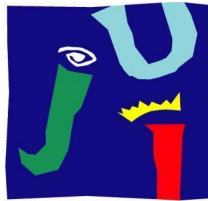


ENGLISH STUDIES DEGREE

**FINAL UNDERGRADUATE
DISSERTATION**



**UNIVERSITAT
JAUME·I**

**Arthurian Literature in Harry
Potter: a Brief Analysis**

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June 2023

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Abstract

The Arthurian legends, particularly the stories of the Round Table and the Holy Grail, have been a significant source of inspiration for many literary works throughout history. This paper presents an analysis of the elements of the Arthurian period that are evident to some extent in J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series, along with the literature and period that inspired the author. A comparison has been made between the legends of King Arthur and J.K. Rowling's books, mostly those found in Sir Thomas Malory's Le Morte D'Arthur. The Harry Potter series by J.K. Rowling clearly shows evidence of being heavily influenced by the Arthurian period. There are similarities between the character Harry Potter and King Arthur, as well as Albus Dumbledore and the wizard Merlin. Additionally, the use of magical objects such as the Horrocruxes and the Sword of Gryffindor is reminiscent of the magical items found in the Arthurian legends. This paper provides valuable information for further analyses and can serve as a guide for those interested in exploring the different adaptations of the mediaeval and Arthurian periods in contemporary literature.

Keywords: mediaeval period sir thomas malory king arthur literature

Introduction

The legend of King Arthur has been a matter of study for a great number of historians and authors as it served as an inspiration for many famous writers. This analysis will delve into the impact and significance of Arthurian elements present in J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series. It will begin with an overview of Rowling's biography and literary influences as well as a discussion of the Arthurian period. This will be followed by an analysis of the Round Table, the Holy Grail, the Sword Excalibur, the Wizard Merlin, and the themes of heroism and chivalry found in the Harry Potter series. The paper will conclude with a summary of the findings. This study aims to assess how the maker of the Harry Potter franchise was inspired by mediaeval literature, particularly the Arthurian legends, and how this literary genre contributes a new perspective on the renowned series, a factor which was considered when the books were transferred to the big screen, where that mediaeval ambiance is faithfully reproduced. Although scholars consider that Harry Potter borrows some elements from the mediaeval period, it is the purpose of this paper to show to which extent the series appropriates from the legend of King Arthur. This project has enriched my understanding of both the Arthurian period and the Harry Potter series. My research has uncovered surprising similarities between the two works, despite their different settings. In addition to increasing my knowledge, this project has deepened my appreciation for J.K. Rowling, and has expanded my interest in the Arthurian period.

Methodology

Before embarking on the present study, it is important to bear in mind the different books and references that had been taken as the main sources of data for this analysis. On the one hand, three books were used as sources of information for my project: *Le Morte D'Arthur* by Sir Thomas Malory taken from a 1903 publication by A. W. Pollard, the translation of *History of the Kings of Britain* by Geoffrey of Monmouth by Aaron Thompson with the revisions of J. A. Giles, and *The Noble Tale of the Sangreal* by Sir Thomas Malory from *Le Morte D'Arthur* from the Caxton edition (1485) supplemented from the 1529 edition of Wynkyn de Worde. Each of these books proved to be of immense value in providing me with a better understanding of the characters, events, and overall context of my project. Nonetheless, some physical books in different languages were also used to gain further insight related to the British Mediaeval period; *Diccionari d'Història Universal*, from the Edicions 62 editorial, *Dictionary of Britain*, from the Oxford English editorial, and *Diccionario Akal de Historia Medieval* by the editor H. R. Loyn and the Akal Ediciones editorial.

On the other hand, regarding the Harry Potter series written by J.K. Rowling, the books from the Bloomsbury edition were used as reference points and data in order to establish the comparison with the legends of King Arthur. Nonetheless, the word Harry Potter was not included in the book titles of the quotes to avoid redundancies.

Additionally, numerous web pages have been of great assistance in order to expand the explanations and information provided in this study. For instance, web resources such as *The Rowling Library* or *Wizarding World* were particularly useful for finding more information about the story of Harry Potter and learning more about the thoughts and experiences of the author herself while creating this fictional world.

