect discourse is used additionally which can be described as "a form of narration that entices us into equating Harry's thoughts with our own" (Schanoes 134).

The close connection to Harry's mind strongly influences the reader's impressions of events. Just as Harry is influenced by prejudices, the stylistic devices influence the reader. The use of narration manipulates the reader's sympathy.

6.2   House System in Hogwarts

In Hogwarts, the students are sorted into four houses – Gryffindor, Ravenclaw,

Hufflepuff and Slytherin – based on character traits. This system unifies and separates Hogwarts' students at the same time.

The houses trace back to the four founders of Hogwarts: Godric Gryffindor, Helga Hufflepuff, Rowena Ravenclaw and Salazar Slytherin. Each of "the four greatest witches and wizards of the age" (HP 2 114) created their own house, which only accepts students who fit the "different virtues" the respective founders valued (HP 4 157). To be able to continue the sorting tradition after they passed away, Gryffindor enchanted his wizard's hat to possess intelligence, speech and mind-reading abilities.

This "patched and frayed and extremely dirty" hat (HP 1 87) is still in use when Harry attends Hogwarts. During the House Sorting Ceremony at the beginning of the school year, new students are asked to put on the Sorting Hat, which then announces their house. The hat balances the possibilities precisely and happens to discuss them with the individual student: "Sometimes, Harry noticed, the hat shouted out the house at once, buut at others it took a little while to decide" (HP 1 90), "'Hmm,' said a small voice in his ear." (ibid.) The Sorting Hat takes the student's wishes into account but is firm in always sorting them into a fitting house (HP 4 157).

Houses play a considerable role in organising every-day life in Hogwarts. House mates spent a majority of their time together sharing classes, common rooms, dormitories and dinner tables in the Great Hall (HP 1 85). During Professor McGonagall's introductory speech in "Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone", an emotional connection towards one's house is also established.

Harry's first impression of Professor McGonagall is that she is "not someone to cross" (HP 1 85). With her "very stern face", her words implicitly gain particular weight and reliability. She declares that the houses have "noble" histories, "outstanding" alumni and hopefully, each student "will be a credit" to their house (ibid.). House points are granted for academic "triumphs", deducted for "any rule-breaking" and being "awarded" the "House Cup" for having the most points in the end of the school year is a "great honour" (ibid.). The choice of positive adjectives and nouns connected with success, pride and glory gives the impression of seriousness and significance and stirs up unity and team spirit in light of competition. They create a feeling of responsibility towards one's house since both success and failure are shared by the entire community.

The obligation goes further: McGonagall explains to Harry and the other first-years that "your house will be something like your family within Hogwarts" (ibid.). In fact, it is not unusual for biological families to be separated – for example, the identical twins Parvati and Padma Patil are sorted into different houses (HP 4 154). Old house

members enthusiastically welcome new members with loud cheers, applause and hand-shaking (HP 1 89-91, HP 4 158-60, HP 5 188). The physical and collective house in particular develops into a new family for Harry as he experiences homesickness during the summer holidays (HP 2 8) and feels "home at last" the moment he steps into his dormitory (HP 3 74).

Due to the use of particular stylistic devices in McGonagall's speech, the Hogwarts students are made aware of their commitments to their new family right from the start: Losing points is a way of failing, letting down the entire house, and entails shame and dishonour. During his school years, Harry quite often experiences rejection after losing house points. It happens the first time when he, together with Hermione and Neville, is caught being in the Astronomy tower at night (HP 1, ch. 15). Professor McGonagall, as Gryffindor's housemistress, takes 150 points from their house which quickly makes Harry realise that "they'd ruined any chance Gryffindor had had for the House Cup" (178). Their house mates turn against them and give them the silent treatment:

> From being one of the most popular and admired people at the school, Harry was suddenly the most hated. … The rest of the [Quidditch] team wouldn't speak to Harry during practice, and if they had to speak about him, they called him 'the Seeker'. … nobody would speak to [Hermione and Neville] either. (HP 1 179).

However, when Harry is mainly responsible for Gryffindor winning the Quidditch Cup – and thereby the House Cup as well – in his third year, he is celebrated by his team and house. The Quidditch stadium "exploded" with cheers, applause and yells, the Gryffindor team sinks "tangled together in a many-armed hug" and is soon "hoisted onto the shoulders of the crowd" (HP 3 230). Two years earlier, Professor McGonagall overrides several school rules as she makes Harry Gryffindor's Seeker after seeing him flying unsupervised on a broomstick (HP 1 111-113): "Heaven knows, we need a better team than last year. *Flattened* in that last match by Slytherin, I couldn't look Severus Snape in the face for weeks", she justifies her choices (HP 1 113). When Gryffindor eventually wins, she sobs "harder even than [team captain] Wood, wiping her eyes with an enormous Gryffindor flag" (HP 3 230). Sport competition and house spirits even affect a strict housemaster who does not favour her students in class (HP 1 101).

As the sense of belonging results in "evident peer pressure" (Lavoie 45), the narrative plays with the student's distinct loyalites to their school and their house causing inclusion and exclusion on various levels (Lavoie 44). Competing for the House Cup

through academic achievements, rule-compliant behaviour and Quidditch matches unifies the students of each house. It particularly unifies house members against the other houses. Thus, as the houses create a sense of unity and responsibility for others, they also lead to separation among the students in general. They pick sides at Quidditch matches (HP 3 225), trick students of other houses into losing points (e.g. HP 1 114) and compete against each other in classes.

6.3   Impressions of the Houses

The formation of groups through house sorting creates a strong group mentality. Friendships between houses are rare. Other houses are only rarely perceived as positive rather than inferior. In fact, prejudices against and stereotypes about house membership are established from the very beginning.

In the following part, I will show how specific images and stereotypes of houses are created. In what way does Harry come into contact with them and how does their introduction influence his approach towards the houses? I will mainly concentrate on Gryffindor and Slytherin as those two houses are the ones emotionally closest to Harry. After investigating the way Harry and the reader get to know the two houses for the first time and a short overview of Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff, I will describe the effects of the representations and the specific notions they create.

A   Slytherin

Slytherin is the first house Harry gets to know. He hears about Slytherin for the first time when he meets Draco Malfoy in Diagon Alley (HP 1, 59-61). The off-putting boy develops into an antagonist later on. In this scene, however, they neither know their names nor have been sorted into houses yet. They are neutral to each other.

Draco is explicitly characterised by the narrative as having a "pale, pointed face", a feature which is repeatedly used to describe him (HP 1 59, 61, 81). On the one hand, his paleness gives an unhealthy impression of infection and illness, on the other hand, it symbolises the aristocratic status of his family. His unpleasant outer appearance matches his behaviour. He comes from a wealthy family and is spoiled and materialistic himself: His parents take over a significant part of shopping for school supplies while he is more interested in expensive racing brooms and why he cannot possess one as a first-year (60). He proudly boasts about his Quidditch skills in front of Harry, a (yet) nameless boy Draco has just met. He is bold and supercilious about being sorted into Slytherin, too – "I know I'll be in Slytherin, all our family have been" (ibid.). It is mostly Draco who controls the conversation: He is eager to speak and to express his opinions which is

why he talks more often and longer than Harry. Due to Harry's limited knowledge and Draco's quick follow-up questions, Harry is bound to one-word replies.

