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'The less you lot have ter do with these foreigners, the happier yeh'll be': Cultural and National Otherness in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* Series

MARION RANA

This paper deals with the depiction of cultural and national otherness in Harry Potter. It analyses the presentation and connotation of cultural and national otherness in the novels, its aims and main characteristics, and highlights how otherness as a social and ideological construct is used to create a certain social order within the Hogwarts universe. Rowling has been praised widely for her supposed multicultural worldview and her support of NGO-like structures fighting for equal treatment and human rights. On the surface, the Harry Potter novels do indeed strike a light for multiculturalism, racial harmony and emancipation. As this paper will demonstrate, however, the underlying worldview of the novels is an imperial and racial biological one: despite the claims of many critics that Rowling's works are multicultural and anti-racist, the hidden discourse of the novels supports and perpetuates racial and xenophobic prejudice.

Key words: Harry Potter, Otherness, Racism, Culturalism, Nationalism, Identity Formation, Discrimination, Multiculturalism.

'L'altérité est un concept relationnel' (Tamiozzo 2002: 6): There is no otherness without the thought that defines it as such. Otherness is constructed by human interaction and social categories and only ever exists in relation to a certain social order. It is thus a social construct that is employed consciously and unconsciously in identity formation, as both individuals and groups define themselves through delimitation of and opposition towards the mythical Other in order to create an identity for themselves (see for example Smith & Mackie 2000, Waldenfels 1990, and Tajfel & Turner 1985). In the processes of othering, physical differences (such as hair or skin colour, age or sex) are charged with social meaning and turned into criteria for exclusion from a certain group. Othering is the division of the world into in (-group) and out (-group), into *us* and *them*: a process of 'cultural

distancing and alienation from the Other' (Rana 2009: 15) – in whichever form it may present itself.

The *Harry Potter*- novels are full of instances of othering – for a good (social psychological) reason: Harry is deeply unsure about his new identity, first as a wizard, then as a member of Hogwarts and Gryffindor and finally as the 'Chosen One'. Caught up in the transition between childhood and adulthood which 'seems to dislocate us from everything that has previously formed our identity' (Heidemann 2009: 57), Harry is constantly trying to find his position in the world, to create his own identity as wizard, family member and hero. Different Others help him along this way, while Draco, the Slytherins and Voldemort serve as the evil Other and exhibit the dark character traits that Harry is denied, enforcing his virtue and heroism. The girls and women's incapability to act independently and to protect themselves allows Harry to show his heroic side, and Hagrid, the house-elves and the centaurs, all of which are presented as inferior in the novels, give him the chance to act benevolently and nobly and thus reinforce his heroic image.

This paper deals with the depiction of cultural and national otherness in *Harry Potter*. It analyses the presentation and connotation of cultural and national otherness in the novels, its aims and main characteristics, and highlights how otherness as a 'construction idéologique, sociale et discursive'² (Tamiozzo 2002: 6) is used to create a certain social order within the Hogwarts universe. Rowling has been praised widely for her supposed multicultural worldview and her support of NGO-like structures fighting for equal treatment and human rights. On the surface, the *Harry Potter* novels do indeed strike a light for multiculturalism, racial harmony and emancipation. As this paper will demonstrate, however, the underlying worldview of the novels is an imperial and racial biological one: despite the claims of many critics that Rowling's works are multicultural and anti-racist, the hidden discourse of the novels supports and perpetuates racial and xenophobic prejudice.

BRITAIN AS THE IMPERIAL CENTRE OF THE WIZARDING WORLD

Britain is constructed as the centre of the wizarding (and in extension, the real) world. Other schools and nations become the underachieving periphery, both in the products they manufacture (see Rana 2009: 74–75) and in their members' behaviour and abilities.³ Thus, the French and Eastern European characters visiting Hogwarts in the fourth novel are portrayed with the help of stereotypical clichés. The Eastern European characters from Durmstrang (which may or may not be situated in Bulgaria⁴) are presented as dark and ominous. Their school uniforms are made of fur, the students and their headmaster seem barely civilized and are under constant suspicion of being affiliated with the dark arts. As Marek Oziewicz fittingly puts it, the Durmstrang delegacy 'seem[s] like a barbaric horde in Hogwarts Rome' (11). The first description of the two main Durmstrang