J.K. Rowling's Biography and Literary Influences

The British author Joanne Rowling was born in Yate, Gloucestershire (United Kingdom) on 31st July 1965, but she currently lives in Scotland. She writes under the pen name J.K. Rowling or Robert Galbraith, and is a famous writer, screenwriter and producer. Her most well-known series of books are Harry Potter, of which more than five hundred million copies have been sold around the world. Since she was a child, she made fantastic tale adaptations that her younger sister read to her. Rowling was interested in Jessica Mitford, a British writer who became her referent. Her great-aunt gave her the autobiographical book *Hons and Rebels* and she was so fascinated by this work that she proceeded to read all the other books of Mitford, being interested in literature at a young age, a trait which would be reflected in her future.

In 1982, Rowling was unsuccessful in her application to the University of Oxford, instead opting to pursue a degree in Classic Philology and French at the University of Exeter. This is of particular

interest, as it is from this classical knowledge both linguistic and cultural, that this paper will draw upon. After her studies, she moved to London in order to work as a researcher and bilingual secretary for the International Amnesty. The idea of writing about a wizard came to her when she was travelling by train from Manchester to London. In an interview (2014) she stated “I was going on a train from Manchester to London, sitting there thinking of nothing to do with writing and the idea came out of nowhere”.

The author met her first husband in Oporto, and had her first child, Jessica. Nevertheless, she got divorced after suffering abuse and violence from her husband. As a consequence, she moved to Edinburgh with her daughter to live with her sister. Rowling did not have a job in that time, her mother died of multiple sclerosis, this made her become depressed and even thought about suicide. Despite all this and the fact that it was rejected by twelve editorials, in 1995 she completed writing her first book, entitled *The Philosopher's Stone*.

The Bloomsbury editorial was the one that decided to publish her book and requested her to use two capital letters and not employ her full name. They believed that younger readers would not purchase books written by a woman, as they deemed it necessary for her to have a more appealing name for the public. *The Philosopher's Stone* was published in 1997, and was awarded with the *Nestlé Children's Book Award*, the *Prestigious British Book* in the category *Children's Book of the Year*, and the *Best Children's Book Award*. In addition to this, the Scottish Arts Council provided her with a £8,000 grant in

order to enable her to continue writing. As new Harry Potter books were published, the sales increased in great quantities, reaching the figure of 11 million sold copies with her last book *The Deathly Hallows* (2007) only on the first day on sale in the UK and USA. Additionally, eight successful films were made based on her Harry Potter novels. Consequently, she became one of the richest and most famous writers of the time. She invests her money not only in writing novels but also in many different charities such as Lumos, an international charity that works in ending the harm of institutionalisation and helping children worldwide be reunited with their families.

Resuming the topic of literature we realise that J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter books have plenty of references of classic and Greek mythology, mediaeval and biblical literature as well as folklore. Therefore, the aim of this work is to conduct an analysis and comparison of some of the references of the Arthurian period that are present in the Harry Potter series. Additionally, her studies enabled her to develop an in-depth understanding of the classic languages (Latin is present through her whole work) and ancient customs, which has enabled her to bring a level of authenticity to the world of Harry Potter. Furthermore, she has been able to incorporate details into her work that are rooted in the history and mediaeval times. This makes the world of Harry Potter come alive for readers, allowing them to immerse themselves in the story. Therefore, in this section we are going to see how she has captured linguistic and cultural knowledge about the Arthurian period in her most important work.

During the Middle Ages, Arthurian literature flourished, only to begin its decline in the ensuing centuries. However, in the 19th century, it saw a considerable revival. Even today, the legend of Arthur remains pervasive in literature, theatre, media, films, and television adaptations. J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter is one of the works of literature to be influenced by this writing.

This literature revolves around the figure of King Arthur, a heroic and mythical king of Britain. His story is believed to have originated in the *Historia Brittonum* and *Annales Cambriae*, two early mediaeval sources, even though they were written hundreds of years after the era in which he was supposed to have lived. Consequently, numerous historians, who are devoted to the study of the period, do not consider Arthur a historical figure. King Arthur's name is also mentioned in *Y Gododdin*, a collection of Welsh poetry that is a key component of the popular legend of Merlin, a figure which also appears in the Harry Potter series and is going to be covered in this paper.