This changes slightly when the conversation centrers on Hagrid. While Harry, "pleased to know something the boy didn't", introduces the gamekeeper, Draco exposes himself to be classist (60): Relying on hearsay, he openly disdains Hagrid as a servant and as wild, drunk and untalented (ibid.). By his explicit characterisation of Hagrid, Draco implicitly (and surely unconsciously) characterises himself as arrogant and judge-mental as well as disdainful towards people from a lower class. He behaves tauntingly and does "a slight sneer" when Harry argues that he thinks Hagrid is "brilliant" (ibid.). Furthermore, Draco exposes himself to be racist, too, when he explicitly states that "they shouldn't let … [Muggle-born students] in … . They're just not the same, they've never been brought up to know our ways" (61). Draco's conservative, discriminatory and stereotypical thinking leaves Harry "rather quiet" after their conversation (ibid.). When Harry finally asks Hagrid about Slytherin, the trustworthy and loyal wizard who introduced Harry to the magical world states: "There's not a single witch or wizard who went bad who wasn't in Slytherin. You-Know-Who was one." (61-62). This directly connects Slytherin house to the murderer of Harry's parents and his fascist ideology of pure wizard blood.

Without knowing the character traits of Slytherin house yet, Harry and the reader already get a negative impression of the house. It is Draco's obnoxious and snotty beha-viour as well as the connections to Voldemort that cast a damning light on Slytherin house, establishing Harry's world view.

The rejection of Slytherin is supported by other first-years Harry meets on the train. Wiseacre Hermione expresses her attraction towards Gryffindor and Ravenclaw and Harry's new friend Ron "suppose[s] Ravenclaw *would* [not] be too bad, but imagine if they put me in Slytherin" (HP 1 79-80). When they are visited by Draco and his friends, the negative impression of Draco, and therefore Slytherin house, is evoked once more: Surrounded by Crabbe and Goyle, Draco proves himself once more as disrespect-ful towards the less wealthy Weasley family and "riff-raff like … that Hagrid" (81). He consciously provokes Harry and Ron by insulting their families, claiming their space and promoting pure blood ideology (81-82). Draco is aggressive, ready to fight and ap-pears as violent.

It is interesting to note the appearance of the soon-to-be Slytherins Crabbe and Goyle. Depicting a hierarchy, they shield Draco "like bodyguards" (81) and are "a lot bigger than [Harry] and Ron" (82). In the course of the story, they usually "crack their

knuckles" (HP 1 114), flex their muscles (HP 3 91) and have next to no lines. On top of that, Harry interprets them as "thickset" and "looking extremely mean" (HP 1 81). Lavoie notes how other Slytherins "are menacing" as well (Lavoie 36): The Slytherin Quidditch team goes "for size rather than skill" (HP 3 225), their team captain reminds Harry of a troll (HP 1 136). Millicent Bulstrode is "large and square and her heavy jaw jut[s] aggressively", "a lot bigger" than Harry and has "Hermione in a headlock" during the Duelling Club (HP 2 143-4). Pansy Parkinson not only looks "like a pug" but is also "hard-faced" (HP 3 75, HP 1 110). Lavoie concludes that "[i]n Slytherin, then, the combination of brute strength and cunning find a home" (37) and therefore, Slytherins are "evidently something to be feared" (36). In the development of the story, it becomes clear that Slytherin house is an outsider or, as Lavoie puts it, "separate from the other three houses" (38).

Draco, being unlikeable as a person, coins averseness to Slytherin from the beginning. The house is not only linked to Voldemort, but also brutal. All of this leads to Harry's strong refusal to get sorted into Slytherin (HP 1 91).

B   Gryffindor

Hermione Granger is the first person to mention the existence of Gryffindor house to Harry in the Hogwarts Express (HP 1 79). It turns out that the talkative girl with a "bossy sort of voice" has practised spells before arriving at Hogwarts. Thirsty for knowledge, she not only "got a few extra books for background reading" on the wizardry world but has also "been asking around and I hope I'm in Gryffindor, it sounds by far the best, I hear Dumbledore himself was one" (HP 1 79-60). At this point in the story, Harry has just read about Hogwarts' headmaster as being "the greatest wizard of modern times", a successful magical scientist and an honourable fighter against a Dark magician (HP 1 77). The description of Dumbledore, similar to a lexicon article in style, implicitly and publicly depicts him as an ultimate role model, adding to the reader's positive impression on him in the first chapter.

Gryffindor becomes even more appealing when Harry finds out that the entire family of his newly found friend has been sorted into that house (HP 1 80). Harry meets the Weasley family at King's Cross. In their conversations, they mainly make a positive impression – as a loving, supportive family with a healthy family life, coined by a "fondly" and caring mother (72), siblings teasing and caring for each other (ibid., 73), baulky sons (72) and parental admonishments (73). Their underlying loving behaviour towards each other contrasts with the family life Harry has experienced at Dursleys' so

far. The Weasleys also act supportively and kindly towards the lonely Harry and unhes-
itatingly help him to get to the platform (70) and to lift his trunk onto the train (71).
When it is revealed that he is the famous Harry Potter, the children are fascinated and
star-struck. After Mrs Weasley makes it clear that "the poor boy isn't something you
goggle at in a zoo" (73), she enjoins her children to treat him normally (which they then
do, 74) and expresses her support and fondness towards Harry.

On the train, Harry becomes friends with Ron Weasley. "[T]all, thin and gangling"
(70), Ron eagerly introduces Harry to the magical world. Harry finds Ron "just as inter-
esting as Ron found him" (74) and gladly shares his magical sweets with him – "Harry
… had never had anything to share before or, indeed, anyone to share it with. It was a
nice feeling, sitting there with Ron" (76). They additionally bond over their common
poor childhood (75) and share their sorrows: Ron becomes gloomy when the success of
his elder brothers and the resulting expectations come up (75, 80) and Harry, "voicing
for the first time something that had been worrying him a lot lately", is afraid of having
disadvantages in class. Their interest in each other quickly turns into a common affec-
tion and a friendship grounded in trust and support.

The longtime connection of the empathetic and helpful Weasley family, especially
Ron, to Gryffindor house provides an attraction towards the house. Being praised by the
educated Hermione as well, Gryffindor's importance is made clear from the beginning.

C   Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff

Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff play a comparatively insignificant role in the narrative.
Especially in the first half of the series, Harry rarely deals with Ravenclaws and Huffle-
puffs outside of shared classes or Quidditch matches and has no friends in these houses.

That does not prevent them from being vilified as well. Draco tells Harry he
would leave Hogwarts if he were sorted into Hufflepuff and Hagrid reports that
"[e]veryone says Hufflepuff are a lot o'duffers" – although, "[b]etter Hufflepuff than
Slytherin" (HP 1 60-61). Ravenclaw, on the other side, "wouldn't be too bad" in Hermi-
one and Ron's opinion (HP 1 80).

Within the House Competition, only a minor role is bestowed upon these two
houses as well. Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff tend to get lost in the traditional and extens-
ive competition between Gryffindor and Slytherin. The students pick sides at Quidditch
matches and usually turn against Slytherin: "everyone had been longing to see Slytherin
loosing the House Cup" (HP 1 179), "even Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff were celebrating
the downfall of Slytherin" (HP 1 222), "three quarters of the crowd [at the Quidditch fi-

nale] were wearing scarlet robes, […] two hundred people were wearing green" (HP 3 225). As far as the reader knows, friendships between houses usually form among Gryffindors, Ravenclaws and Hufflepuffs. Neither is there a single Slytherin in Dumbledore's Army (HP 5 301-2). Their unity against Slytherin underlines Hagrid's position that is rather to be simple than "skilled and use that skill badly" (Lavoie 38).