characters, the student and international Quidditch player Victor Krum and the ex-Death eater Karkaroff, who is now headmaster of Durmstrang school, sets the mood for the subsequent portrayal of Durmstrang students: while Krum is described as 'thin, dark and sallow-skinned, with a large curved nose and thick black eyebrows', resembling 'an overgrown bird of prey' (Rowling 2000: 95), Karkaroff possesses

a fruity, unctuous voice; when he stepped into the light pouring from the front doors of the castle, they saw that he was tall and thin like Dumbledore, but his white hair was short, and his goatee (finishing in a small curl) did not entirely hide his rather weak chin. When he reached Dumbledore, he shook hands with both of his own. 'Dear old Hogwarts,' he said, looking up at the castle and smiling; his teeth were rather yellow, and Harry noticed that his smile did not extend to his eyes, which remained cold and shrewd. (Rowling 2000: 217)

Upon his first appearance, then, Karkaroff is immediately put into direct opposition to the benevolent Dumbledore – and loses out against the latter, not only in terms of posture and physique (note the weak chin and un-sorcerous short hair and goatee) but most importantly in terms of trust and sacredness, the most important indications of which are, as is common in literature, the eyes that cannot disguise his cold and shrewd nature. In direct opposition to this, Dumbledore's eyes are constantly referred to as being warm, friendly and full of laughter and merriment.

Durmstrang students are further accessorized with a school uniform made of fur and an ominous morbid travel device: they arrive on a magical ship completely submerged into water which 'had a strangely skeletal look about it, as though it was a resurrected wreck, and the dim, misty lights shimmering at its portholes looked like ghostly eyes' (Rowling 2000: 217).

Not surprisingly, Harry and his friends distrust the Durmstrangs from the start and when Harry's name is entered into the competition without him having submitted it (a plot that could lead to his death because he is too young to know some of the magic required to participate in, and in fact to survive, the competition), Karkaroff is one of the first to be suspected. Similarly, when a Ministry official is attacked and, as we later find out, killed on the Hogwarts grounds, Hagrid tells Harry to keep away from the Durmstrang students because 'the less you lot have ter do with these foreigners, the happier yeh'll be' (Rowling 2000: 489). Even though it later turns out that both the attack and the entry of Harry's name into the competition were the work of a Death Eater pretending to be a Hogwarts teacher, the suspicions leave a strange aftertaste, especially as they are never reflected on as being led by racist prejudice.

In accordance to common stereotypes about Eastern Europeans, the Durmstrangs/Bulgarians are also presented as animalistic and emotionally uncontrolled. Thus, in the final of the Quidditch World Cup, the Bulgarian team not only plays dirty, its fans also lose control over their emotions and issue animal-like 'furious roars' (Rowling 2000: 101). In the second task of the Triwizard Tournament, Krum attempts to turn himself into a shark (a charm

that interestingly only works half way, transforming Krum into a half-creature – an extension of his animalistic nature). Harry, on the other hand, uses a natural remedy to help him breathe under water (gillyweed), while Cedric and Fleur, the other two contestants, produce a sophisticated and well-mannered bubble-head charm that preserves some oxygen around their heads to let them breathe.

While the Eastern European characters are presented as animalistic, evil, sexually uninhibited and dangerous, the French students from Beauxbatons do not fare much better. Even though they are never suspected of having any affiliation to the dark arts, they are described as particularly arrogant. In fact, Ehgartner calls them the direct opposite to the Durmstrangs (see 2002: 79): while the Durmstrangs do not seem to care about anything but their bravery and honour, the Beauxbatons students are over-cultured and snooty, overly concerned with looks and manners. Both the students and their headmistress are described as very beautiful and gracious and in contrast to the Durmstrangs' barbarian look, the Beauxbatons school uniform is a testimony to their style-over-usefulness-attitude. The students wear blue robes made out of fine silk, and no coats, which leaves them freezing both when they arrive and when they sit down in the Great Hall, still clutching scarves to their faces and obviously unimpressed by the grandeur of Hogwarts Castle (see Rowling 2000: 219–221). Apparently, Hogwarts does not measure up to the palace-like Beauxbatons, and the students are too impolite and arrogant to hide their distaste: 'Zis is nothing,' she [Fleur Delacour] said dismissively' (Rowling 2000: 364). Even the giant horses that draw the Beauxbatons carriage have a very refined taste: they drink 'only single-malt whisky' (Rowling 2000: 215–6).