Most of the existing Arthurian narratives originated from multiple sources, incorporating similar values such as courage and heroism. J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series is deeply entrenched in this tradition, taking elements from the mediaeval realm. Arthurian literature is a chivalric romance, incorporating battles, extraordinary events and a monarch battling for honour. Over five hundred manuscripts written in multiple tongues are a testament to the endurance of these myths. Some of the most famous moments from the legend of this king were described by the French poet Chrétien de

Troyes, widely celebrated for penning a great selection of Arthurian tales by the 12th century. “Chrétien de Troyes did much to create a new genre of literature with his Arthurian romances. He successfully blended a British plot with the concept of courtly love and a broad knowledge of ancient and contemporary literature” (Flint, F. Johnson, 2012). For instance, he introduced one of the most famous figures of this story, Lancelot, a knight of the well-known Round Table, whose name probably inspired J.K. Rowling for his character Lancelot, appearing in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. As previously stated, Rowling's work is largely reflective of that of Sir Thomas Malory, who is renowned for composing the first great prose epic in Anglophone literature. The work *Le Morte D'Arthur* is celebrated for its description of the nobility of the chivalrous world and serves as the basis of the Arthurian romance. King Arthur is an important figure in British folklore and many legends from the mediaeval period and early modern era. Nonetheless, although there are several versions of the legend, Thomas Malory's is considered one of the most important. It is a matter of debate as to whether a king in what is now modern-day England existed by the name of Arthur, and it is not possible to know for certain. However, it is indisputable that the tales surrounding his persona have been a source of inspiration for numerous writers throughout history. The subsequent sections of this discourse are dedicated to describe some of the foremost figures and influences of the Arthurian era as manifested in the literary works of the British author J.K. Rowling.

Relevance of the Arthurian Period in Literature

The legends of King Arthur, his entourage of knights, and the enigmatic Wizard Merlin have been a continuing source of inspiration for novelists and historians. Many books and movies have been produced from the mythology, and while some believe the King was a real individual, the fact remains uncertain. As we can find in the book *Diccionari d'Història Universal*, published by the editorial Edicions 62, he is defined as a legendary king of Brittany (VI century), defender of the Christianity, and considered to be the responsible who unified the British tribes against the Pagan invaders (V and VI century A.D.). King Arthur is also claimed to be the prince of Brittany, Cumberland, Wales, Cornwall, and the Lowlands of Scotland. His legacy has become a literary phenomenon, with many myths and stories being composed in his name, for instance the legends of the Round Table and its Knights, as well as the quest for the Holy Grail, all of which originated between the 12th and 13th centuries. Renowned authors such as Chrétien de Troyes and Geoffrey of Monmouth have been observed to have created their own versions of the legendary stories and accounts of King Arthur, and it was Sir Thomas Malory the one who undertook a rework of all the available texts concerning the life of the Monarch.

Despite their extensive retellings, the original authors of these stories remain largely unknown. From Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* to the courtly romances of Chretien de Troyes, King Arthur's legacy has been built and preserved over time

by the works of these writers, that are part of what is known as Matter of Britain which is the collective term given to the set of stories, myths and legends associated with King Arthur and his court.

The name of Arthur, his knights, Merlin and the Round Table can be found in many dictionaries of Universal, British or Medieval Literature. *The Last Legion*, *The Green Knight*, and *Excalibur* are some among the many films based on the legend of King Arthur. Books such as *Morgana en Esmelle* by Begoña Caamaño, *The Mists of Avalon* by Zimmer Bradley, and *La Búsqueda del Santo Grial* by Carlos Alvar Ezquerro are examples of literature based on the adventures of the king, narrated from the perspective of the women characters and adding a contemporary vision to the events. In addition, there are pieces of literature which had taken inspiration from many elements of the Arthurian period in order to create a new story, as is the case with *The Lord of the Rings* or *Harry Potter*.