6.4 Gryffindor versus Slytherin and Good versus Evil

The stylistic way Harry and the reader come into contact with each house results in the formation of stereotypical house images. I will outline the connection between the presentation of each house and the ensuing stereotypes in more detail.

Due to the authorial manipulation by explicitly and implicitly stated negative outer appearances, behaviours and moral values of people associated with Slytherin house, there is being made a correlation between being a member of Slytherin and being a supporter of Voldemort's – and therefore on The Bad Side. Hagrid's statement about there not being "a single witch or wizard who went bad who wasn't in Slytherin" (HP 1 61-62) also leads towards the conclusion that everyone "bad" is a Slytherin, too, and, in turn, that Slytherins in general are "bad". The choice of the adjective "bad" also constructs a black-and-white picturing in which it is, in whatever terms, black, dark and terrible. This wrongful generalisation – Hagrid's comment, rationally considered, seems not only mildly exaggerated but is proven to be wrong as the Gryffindor Peter Pettigrew supports Voldemort – relies on a flawed thinking process. Both Harry and the reader only possess limited knowledge and information from hearsay and rumours. Still, the stereotype established in the magical culture is passed down to Harry and the reader, who, driven by emotion, are both ready to accept it as universal foundation. In the course of the story, Slytherin continues to symbolise evil as Death Eaters prove to be sadistic torturers. By creating horcruxes, Voldemort performs "the supreme act of evil" himself (HP 6 465).

Reduction to negative house traits, stressing the ugliness of opponent characters and Slytherins "nearly universal lack of appeal" (Lavoie 38) support the strong bias against Slytherin since the beginning. Lavoie goes so far to say that Slytherins "signally fit to be spat upon" (Lavoie 38).

Slytherin stands in strong contrast with Gryffindor. The two houses are portrayed as two sides of the same coin, contrary parties.

Subtle devices hint at Gryffindor and Slytherin being permanently linked to each other in their opposition, usually favouring Gryffindor: Whenever the houses are listed,

Gryffindor is named first and Slytherin last. Their heraldic animals face each other at the top of the school's coat of arms – Gryffindor's lion is royal, noble; Slytherin's snake is twisted and has a forked tongue. Gryffindor's red is the complementary colour to Slytherin's green. Gryffindor's common room is "in one of the towers", "cosy", "round" and "full of squashy armchairs" (HP 1 96). Slytherin's common room, however, is down in the dungeons, "a long, low underground room with rough stone walls and … greenish lamps" (HP 2 165). The completely opposite locations of the two common rooms in the castle – the only ones protected with a password – depict a clear hierarchy. Apart from other contrasts being shown, this hierarchy is also reinforced by Salazar Slytherin's departure after arguing with Godric Gryffindor about the students' selection (HP 2 114) while Gryffindor grows into something like a leader among the founders.

In the narrative, Gryffindor's opposition to Slytherin starts as a very individual fight and ultimately turns into a broader battle "between good magic and bad magic" (Lavoie 36) influencing the wizarding society as a whole. During his sorting, Harry desperately hopes not to be put into Slytherin ("Not Slytherin, not Slytherin", he repeats like a prayer) whereupon the Sorting Hat puts him into Gryffindor (HP 1 90-91). In the beginning, the rivalry between Gryffindor and Slytherin is merely mirrored in personal rivalries between Harry and Draco or Severus Snape. Since the narration is focalised by Harry, the reader gets heavily influenced by his competitive thinking as well. Soon, however, Gryffindor versus Slytherin becomes an analogy for Good versus Evil. Harry's opponents – Draco, Snape, Voldemort – stand on the dark side and belong to Slytherin while Harry's role models and the people emotionally close to him – his friends, Hagrid, his parents and their friends, Dumbledore – are grouped together as Gryffindors and supporters of The Good Side. The house conflict becomes especially clear in the opposition of Harry and Voldemort since both wizards are the embodiment of their houses. The opposition climaxes in the Chamber of Secrets: Voldemort is the "last remaining descendant of Salazar Slytherin" and Harry, being able to pull the Sword of Gryffindor out of the Sorting Hat, proves himself to be a "true Gryffindor" (HP 2 245). In fact, it is Harry's Gryffindor membership which distinguishes him from Voldermort and makes him superior. Lavoie argues that Harry is made "both the first among equals [within Gryffindor] and an equal among firsts in the best house at the best school in Britain" (Lavoie 46).

In conclusion, Gryffindors are Good. However, they are only good as long as they are opposed to Slytherin. While the image of Slytherin is clearly established through writing style, characters, their constellation and world-building, Gryffindor is depicted

comparatively little. The image of Gryffindor's righteousness only exists in the way it does because the narrative heavily contrasts Gryffindor with Slytherin and analogously, Harry's friends with his enemies. Slytherin's promoted evilness is what ultimately makes Gryffindor good.

Originally meant to organise every-day school life in the fictional world, categorisation into groups based on houses helps Harry and the reader to orient themselves in the new and complex magical world and the evolving war. However, the houses tend to be rather associated with exaggerated impressions than their true traits from the very beginning. On the diegetic level, stereotypes that influence the reader's perception are also constructed by authorial manipulation. Culturally coined definitions of seemingly homogeneous groups based on wrongful generalisations are passed down to individuals in order to uphold norms and conventions. Narratively manipulated generalisations present Slytherins as evil while binary oppositions construct Gryffindor as ultimately good.

6.5 Trying to Define The Houses' Actual Traits

Having identified the stereotypes connected to the houses of Hogwarts raises the question which characteristics the respective house members' personalities were initially based on. In search of their true traits, the songs of the Sorting Hat seem to be suited for an analysis. Before the actual sorting, the Hat introduces each house, describes historical events or hands out advice in a song. During his school days, Harry experiences three songs.

The Sorting Hat refers to Gryffindor first:

> You might belong in Gryffindor,
> Where dwell the brave at heart,
> Their daring, nerve and chivalry,
> Set Gryffindors apart. (HP 1 88)

> Bold Gryffindor …
> By Gryffindor, the bravest were
> Prized far beyond the rest; … (HP 4 156-7)

> Said Gryffindor, 'We'll teach all those
> With brave deeds to their name,' …
> While the bravest and the boldest
> Went to daring Gryffindor. (HP 5 185)

The recurring traits connected to Gryffindor are bravery and courage, the "quality of mind which shows itself in facing danger without fear or shrinking" ("courage," Entry 4). They are daring and bold. The phrase "Prized far beyond the rest" and "chivalry" used to describe them connects them to glory and success.

Slytherin's traits are described quite differently:

> Or perhaps in Slytherin
>
> You'll make your real friends,
>
> Those cunning folk use any means
>
> To achieve their ends. (HP 1 88)

> Shrewd Slytherin …
>
> And power-hungry Slytherin
>
> Loved those of great ambition. (HP 4 157)

> Said Slytherin, 'We'll teach just those
>
> Whose ancestry is purest.' …
>
> For instance, Slytherin
>
> Took only pure-blood wizards
>
> Of great cunning, just like him … (HP 5 185)

The description of Slytherin is marked by the use of negative phrases. While "use any means / To achieve their ends" can be interpreted positively, it denotes unreliability, unethical and immoral behaviour, dishonesty and even treachery in combination with "cunning". Slytherin's founder is characterised as "shrewd" and "power-hungry" and an emphasis is put on his pure-blood ideology. His opposition to Gryffindor becomes distinct.