Analysis of the Arthurian Elements in Harry Potter

J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series has been praised for its captivating blend of modern and mediaeval elements. Inspired on a variety of sources from the Arthurian period, the saga has become renowned for its incorporation of these elements. Therefore, these subsections will explore some of the most prominent Arthurian influences in the *Harry Potter* books in order to demonstrate how the series has been given a classic mediaeval feel, creating an enthralling

and magical world by the combination of heroic quests with the themes of love and friendship.

The Round Table and the Holy Grail

Harry Potter is the main character of J.K. Rowling's series, depicted as an honest, brave and kind hero. The world of King Arthur pays special importance to chivalry, and the main features of heroes in his legend was that they were considered as honourable. Arthur became one of the most well-known rulers of Britain, and fought against witches, giants and monsters. He is known for uniting Great Britain and confronting the Saxons, as well as for being a knight, and member of the Round Table. This famous table was where he and his knights congregated, and it was first mentioned in Wace's *Roman de Brut* (1155). The creation of the Round Table is an event of great importance, as it provided the knights of Arthur a name, a collective personality, and a purpose. There were 150 knights forming the table, some of the most famous ones are Sir Lancelot, Sir Gawain, Sir Tristan, and Sir Galahad. This association became the prototype of great chivalry orders which were established in Europe during the Middle Ages. The Round Table can be compared to the Order of the Phoenix in the Harry Potter series, a secret society created by Albus Dumbledore. As the King Arthur's Round Table, this order was founded by brave wizards willing to fight under the rule of Dumbledore, and later on under Harry Potter's orders. There are several similarities between the Round Table of the legend of King

Arthur and the Order of the Phoenix in the Harry Potter series. Both are groups of individuals who come together to serve a noble cause. King Arthur and his knights gathered around the Round Table to ensure the kingdom's security, while the members of the Order of the Phoenix joined forces to fight against Lord Voldemort and his Death Eaters (the antagonists of the series). Both societies have a leader who inspires and guides them. King Arthur is the leader of the Knights of the Round Table, while Albus Dumbledore is the founder and leader of the Order of the Phoenix. Furthermore, they have a sense of unity and loyalty. The Knights of the Round Table were bound by an oath of chivalry and a sense of brotherhood, while the members of the Order of the Phoenix were united by their commitment to the cause and their loyalty to Dumbledore. Likewise, the Order of the Phoenix and the Round Table are composed of individuals with different backgrounds and abilities. The Round Table was made up of knights from different parts of the kingdom, each with their own strengths and weaknesses. Similarly, the Order of the Phoenix was composed of witches and wizards, each with their unique skills and talents. Overall, both the Round Table of the legend of King Arthur and the Order of the Phoenix in the Harry Potter series represent the power of unity, loyalty, and sacrifice in the face of adversity. According to the oldest known source of information about Merlin (Robert de Boron's *Merlin*), he created the Round Table, although some later literature contradicts this and states that Arthur formed the Table. The wizard Merlin is a similar figure to Albus Dumbledore, who happens to be his friend in Harry Potter as he also appears in the books, and will be

discussed later. The knights of King Arthur reunited together around the table, whose purpose was to keep peace during the chaotic early years of the king's reign.

Later, they were given the task of hunting down the Holy Grail, according to the legend, this vessel is the one Jesus drank from at the Last Supper, and is the final prize sought by the Knights of the Round Table, a relic that can be compared with the magical properties and the search for the Horrocruxes created by Lord Voldemort in the Harry Potter series. These powerful objects, like the Holy Grail, have magical powers that grant great power and immortality. The creation of the Horrocruxes allowed Lord Voldemort to split his soul from him and hide each portion of it in these objects to make him immortal, while the Holy Grail is said to possess healing powers and bestow eternal life. They also share the difficulty of finding and obtaining. The Horrocruxes are hidden in various places with complex magical protections to keep them safe, while the Holy Grail is hidden in a secret place that is difficult to access. Both objects are sought after by the main characters for their own purposes. In Harry Potter, the Horrocruxes required the combined efforts of Harry Potter, Ron Weasley, and Hermione Granger (all members of the Order of the Phoenix) to find and destroy them. In Arthurian legend, King Arthur's knights seek the Holy Grail as a desire for self-improvement that will lead them to reach the path of perfection even if they have to offer their lives to do so. These relics have a symbolic meaning beyond their magical properties. On the one hand, the Horrocruxes represent the evil that can cause the desire for power and immortality. On the

other hand, the Holy Grail represents virtue and spirituality, for this reason, although there are many similarities in the magical properties and the search for Horrocruxes and the Holy Grail, it has to be recognized that the symbolism of both is completely different.

King's Arthur's quest for the Holy Grail can also be compared to the cup of the Triwizard Tournament organised by the Hogwarts School in the wizarding world. "An impartial judge will decide which students are most worthy to compete for the Triwizard Cup, the glory of their school, and a thousand Galleons personal prize money." (Rowling, 2000, *The Goblet of Fire*, 159). The Grail quest legend is well known due to the sixth book of Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*, the *Noble Tale of the Sangreal*. Each knight participating in the quest of the Holy Grail must show his knightly skills. In both stories, the quest implies facing various challenges and obstacles. In the *Goblet of Fire*, the Triwizard Tournament consists of several dangerous competitions which the participants must complete.

"Dumbledore's trying to stop us giving our names.' 'People have died, though!' said Hermione in a worried voice, as they walked through a door concealed behind a tapestry and started up another, narrower staircase. 'Yeah,' said Fred airily, 'but that was years ago, wasn't it? Anyway, where's the fun without a bit of risk?'" (Rowling, 2000, *The Goblet of Fire*, 161).

In the legend of King Arthur, the knights seeking the Holy Grail must overcome various difficulties and temptations.

"I am sure they all shall never meet more in this world, for they shall die many in the quest. And so it forthinketh me a

little, for I have loved them as well as my life, wherefore it shall grieve me right sore the departition of this fellowship, for I have had an old custom to have them in my fellowship.” (Thomas Malory, 1529, *The Noble Tale of the Sangreal*, Book XIII, chapter VII).

Furthermore, the two stories show a weather change when the Grail and the Cup appear in the scene. On the one hand, in the *Noble Tale of the Sangreal* the presence of the Grail creates a different atmosphere, “Then anon they heard cracking and crying of thunder, that them thought the place should all to-drive [...] Then there entered into the hall the Holy Grail covered with white samite” (Thomas Malory, 1529, *The Noble Tale of the Sangreal*, Book XIII, chapter VII). On the other hand, in *The Goblet of Fire* the announcement of the Triwizard Tournament also creates a new atmosphere “Harry glanced up at the ceiling too. It was enchanted to look like the sky outside, and he had never seen it look this stormy.” (Rowling, 2000, *The Goblet of Fire*, 148, 149). Furthermore, the announcement of the tournament is interrupted by the arrival of Professor Moody (a mysterious and scary character) who adds an even darker atmosphere to the scene.

But at that moment, there was a deafening rumble of thunder and the doors of the Great Hall banged open. A man stood in the doorway, leaning upon a long staff, shrouded in a black travelling cloak. Every head in the Great Hall swivelled toward the stranger, suddenly brightly illuminated by a fork of

lightning that flashed across the ceiling. (Rowling, 2000, *The Goblet of Fire*, 156).

The Sword Excalibur

J.K. Rowling follows the pattern of the sword of Excalibur for the creation of the sword of Godric Gryffindor that appears in Harry Potter. Before going in detail with the comparison of the two elements, a brief description of them will be made in order to contextualise this subsection of the paper.

On the one hand, the sword of Godric Gryffindor from the Harry Potter books is a sword with magical powers that is thousand-years-old. It was made by goblins and his owner was Godric Gryffindor (one of the founders of Hogwarts School). On the other hand, the Excalibur sword from the Arthurian legend is the legendary sword of King Arthur, which is usually attributed to have different powers or properties. There is more than one version related to this sword, but only one was chosen in order to compare it with the one appearing in Harry Potter, as it is the most similar one to the story of the young wizard.