Hufflepuffs are "just and loyal", "patient", "unafraid of toil" (HP 1 88), "hard workers" (HP 4 157) and tolerant (HP 5 185). Ravenclaws appreciate "wit and learning" (HP 1 88), are "the cleverest" (HP 4 157) and have "the sharpest minds" (HP 5 185).

It becomes clear how the seemingly neutral medium, the Sorting Hat, is not neutral at all when it comes to Hogwart's houses. Its bias against Slytherin may be rooted in the physical connection to the head and mind of its owner. These "pseudo-neutral statements" (Fenske 41) influence Harry's perceptions and therefore also the reader's.

In 2012, J. K. Rowling launched Pottermore, an online "digital publishing, e-commerce, entertainment and news company" where she publishes "new and previously unreleased writing" ("About us"). The texts contain information on the wizarding world

not mentioned in the books and belong to the canon in an individual way. On the website, Gryffindor is described to cherish "courage, bravery and determination" ("Gryffindor"), Slytherin "produces more than its share of Dark wizards, but also turns out leaders who are proud, ambitious and cunning ("Slytherin"), Ravenclaws "prize wit, learning, and wisdom" ("Ravenclaw") and Hufflepuffs "value hard work, patience, loyalty, and fair play" ("Hufflepuff"). Pottermore's definition of Slytherin behaviour sounds less biased.

As working definitions of the actual house traits, Gryffindors are thus willing to face dangerous and problematic situations without dread, although the honourable chivalry can turn into hot-blooded daring. Slytherins, while being connected to Dark Magic and Voldemort, are ambitious and use their shrewd intellect to serve their own interests. Ravenclaws use their wit to gain wisdom, Hufflepuffs are dutiful and lawful workers.

In opposition, the stereotypical images connected to the houses depict Gryffindor's traits positively as the Good people, brave and honourable. Slytherins are reduced to their link to Voldemort and his facist ideology and their ambition is reduced to a negative trait. Ravenclaws are merely perceived as smart and clever while Hufflepuff's loyalty and perseverance remains unconsidered. While all houses are stereotyped, Slytherin has by far the most negative connotation.

7   Challenging Stereotypes

Over the course of the series, the stereotypes attached to Hogwarts houses are partially broken. At important turning points, characters act in ways that are inconsistent with their assigned stereotype and thereby surprise the reader. As Dumbledore puts it, "It is our choices … that show what we truly are" (HP 2 245). In the following, it will be shown how the choices of selected characters considerably change their image.

Severus Snape's portrayal is probably the most inverted in the novels. His nasty, suspicious evilness is turned upside down when Harry finds out about Snape's true intentions during the Battle of Hogwarts. In the moment of decision, other Slytherins like Narcissa Malfoy, Regulus Black, Andromeda Tonks and Horace Slughorn make up their mind and each challenge Slytherin stereotypes. The utter personifications of evil, racism and cunning need to be reinterpreted. However, a character like Peter Pettigrew overturns the equivalence of being a Gryffindor and being Good.

Each character will be analysed according to their initial portrayal, their implementation of stereotypes, their choices and the ensuing destruction of stereotypes. The focus, however, lies on Severus Snape and Peter Pettigrew.

7.1   Severus Snape: The Good Slytherin

A   Hating Harry: "Snivellus", the Archenemy

Severus Snape is described by the narrator as having "greasy black hair, a hooked nose and sallow skin" (HP 1 94). During Harry's first start-of-the-term feast, they share a quick look: "The hook-nosed teacher looked past Quirrell's turban straight into Harry's eyes – and a sharp, hot pain shot across the scar on Harry's forehead." (ibid.) At this point, it is unknown that the reason for Harry's pain is Voldemort beneath Quirrell's turban but the effect is strong nevertheless: From the moment Snape and Harry make eye contact with each other, Snape is connected with physical pain in the wound Voldemort gave him. Harry asks Percy about Snape: "He teaches Potions, but he doesn't want to – everyone knows he's after Quirrell's job. Knows an awful lot about the Dark Arts, Snape." (ibid.) The first interaction between Harry and Snape is non-verbal but nevertheless shapes the impression of the Potions teacher significantly. Next to the repellening narrative description of his outer appearance, he sympathises with bad magic and causes pain.

Prior to their first potion lesson together with Slytherin, Ron tells Harry that "Snape's Head of Slytherin house. They say he always favours them" (HP 1 101). The reader is told that "the Potions lesson turned out to be the worst thing that had happened to [Harry] so far" and that "Snape didn't dislike Harry – he *hated* him" (ibid.). Together with the cold and creepy Potion's classroom, the explicit judgements set the mood for the entire scene.

Snape's black eyes have "none of Hagrid's warmth", in fact, they are "cold and empty and made you think of dark tunnels" (102). He sweeps through the classroom like a bat, wearing a "long black cloak" (103). Snidely, he calls Harry "our new – *celebrity*" (101). After a dramatic and poetic speech about the "subtle science and exact art of potion-making" (102), Snape asks Harry detailed questions he cannot answer. He continues to push Harry while ignoring Hermione's raised hand and takes a point from Gryffindor "for your cheek, Potter" (103). During the lesson, it turns out that Snape does, in fact, favour some of his students: He criticises "almost everyone except Malfoy, whom he seemed to like", snarls at Neville for spilling potion and calls him "'Idiot boy!'" (ibid.). He vents his wrath on Harry whom he accuses of not helping Neville: "'Thought he'd make you look good if he got it wrong, did you? That's another point you've lost for Gryffindor.'" (104)

Snape is an accurate potion teacher but unfair, aggressive, cruel and malicious

when it comes to his students. The explicit description of his outer appearance not only depicts him as repulsive but also literally portrays his darkness, i.e. Dark Magic. Additionally, he gladly abuses the power he has as a teacher. He bullies Hermione, Neville and other Gryffindor students inside and outside his classes through the years – to the extent that Neville's Boggart, the thing which "will frighten us most" (HP 3 101), does not take the shape of his parents' torturers but the one of his teacher, Snape (103). Oppositionally, he continuously favours Slytherins, especially Malfoy: He comments on Harry for Malfoy and the Slytherins to laugh at (e.g. HP 1 101-2), overrules Gryffindor's booking of the Quidditch pitch (HP 2 85) and overlooks Slytherin misbehaviour (e.g. HP 4 262-3). Snape's unjust behaviour creates a frustrating feeling "of utter helplessness under an arbitrary higher authority" (Wolosky 42).

Snape has a particular negative attitude towards Harry. He takes points from Gryffindor and blames Harry, who later tells Hagrid that Snape "seemed to really *hate* me" (HP 1 105). Snape shows his disapproval of Harry whenever he is able to. Harry learns that Snape was in the same year as Harry's father James and his friends. Remus Lupin recalls: "we – er – didn't like each other very much. He especially disliked James. Jealous, I think, of James' talent on the Quidditch pitch …" (HP 3 261). Sirius Black later explains that "James and Snape hated each other from the moment they set eyes on each other" (HP 5 590) and in "Snape's worst memory", Harry experiences from a non-participating, third person point of view how his father taunts, torments and humiliates Snape in public (HP 5 569-571). Snape repetitively compares Harry to James and complains about their common dishonourable behaviour, grandiloquent popularity and unsubstantiated success, for example:

> "How extraordinarily like your father you are, Potter … He, too, was exceedingly arrogant. A small amount of talent on the Quidditch pitch made him think he was a cut above the rest of us, too. Strutting around the place with his friends and admirers … the resemblance between you is uncanny." (HP 3 209)

It thus becomes clear how Snape is neither able to get over juvenile hassle nor distinguish Harry from James. Harry, bearing a striking similarity to James ("Yeh look a lot like yer dad" – Hagrid, HP 1 39) and constantly reminding Snape of him, is equated with his father. Snape also projects the aggressive hate he feels towards James onto Harry, who, in turn, develops a similar resentment from the start. "You are determined to hate him, Harry … And I understand, with James as your father, … you have inherited an old prejudice", Remus Lupin perceives years later (HP 6 312).

Additionally, Snape behaves suspiciously. He is not with the other teachers fighting against an intruding troll but heads for the forbidden third floor instead (HP 1 128). Harry finds out Snape has been hurt by the three-headed guard dog there (134). From that, he concludes that Snape is "after whatever it's guarding! And I'd bet my broomstick *he* let that troll in, to create a diversion!" (135). During Harry's first Quidditch match, Harry loses control over his broom. Hagrid says: "Can't nothing interfere with a broomstick except powerful Dark Magic … ." (140) Ron and Hermione, who notice Snape fixating on Harry and murmuring, assume that he jinxes Harry's broom and distract him by putting his robes on fire (ibid.). After the match, they tell Harry, "It was Snape … Hermione and I saw him. He was cursing your broomstick, muttering, he wouldn't take his eyes off you" (141). The idea of Snape as a villain is further settled when Harry overhears Snape threatening Quirrell in the Forbidden Forest:

> "Have you found out how to get past that beast of Hagrid's yet? … You don't want me as your enemy, Quirrell," said Snape, taking a step towards him. … "– your little bit of hocus pocus. I'm waiting. … We'll have another little chat soon, when you've … decided where your loyalties lie." (HP 1 166)

Excitedly, Harry later tells Ron and Hermione that "'Snape's trying to force Quirrell to help him get it'" (ibid.). Besides Snape's strong interest in the Dark Arts, the reader is led to doubt Snape further throughout the series: He plots against Lupin (HP 3 253), has been a Death Eater (HP 4 513), murders Dumbledore (HP 6 556) and becomes headmaster after his death (HP 7 186).

However, most of his actions turn out to be ambiguous. Once Quirrell is revealed to be the true villain, Snape's doings confusingly appear in a different light. The treasonous actions he is accused of by Harry and his friends are actually carried out by Quirrell. Snape, though, "'suspected [Quirrell] all along'", spies on him and confronts him (HP 1 210). Thus, their conversation in the forest can be interpreted quite differently: "'He was … trying to find out how far I'd got … [and] to frighten me'", Quirrell remembers (ibid.). Furthermore, Snape tries to save Harry on his uncontrollable broomstick, mutters counter-curses and referees the next Quidditch match (HP 1 208).

After Voldemort's resurrection, Snape becomes a double agent, giving "top-secret" reports to Dumbledore's Order of the Phoenix (HP 5 67). His actual position, however, remains unclear. Few members of the resistance are able to relate to Snape's involvement but it is usually Dumbledore's trust in Snape that makes them believe in Snape's good intentions as well: "'Dumbledore trusts him, he works for the Order, that ought to be enough'", Hermione argues (HP 5 489-90) and Lupin makes clear that it "comes

down to whether or not you trust Dumbledore's judgement. I do; therefore, I trust Severus" (HP 6 311). Harry and Ron stubbornly remain sceptical; Ron believes that Snape "used to be a Death Eater … And we've never seen proof that he *really* swapped sides" (HP 5 490), while Harry remarks, "just say – just say Dumbledore's wrong about Snape – …" (HP 6 311). During a scene where Harry is absent, the reader is presented with additional reasons for doubt, as Snape tells Bellatrix Lestrange how he continues to be Voldemort's spy and vows to commit the murder of Dumbledore (HP 6 33-41).

With Snape's continuing ambiguous behaviour, it remains uncertain whether he acts for Dumbledore or Voldemort, The Good or The Bad Side. "Is he a Death Eater in the Order of the Phoenix or a member of the Order posing as a Death Eater?", Wolosky writes about Snape's double role (Wolosky 120). Using free indirect discourse, clever withholding of information, devaluating character descriptions and rash, stereotypical conclusions, Rowling manipulates the reader to believe that Snape is an evil character. His behaviour can be interpreted as both good or evil but, just like Harry, the reader has a "*desire* for Snape to be evil" (Schanoes 134).

B   Loving Lily: "Sev", the Redeemed

Snape is killed by Voldemort during the Battle of Hogwarts so he can master the Elder Wand (HP 7 527-8). Harry, under the Invisibility Cloak, is present at his death and during his last moments alive, Snape gives Harry a collection of memories (528). Snape's memories have considerable impact on the mysteries of both Snape's and Harry's life. Due to the fact that Snape gives them to Harry after his brutal, cold-hearted and deadly injury, they gain significant meaning and reliability, which they most likely would not have if Snape had talked to Harry directly.

Harry learns that Snape and his mother are friends during their childhood and school years (533). Snape's deep interest in Lily turns into love – he looks at her with greed several times, comforts her and smiles when she says his name (532-535). Although Lily openly rejects his devotion to the Dark Arts, he interprets James' popularity and interest in Lily as threat, as a direct cause of loosing her (HP 7 541). He accuses the Marauders of secretive rule-breaking, flaunting and arrogance (ibid.). The rivalry with James is the source of his hatred towards him. However, it is Snape's fascist ideology which causes Lily to break contact with him: "'You've chosen your way, I've chosen mine. … you call everyone of my birth Mudblood, Severus. Why should I be any different?'" (542)

Lily stays "the only love he ever experienced" (Wolosky 124). Hate against

Harry's father clashes with love towards Harry's mother and supporting Voldemort clashes with worshipping Lily. He witnesses the Prophecy about "*the one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord*" (HP 5 741). His loyalty to Voldemort forces him to betray Lily. By her merciless death, Voldemort creates a renegade, underestimating the power of Snape's love. Snape, unable to trust Voldemort and deeply hurt, stops being loyal, turns against his leader and changes sides (HP 7 543). Out of his love, he even becomes the protector of Voldemort's ultimate opponent, Harry, in order to "make sure [Lily's death] was not in vain" (544).

And it is this promise which resolves doubts and questions about Snape: He stands on the Good Side. He guards Harry out of love for his mother. Snape becomes a member of the Order of the Phoenix and protects its members numerous times. He acts as a spy for Dumbledore, lies to Bellatrix about his true intentions, helps Harry to find the Sword of Gryffindor (552-3); even the murder of Dumbledore turns out to have been planned in advance and is "hence not an act of base betrayal but rather of painful obedience" (Wolosky 72). In the end, he gives Harry what he needs to hear through his memories and thus helps Harry to face Voldemort in the Forbidden Forest, resulting in destroying the piece of Voldemort's soul in Harry's body (HP 7 550-1). Through his love for Lily, Snape acts not only acts for her, but also for her son Harry, for Dumbledore and ultimately for the Good Side.