These swords can be compared as they both are attributed to have magical powers. There are two different legends about the sword's origin. The first one is from a poem written by Robert de Boron named *Merlin*, known as the "Sword in the Stone Legend". Here, the sword lies embedded in a stone which can only be taken out by the rightful king, which happens to be Arthur. The second legend

comes from *Post-Vulgate Suite du Merlin* taken up by Sir Thomas Malory. Here, the Lady of the Lake gives Arthur the sword Excalibur after he broke his first sword (named Caliburn) in a fight against King Pellinore. The king takes this sword from a hand which rises out of the lake, he uses it for his battles and after being mortally wounded, he demands his knight Sir Bedivere to return the sword to the lake in order to give it to the next king. The story of the sword written in the poem *Merlin*, can also be compared to that of Harry Potter. Nonetheless, only a few fragments and later interpretations of this poem had been preserved. However, Malory records both versions in his *Le Morte D'Arthur*.

Therefore, said Arthur unto Sir Bedivere, take thou Excalibur, my good sword, and go with it to yonder water side, and when thou comest there I charge thee throw my sword in that water, and come again and tell me what thou there seest. (Thomas Malory, 1903, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, 731).

It is not by chance that the character Harry Potter which was created by J.K. Rowling pulled the sword of Gryffindor from a lake in the last book of the saga. "A glint of deep red ... it was a sword with glittering rubies in its hilt ... the sword of Gryffindor was lying at the bottom of the forest pool." (Rowling, 2007, *The Deathly Hallows*, 300). This particular sword can only be taken by someone who truly belongs to the Gryffindor house (one of the four houses in which students are chosen at Hogwarts School). Gryffindors are characterised by his bravery, "You might belong in Gryffindor, where dwell the brave at heart, their daring, nerve and chivalry set

Gryffindors apart” (Rowling, 1997, *The Philosopher’s Stone*, 126). The author herself in an interview (Aug 10th 2015) stated that “There is a further allusion to Excalibur emerging from the lake when Harry must dive into a frozen forest pool to retrieve the sword in *Deathly Hallows*” (J.K. Rowling, Aug 10th 2015).

The Wizard Merlin

The Wizard Merlin is an important figure of the Arthurian period, as well as in the series Harry Potter. There is no doubt that J.K. Rowling has taken inspiration from the mediaeval figure for her story. The first found written reference of Merlin was in the story *Historia Brittonum*, written by Nennio at the end of the VIII century. Nonetheless, in the world of King Arthur, the Wizard Merlin appeared for the first time in *Historia Regum Britanniae* (published around 1136-38) by Geoffrey of Monmouth. This story pretends to be the translation of an ancient Brittany document. It is, in fact, a piece of literature adapting data from British sources (particularly from Gildas and Nennio) and Welsh legends. This story was highly popular during the Middle Ages, and it served as the birth of future occidental literature. Here, Merlin is depicted as a sorcerer and prophet who helps the father of King Arthur to impersonate another man to be able to spend the night with his wife, since he had fallen in love with her.

The king readily believed what he was so well inclined to, and ordered Merlin, who was also come to the siege, to be called. Merlin, therefore, being introduced into the king’s presence,

was commanded to give his advice, how the king might accomplish his desire with respect to Igera (Geoffrey of Monmouth, 1999, *History of the Kings of Britain*, 143).

This is an important event as it culminates with the birth of King Arthur, “The same night therefore she conceived of the most renowned Arthur, whose heroic and wonderful actions have justly rendered his name famous to posterity” (Geoffrey of Monmouth, 1999, *History of the Kings of Britain*, 144). The figure of the Wizard Merlin is often associated with that of Albus Dumbledore in the Harry Potter series, both described as advisers of the main characters of the stories, wise and powerful sorcerers. On the one hand, the character of Albus Dumbledore is highly inspired by that of Merlin in many aspects not only of his appearance but also in his behaviour with the main character. For instance, when Harry Potter lost his mother and father when he was a baby, Dumbledore was given Harry by Hagrid and the wizard hid the identity of young Harry to protect him. Later on, he helped him to become the greatest wizard of all time.

‘It would be enough to turn any boy’s head. Famous before he can walk and talk! Famous for something he won’t even remember! Can’t you see how much better off he’ll be, growing up away from all that until he’s ready to take it?’ (Rowling, 1997, *The Philosopher’s Stone*, 14).