It turns out that Snape is, in fact, not at all the coward he keeps being characterised as through the books (e.g. HP 7 482). He is a hero. Dumbledore does not "underestimate the constant danger" in which Snape puts himself by being a double agent (HP 4 549) and the headmaster tells him, "You are a braver man by far than Igor Karkaroff" who plans to flee from Voldemort (545).

Snape's arc forces the reader to reconsider the definitions of good and evil. It shows how "a man may … humiliate us and yet be a hero" and expresses the need of distinguishing "between subjective hatred and objective evil" (Schanoes 132). Some of Snape's actions have been misread, influenced by limited knowledge, stereotypical conclusions and authorial manipulations. Ultimately, Snape does good things and fights for the Good Side. He is a hero capable of love and this ability not only considerably distinguishes him from Voldemort, but also humanises him and creates sympathies. Harry eventually redeems Snape. He names his second child after him and tells young Albus Severus: "'You were named for two headmasters of Hogwarts. One of them was a Slytherin and he was probably the bravest man I ever knew.'" (HP 7 607) Snape's character arc eventually breaks the stereotype that Slytherin equates evil.

While the narrative gives Snape his redemption, his cruelty in certain context cannot be justified. His love and devotion for Lily fail to influence his personal development in general; his personality stays filled with hatred and selfishness. He gives the impression of an adult who replicates and incites unhealthy house competition, continues to pass down stereotypes to younger generations and is stuck in his past and personal teenage quarrels that he cannot seem to get over. He uses his authoritarian position to his advantage, is a sadistic bully to his students and inventor of harmful Dark Magic spells (Sectumsempra). Snape's obsession with Lily is all the more so alarming and does not excuse his tyrannical behaviour towards Harry. Loving Lily is what saves Snape from being a full Death Eater but it is an "exclusive love" (Wolosky 125). In everything he does, he only cares for Lily, not Harry nor her husband. He worries about Lily's safety first and mourns only her death, although he is responsible for James' and Harry's fate just as much: "They can die, as long as you have what you want?", Dumbledore asks disdainful (HP 7 544). Protecting Harry has nothing to do with Harry himself or fighting Voldemort; in the end, Lily is still the reason for Snape's actions "after all this time" (551-2). It remains a selfish move and this selfishness is what identifies him as Slytherin in the end.

Snape stays a morally bad figure: biased, bigoted and cruel, but also a figure who *chooses* the Good Side and does some things in a Good way. The narrative changes its stance on Snape when his multidimensional but static character is exposed. While Snape shows that Slytherins are not fundamentally evil, being credited with the most defining feature of Gryffindors – bravery – several times, is like a legitimation of a hero.

7.2   Pure Nobility Caught in Dilemma

There are other, minor Slytherin characters who surprise the reader with their good actions. I shortly want to focus on four biographies.

"The Noble and Most Ancient House of Black" is a widely spread family of pureblood wizards who promote "the purification of the wizarding race" (HP 5 103-4). Many family members are Slytherins, sympathise with Voldemort and become Death Eaters.

Regulus Black, Sirius' brother, is susceptible to the fascist ideology of his parents. Proud of his origin, he decorates his room with Slytherin colours and the Black family crest (HP 7 154-5). Information on Regulus is limited, Harry merely accesses it through the memories of his brother Sirius, who hated him, and his house elf Kreacher, who adored him. Untangling each of their biases, a differentiated picture arises. Sirius recalls

how Regulus has joined Voldemort at sixteen, "so proud, so happy to serve" (HP 7 159). Regulus seems to be just another enthusiastic Death Eater. Kreacher, however, reveals unknown developments. When Voldemort uses Kreacher to hide his locket with a piece of his soul in the cavern, Regulus finds out about his Horcruxes and decides to destroy them (HP 6 569). Regulus turns against his master, changes sides in secret and sacrifices his life for the greater good.

The fate of three Black sisters is particularly interesting. Having grown up together, Bellatrix and Narcissa Black "made lovely, respectable pure-blood marriages"; their sister Andromeda, however, is dishonoured and disowned due to her marriage to a Muggle-born wizard (105). Andromeda fights with her husband and daughter on the side of resistance and helps Harry to flee Privet Drive (HP 7 58-61).

While Bellatrix becomes a manic votary of Voldemort's and a dedicated Death Eater herself, Narcissa supports her husband, Lucius Malfoy, as Voldemort's follower. Harry gets to know her as Draco's arrogant, cold and proud mother who values racist ideals and hierarchical thinking (HP 4 91-92). This impression changes partly when she begs Snape to protect Draco from Voldemort's revenge for Lucius' failure (HP 6 ch. 2). She is desperate, cries and breaks down in light of the imminent loss of her son in addition to her husband's imprisonment. The love for her child drives Narcissa to betray Voldemort. After Voldemort's and Harry's duel in the Forbidden Forest, she is asked to check whether Harry is dead. She is able to feel Harry's heartbeat and takes the chance to ask him: "*'Is Draco alive? Is he in the castle?'* The whisper was barely audible … . *'Yes'*, he breathed back." (HP 7 581)

Fearing for her son's life but still obliged to Voldemort's orders, Narcissa knows Harry needs to be dead for Voldemort to move to the castle. Not caring about Voldemort's victory any more, she gives Harry another chance. By declaring Harry dead, the opposing Slytherin acts for the Good side.

Horace Slughorn is a less arrogant Slytherin when Harry meets him (HP 6 ch. 4). He actually hides from the Death Eater's tyranny but is still a prejudiced, racist, self-centred networker: "Your mother was Muggle-born, of course. Couldn't believe it when I found out. Thought she must have been pure-blood, she was so good" (HP 6 71). Harry does not know "whether he liked Slughorn or not" (75). During the Battle of Hogwarts, Slughorn has to take a side as the new Slytherin housemaster. "The time has come for Slytherin House to decide upon its loyalties", McGonagall demands, and spluttering Slughorn is "aghast" at her accusation that Slytherin students could "sabotage" the resistance (HP 7 484). While Slytherin house collectively leaves the school

(491), Slughorn is later seen fighting against Voldemort together with McGonagall and Kingsley Shacklebolt (589). Having comes back with some students, he opposes Voldemort and his Death Eaters and fights with Harry.

The presented Slytherin characters act in contrast to their stereotype. In the course of action, their behaviour disproves the correlations between being Slytherins and evil, racist or a follower of Voldemort's and contributes to a Slytherin image closer to reality. At the same time, the characters stay ambitious Slytherins serving their own interests.

7.3   Peter Pettigrew: Backstabbing Coward

There certainly are characters who followed Voldemort initially but acted against him in crucial moments. There are other biographies, however, where defection and betrayal goes into the other direction. Peter Pettigrew doubles Severus Snape as renegade while contrasting him as honourless spy at the same time.

A   Dying a Hero's Death

Peter Pettigrew is introduced as the hero who defeated Sirius Black at the end of Voldemort's first reign. At the beginning of the third book, Sirius is described as one of the biggest followers of Voldemort's, obsessed with killing Harry. Under his Invisibility Cloak, Harry overhears a conversation between Hogwarts teachers, the Minister of Magic and landlady Madam Rosmerta. Unaware of Harry's presence, they tell Madam Rosmerta of the friendship between Sirius and Harry's parents, Sirius' unknown double agency and the ensuing betrayal of revealing the Potters' hiding place to Voldemort (HP 3 151-154). The reason for Sirius finally being captured and imprisoned is Peter Pettigrew.