On the other hand, when young Arthur was born, his mother died and he was given to Merlin, who hid the identity of Arthur in order to protect him. Later on, and similarly to Dumbledore with Harry, he helped him to become one of the greatest and most

intelligent people of his time. Furthermore, Arthur was shown the future by the wizard in order to prepare him for it and make him more powerful. “After this Merlin told unto King Arthur of the prophecy that there should be a great battle beside Salisbury, and Mordred his own son should be against him.” (Thomas Malory, 1903, *Le Morte D’Arthur*, 80). This event may have served as an inspiration for Rowling to create an important part of the story of Harry Potter, as Dumbledore employs sorcery to demonstrate to Harry the identity of Voldemort and the manner in which he plans to attempt his murder. Furthermore, a prophecy is also mentioned in the Harry Potter series and it is the event that gives rise to the whole story of the wizarding world. Dumbledore explains to Harry how professor Trelawney (the teacher of Divination in Hogwarts School) predicted that a child born at the end of July would be the one to hunt down the Dark Lord (Voldemort). This prophecy makes Lord Voldemort get obsessed with the killing of Harry Potter and unleashes a long battle between the two of them.

The prophecy did not refer to a woman,” said Dumbledore. “It spoke of a boy born at the end of July-” You know what I mean! He thinks it means her son, he is going to hunt her down - kill them all - (Rowling, 2007, *The Deathly Hallows*, 553).

The Wizard Merlin, traditionally described as an old wizard with a long white beard, has the same appearance as Albus Dumbledore in the Harry Potter series. Although Merlin is not a figure appearing in the books, he is mentioned a few times throughout

them, and he is described as a famous and powerful wizard. For instance, when Harry is travelling by train to Hogwarts, he is eating chocolate frogs which each contain a card of a famous wizard; one of those in his collection is Merlin, “Harry couldn’t keep his eyes off them. Soon he had not only Dumbledore and Morgana, but Hengist of Woodcraft, Alberic Grunnion, Circe, Paracelsus and Merlin” (Rowling, 1997, *The Philosopher’s Stone*, 110). It is also mentioned that Albus Dumbledore is a member of the Order of Merlin, “Headmaster: Albus Dumbledore (Order of Merlin, First Class, Grand Sorc., Chf. Warlock, Supreme Mugwump, International Confed. of Wizards)” (Rowling, 1997, *The Philosopher’s Stone*, 55). The Order of Merlin in the world of Harry Potter is an award given to wizards and witches who have accomplished great achievements. This prize has three levels (first class, second class, and third class), and wizards who have this recognition are mentioned in the books as being a very proud people, “That was the final straw for Severus. I think the loss of the Order of Merlin hit him hard.” (Rowling, 1999, *The Prisoner of Azkaban*, 449, 450). Therefore, despite not being described with detail who Merlin was and what he did in the world of Harry Potter, the author presents his figure as one of great importance, to such an extent that one of the most important prizes for a wizard bears his name.

As it can be seen the figure of the Wizard Merlin who has different versions of his story, he has always been described as a very powerful sorcerer. His feats classify him as one of the wisest and cunning characters in history, some features which will be described

in the next subsection and are of great importance not only in the Arthurian period but also in the Harry Potter series.

Heroism and Chivalry

Heroism, chivalry, cunning and braveness are the most important features in the Arthurian period, but they are also key attributes for the characters in Harry Potter. Not only Albus Dumbledore can be compared to Merlin in terms of wisdom, but Hermione Granger (one of Harry's best friend) is particularly significant to the wizarding world, being known as the "brightest witch of her age", an apt description given her numerous admirable attributes, such as bravery, integrity, resourcefulness and honour.

The tales of Arthur and his knights evolve from the fifth century, and they are of great importance in British literature making the themes of heroism and chivalry the key features of these stories. For instance, in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, King Arthur fights a Spanish giant who had stolen Helena (the niece of Hoel, a vassal of King Arthur) away. "Arthur, nothing daunted, slipped out of his hands, and so exerted himself with his sword, that he gave the giant no respite till he had struck it up to the very back through his skull." (Geoffrey of Monmouth, 1999, *History of the Kings of Britain*, 174). This is one of the moments in which Arthur shows his heroism and cunning, with no fear to fight against a giant in order to show loyalty to Helena,

For being a man of undaunted courage, he did not care to lead his army against such monsters; both because he could in this manner animate his men by his own example, and also because he was alone sufficient to deal with them. (Geoffrey of Monmouth, 1999, *History of the Kings of Britain*, 172).

This example of bravery can be compared to the moment in which Harry Potter fights a basilisk, a giant serpent who has kidnapped Ginny (One of Harry's best friends and future wife), and had hidden her in the Chamber of Secrets at Hogwarts. He also leads his best friend Ron (Ginny's brother) to fight the basilisk, as none of them fear the beast and the obstacles that may present to them. "I'm going down there,' he said. He couldn't not go, not now they had found the entrance to the Chamber, not if there was even the faintest, slimmest, wildest chance that Ginny might be alive. 'Me too,' said Ron." (Rowling, 1998, *The Chamber of Secrets*, 317, 318). However, it is Harry alone who fights the giant serpent in the end and the one who nails the sword of Gryffindor in his skull. "Harry threw his whole weight behind the sword and drove it to the hilt into the roof of the serpent's mouth". (Rowling, 1998, *The Chamber of Secrets*, 338).

Apart from all the above mentioned, the Arthurian legend is about a hero's journey, in which Arthur and his knights have to travel to achieve some goal, obtain wisdom or acquire an object. For instance, the search for the Holy Grail or the achievement to reach the sword inside a lake and the bravery that it conveys. The hero and his knights gain powers, experience perilous and great adventures during their quests, and constantly show their chivalry, bravery and cunning.

Similarly to Harry Potter's adventures in which he, along with his friends, also faces countless dangers and acquires new powers which make him stronger until he becomes the most powerful wizard in the world of J.K. Rowling.

Conclusion

In general, the purpose of the present study was to make an analysis of the Harry Potter series and find elements that have been created with the Arthurian legend as a source of inspiration. In order to carry out the study, this paper has been divided into different sections which contain information about the most relevant features of the Arthurian period and their comparison with the elements appearing in the novels of Harry Potter.

The contributions of the present study show how the author J.K. Rowling has been inspired from the legend of King Arthur for creating her novels taking elements such as the Round Table or the Sword of Excalibur for narrating the adventures of her main characters. Classical studies and interest in literature are shown in this paper as being of great importance for this author. In order to accomplish this, a section has been devoted to study J.K. Rowling's literary influences through her life, adding some of the most important features in her biography.

Above all, different legends of King Arthur such as *Le Morte D'Arthur* by Sir Thomas Malory or *Historia Regum Britanniae* by Geoffrey of Monmouth were taken as the main sources of information

to develop the present study. This paper demonstrates to which extent the Harry Potter series descend from the legend of King Arthur, and the elements borrowed from this mediaeval period.

Finally, it is important to mention that some limitations have been presented during the study for the creation of this paper. There were many different versions of the legend of King Arthur and it was difficult to select those who had most importance in history. The wide variety of sources has also awakened my interest in reading and searching for information during the creation of this work. Nonetheless, it was laborious and complicated to deal with so many different stories and versions of the same king, as well as finding the original books related to the Arthurian period. As a consequence, it would be interesting to carry out studies in which a wide range of Arthurian elements were compared to the story of J.K. Rowling and show the exact extent in which the author has been influenced by this period.

This project has been an incredibly interesting experience for me. I have been able to explore the Arthurian period and the Harry Potter series in great detail and compare them based on the themes they portray. By doing this, I have been able to gain a greater understanding and appreciation of both of these popular works of literature. My research has not only broadened my knowledge of these two periods of time, but it has also opened my eyes to some of the similarities between them. Although these two works are set in different times, I have learned that they still share some of the same elements and themes. Overall, this project has been an eye-opening

experience for me. I held a high level of admiration for the Harry Potter series and its author, J.K. Rowling, which has only heightened as a result of my work on this project, and has further increased my interest in the Arthurian period. I am thankful for the opportunity to have done this project, as it has allowed me to gain insight into two different periods and explore the themes they both share.

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