The adults remember Peter as a "little" and "fat" tag-along who "hero-worshipped Black and Potter" but is not as talented as them (154). In their story, Peter goes after Sirius after the Potters' death, "maddened by grief", "foolish", "hopeless at duelling" (ibid). Their short duel results in the death of twelve Muggles and

> '… a crater in the middle of the street, so deep it had cracked the sewer below. Bodies everywhere. Muggles screaming. And Black standing there laughing, with what was left of Pettigrew in front of him … a heap of blood-stained robes and a few – a few fragments –' (155)

In fact, his right middle finger is the only thing left of Peter and he is declared dead. He receives high honours and, even twelve years later, is still remembered for dying "a hero's death" (154).

Peter is characterised by his former teachers and authority figures after his

passing. While they establish Sirius as cruel and cold enemy, Peter appears as chary, si-
lent friend. He shows surprising self-confidence and loyalty to his righteous friends by
attacking an immoral companion. He is a courageous, yet untalented martyr to whom
injustice has been done to earlier.

B   Living a Fraud's Life

Peter's image changes soon, however. By the end of the book, it is revealed that
Peter has not died but but escaped by transforming into a rat and spent twelve years as
Ron's pet, Scabbers. Exposed by Sirius and Remus, it becomes clear what really has
happened during the days of Voldemort's first downfall: Peter is the traitor among the
Order of the Phoenix and has given the Potters' hiding place away. His confrontation
with Sirius seems to have occurred differently as well:

> 'Just before he transformed [Peter cut a finger off himself]', said Black.
> 'When I cornered him, he yelled for the whole street to hear that I'd betrayed
> Lily and James. Then, before I could curse him, he blew apart the street with
> the wand behind his back …' (HP 3 266)

Pretending to be dead and living as pet in a wizard family, Peter hides from Death
Eaters who believe him to be responsible for Voldemort's fall (270). Sirius additionally
accuses him of being an opportunist: "When did I ever sneak around people who were
stronger and more powerful than myself? But you, Peter … you always liked big friends
who'd look after you, didn't you?" (271) His fascination with the talented, good-looking,
funny and daring Sirius and James is what makes him become friends with them in the
first place. When he becomes aware of Voldemort's unstoppable rise to power, he sees
more advantages for himself on the dark side and defects to the enemy. He is not loyal
to one side at all but only to the one he chooses at a particular moment.

The exposed Peter still strongly resembles a rat with "his pointed nose, his very
small, watery eyes" (269). He tries to endear himself, invents excuses and finally begs,
whines and pleads for mercy. He gives the impression of being weak and anxious, in-
spiring "pity and disgust at the same time" (Fenkse 258). Harry believes Sirius and Re-
mus but decides to spare Peter's life so that they do not become murderers themselves
(HP 3 275). Peter, however, manages to escape again (279) and joins Voldemort once
more.

He plays a crucial part in Voldemort's resurrection and executes the ritual. Ruth-
lessly devoted to Voldemort, Peter sacrifices his own right hand and receives a silver
prosthesis as a reward (HP 4 556; 563). Yet even Voldemort does not trust him: "'Worth-

less and traitorous as you are … May your loyalty never waver again, Wormtail'" (563). During Voldemort's reign, he stays on a low hierarchy level and performs tasks of a servant and jailer (HP 6 29; HP 7 380).

Peter is killed in Malfoy Manor's dungeon cell. When strangling the captured Harry, Harry confronts him with the fact that Peter owes him his life. In a short moment of merciful hesitation, Peter loses control of his silver hand and it closes around his own throat (HP 7 380-1). Peter has to pay a horrible price for his disloyal fickleness.

Peter turns out to be a wizard more competent than initially thought. The assumptions of Hogwarts teachers about Peter are merely based on their limited knowledge. Peter is able to fool the whole wizarding world and is magically talented enough to turn into an Animagus and perform Voldemort's rebirth. His ability to fearlessly cut off parts of his own body when the situation requires it makes him unpredictable and dangerous. He is not the hero he is remembered as; he betrayed Harry's parents and is weak and sneaky in searching for the strongest around him to protect him. Cowardly, he switches sides when the situation becomes too dangerous for him. Despite that, the hesitation during strangling Harry can be read as a honourable, merciful move.

All in all, however, Peter stands on Voldemort's side. Growing up with the other Marauders, fascinated by their bravery and boldness, he starts off as a fighter against Voldemort. He becomes a spy for the Dark Lord because he senses more advantages on his side and stays with him out of fear of his old friends. Initially thought to be a devoted Gryffindor, he shamelessly turns to Voldemort and supports his evil doings.

In addition to Peter, there are others who seem to be standing on the Good Side entirely but have performed questionable actions in their youth. Albus Dumbledore, wise and omniscient mentor, has longed for the repression of Muggles and to master the Deathly Hallows in his youth (HP 7 291; 571). Realising that power is his temptation, he refuses to rule over anything apart from Hogwarts (575). Sirius and James are rowdy, reckless troublemakers at school but manage to grow out of it and to become good people in opposing Voldemort vigorously.

Peter Pettigrew is the nearly unique example of a Gryffindor turning bad. However, his arc as well as the questionable actions of other Gryffindors illustrate how not every Gryffindor is ultimately good, brave and honourable. The characters selected for the analysis illustrate how Slytherins are no homogeneous unit either. In the beginning, all three dimensions of their respective personality – physical, behavioural, mental – appear in a negative light. Slytherins are mostly ugly, threatening, showcase unfair behaviour and preserve racist and fascist ideals. The rest of the picture is filled in. Paralipses

are used for manipulative guidance. The selected examples, however, are faced with a decision upon which they either perform good actions or lose their fascist beliefs. Their change challenges the idea of Slytherins as evil.

PART THREE: CONSEQUENCES

Finally, the findings of the analyses will be summarised and concluded. It will be examined if house representations are lastingly diverse and the importance of multi-dimensional personalities as well as the power of choice will be addressed. The conclusion provides an overview and reviews the thesis.

8   Silent Salvation

Within the seven books, most characters are presented as types, clearly classified as belonging either to the good or bad side. Usually, the classifications are triggered by specific house membership. Yet, there are several situations in which characters show different aspects of themselves and surprise with their change of sides, whether it may be small or permanent. But are they redeemed in the end? Do Slytherins remain evil by default?

After Voldemort's final passing, Slytherins get some redemption. Harry does not see them as fundamentally evil and dispels his son's (and the reader's) worries about being sorted into Slytherin: "It doesn't matter to us, Al." (HP 7 607). Harry's new image is closer to the complex reality. Yet, the redemption stays small and implicit. While Harry may suppress the stereotype with a controlled thinking process, Ron teasingly interrupts their children's house discussion with "'If you're not in Gryffindor, we'll disinherit you'" (605). He most likely considers inconsistent Slytherin behaviour to be an exception to the rule. He is unwilling to give up the order and power created the stereotype creates and thereby secures it. Harry's and Ron's children are aware of the negative associations connected to the house which shows that the convention of Slytherin as undesirable house is upheld within the wizarding society.

Slytherins are judged as a whole group that is on the wrong side by default and when they do not live up to these expectations, they are seen as exceptions. Gryffindors stay popular. No character fundamentally changes their character traits, surprising actions of Slytherins stay ambitious and selfish and the ones of Gryffindors can freely be interpreted as brave.

Therefore, the narrative only partly and slightly breaks with stereotypes.

9   Personality, Fate and Choice

Two decades after Voldemort's death, the stereotypes connected to each house seem more solidified than rejected. It shows how they are still seen as universal foundation, helping to judge lesser known individuals but lacking adequate representation of the story's reality.

The houses serve as distinction between good and evil. They bring the distinction to a personal and omnipresent level within the wizarding world. Wrongful generalisations based on limited or questionable information, personal empathies and unattractive outer appearances create biases. Within the narrative text, the representations of the four houses are not neutral, either. In fact, the stereotypes of the characters are transferred to the reader with the help of the effect of free indirect discourse. Additional stylistic devices like paralipses or pseudo-neutral statements are consciously used to influence judgements and guide thoughts. Intentionally placed associations lead to an assumed correlation between house membership and political orientation.

Without thought, the connections are adopted as facts. Houses are perceived as homogeneous groups in which some characteristics are attributed to every member. The alleged accuracy fixes negatively stereotyped houses in their subordinate status and upholds existing power relations. Slytherins are reduced to being evil and Voldemort's following – in a way it can be certain that this is true for every Slytherin which is newly introduced. Conformity with one aspect of the stereotype leads to stereotypical expectations and the rest of the picture is filled in. Categorising characters into houses in the first place, which correlate with political opinion in the second, helps in negotiating one's way through the magical world.

Wich factors determine the initial categorisation, the house sorting? It is character traits, or "virtues" (HP 4 157), "a particular good quality or habit" ("virtue," Entry 2). But the distinction is difficult: Does learning and gaining wisdom not need a certain ambition and ability for hard work? Does loyalty not come in hand with chivalry? Does cunning not require daring? And how do we deal with Hermione's intellect, Ron's reliability and Percy's ambition?

The boundaries between the houses are fluent and the tale repeatedly shows how a character's personality and actions are multi-dimensional. House sorting on the basis of character traits becomes incoherent. Just as no student is solely suited for one Hogwarts house, a classification into good or evil is difficult as well. Within the generally clear di-

vision into the right and wrong side, there are subtleties and smooth transitions: A character can be morally good, morally evil or something in between. By gaining new information about characters, their behaviour becomes psychologically plausible (Fenske 276-7). While the shades and "complications between good and evil" are explored, there is no interest "in overturning the categories of good and evil themselves" (Schanoe 142).

In the end, it comes down to the traits the characters value and the choices they make. The Sorting Hat highlights how the founders have established their houses based on the virtues they found important: "Now each of these four founders / Formed their own house, for each / Did value different virtues / in the ones they had to teach." (HP 4 157). The Sorting Hat, therefore, does not look for the character traits a student necessarily possesses, but the ones he or she *values*. The Sorting Hat, which has "never yet been wrong" (ibid.), examines preferred qualities, looks for potential and takes wishes into account. Hermione is sorted into Gryffindor because its traits are most appealing to her. Snape is attracted to Slytherin and therefore becomes one of them. Peter becomes a Gryffindor because he is impressed by its chivalry and bravery. Harry becomes a Gryffindor because he does not want to be sorted into Slytherin: When being sorted, he desperately "gripped the edges of the stool", pleading not to become Slytherin, and the hat whispers, "'Well, if you're sure – better be GRYFFINDOR!'" (HP 1 90-91). His conscious choice against Slytherin is what distinguishes him from Voldemort in the first place (HP 2 245).

The narrative strongly focuses on the power of choice. Its effects are prominent from the start: Voldemort chooses Harry over Neville, grading Harry "as his equal" (HP 5 742). Lily chooses to protect Harry rather than herself (HP 7 281); her sacrifice provides Harry with the protection of her love (HP 1 216). In a less momentous choice, Neville chooses to stand in his friends' way and proves his Gryffindor bravery (198, 221).

Our values influence our behaviour. While most characters make choices in accordance with the expectations of their house traits, some choices may not meet these expectations. Some characters' choices eventually break the stereotypes, even if its done unconsciously. Snape ultimately chooses Lily and her good side over Voldemort and his bad side. Andromeda's conscious decision against her family's pure-blood ideology entails marrying a Muggle-born, supporting Harry and a change of side. Regulus chooses to destroy Voldemort's horcruxes, Narcissa chooses to lie to Voldemort and Slughorn decides to come back. All decisions contribute significantly to Voldemort's defeat. There-

fore, the tale impressively shows that it does not matter what expectations come in hand with the categories one is put in. Everyone has a choice to change, to surprise and to influence one's fate regardless of their house. Some students may identify less with their house; to others, their house may be more important to their identiy – either way, their choice is valid.

Nevertheless, the categories which the stereotypes are based on are constructed. Within them, there are fluent boundaries. Characters have multi-faceted personalities and no one is the embodiment of only one house's traits.

10   Conclusion

This work initially raised the question whether there is an additional narrative function of house sorting in "Harry Potter". The results of the close reading have shown that there are, in fact, stereotypes attached to each house in order to simplify orientation in the magical world.

Houses unify and separate students at the same time. By various mechanisms, the collective house and the individual pupil depend on each other. Through the individual introduction and portrayal of each house, stereotypes are constructed. The manipulative nature of the writing style becomes clear during analysis: Negative descriptions of outer appearances, pseudo-neutral statements, trustworthy characters, paralipses and the withholding of information, free indirect discourse and evaluating adjectives – all lead towards wrongful generalisations resulting in stereotypes.

Houses, meant to organise everyday school life, also organise the wizarding world and serve the orientation in an increasing swirl of ideologies, morals and politics. Inside and outside the narrative, houses serve as a stereotypical basis for the introduction of new characters. It is expected of newly introduced Slytherins that they are supporters of fascist beliefs, questionable morals or even Voldemort's himself. Due to binary oppositions, Gryffindor, in turn, is perceived as good and desirable and as a group of moral fighters against the evil.

During the story, the stereotypes are challenged when characters behave contradictory. This work took a closer look at several examples; the most significant turns of character, however, are the ones of Severus Snape and Peter Pettigrew. With the revelation of Snape's love for Harry's mother, the mean and exploiting Potions teacher ultimately becomes a hero for the good side. Peter, however, changes sides to his own advantage and is nothing but an unreliable traitor for supporting Voldemort.

Eventually, the stereotypes attached to Hogwarts' houses are rejected in a small

measure. The conventions are still upheld to maintain power relations.

In the narrative, the school houses exist so that the stereotypes that were estab-
lished in the beginning of the series can be broken. Thereby, the Hogwarts houses con-
tribute to the work's general complexity. It was a conscious choice by J. K. Rowling.
They not only help the readers to orientate themselves within this new magical world
but also to classify the characters they meet right away. But overall, the narrative pro-
motes modern wisdom: It is the choice to change which matters.

The multi-dimensional characters free themselves from the expectations and pos-
sibilities that are forced onto them. In a very modern approach, far away from fairy tale
and Victorian school story genres, the "Harry Potter" series claims that our lives are not
predetermined by fate. Neither the circumstances we are born into nor our abilities and
competences confine us in our personal development or determine our beliefs. Similar
to a second chance after an imprisonment, there is always an opportunity for recom-
mencement and a new start. We impose constraints onto ourselves – it is the moral
transformation which defines us in the end.

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