Both the French and the Eastern Europeans speak with a stereotypical accent which does not improve throughout the course of the novels. Even Fleur, who works at Gringott's bank in *The Half-Blood Prince* in order to increase her knowledge of English, has not been able to get rid of her accent after three more years (see for example Rowling 2007: 414). The French cannot pronounce any /ð/ and /θ/ sounds (e.g. 'Zey are saying zat zis little boy is to compete also!' [Rowling 2000: 241]). Krum on the other hand, who cannot manage to pronounce Hermione's name despite being in love with her, is representative for the Bulgarian and Durmstrang side in mispronouncing all /w/- sounds and misusing the gerund: 'Vell, ve have a castle also, not as big as this, nor as comfortable, I am thinking' (Rowling 2000: 363).

Interestingly, the Beauxbatons students are mainly female, and so is their headmistress.⁵ Most of the Durmstrang students, including the headmaster, are male (and, as explained above, are so in a very uncivilized and macho way). Femininity is thus connected with style and sophistication while the brutal and violent nature of the Durmstrangs is emphasised by their masculinity, an attempt that has been taken up by the screen adaptation of *The Goblet of Fire* (Warner Bros, 2005). In the film, not only are the foreign schools gender-segregated, but their entrance into the Great Hall also brings the racial and gender stereotypes of the original text to the forefront with a vengeance. While the 'lovely ladies of the Beauxbatons Academy of Magic' enter the Great Hall in a flurry of fluttering

birds, bouncing bottoms, eye-lid-batting and innocent (while blatantly sexual) virginity, the entrance of 'the proud sons of Durmstrang' is laden with fantasies of barely controlled male power, strength and macho bravado.

The portrayal of Britain as the imperial centre of the world finds its culmination in the fourth novel, *The Goblet of Fire*, which is determined by a clash of civilizations. Here, Britain constantly shows its superiority: Harry and Cedric, the two Hogwarts contestants, win the Triwizard Tournament and Ireland wins over Bulgaria in the Quidditch final.⁶ The Triwizard Tournament in particular serves as a backdrop to a show of British superiority over the rest of the world. In that context, it is telling that despite the fact that there are wizarding schools and, of course, wizards and witches in other parts of the world, all the schools competing in the Triwizard Tournament (which Dumbledore calls 'the three greatest schools of the wizarding world') are from Europe. The suggestion is that not only does Britain find itself at the centre of competence and power within Europe but that Europe itself has to fear no competition from cultures and nations from the even more outlying periphery of the Americas, Africa, Asia and Oceania.

While the tournament is supposed to have been arranged to sponsor international understanding and friendship, the main aim seems to be competition. Thus, when Ron finds out that Hermione is going to the Yule Ball with Victor Krum from Durmstrang, he accuses her of 'fraternising with the enemy' (Rowling 2000: 367). Even though we know that Ron's remark is motivated by jealousy, it nevertheless leaves a strange aftertaste. Hermione gets angry with Ron because, as she puts it, 'this whole Tournament's supposed to be about getting to know about foreign wizards and making friends with them'. To this, Ron replies: 'It's all about winning' (Rowling 2000: 368). The choice of words here is revealing: even though the tournament is '*supposed* to be about' international cooperation, it *is* in fact 'all about' competition (*italics mine*). In line with this interpretation, the contestants actually battle each other in the last task, culminating in Krum attacking Cedric with an Unforgivable Curse.

Some ties do develop through the tournament, however: Fleur, the Beauxbatons contestant, and Bill, one of Ron's brothers, fall in love with each other and marry several books later, and Krum and Hermione become friends, even though their romantic relationship does not take off. Dumbledore himself reminds the students of all schools that international friendship and cooperation across all cultural differences is called for in times of distress and hardship. Given the stereotypical and demeaning portrayal and the backdrop of actual battle and violent competition between the nations in the Triwizard Tournament, however, these statements appear as PC lip service, and are undermined by the actual storyline and the character portrayals within the text itself.

Outside of the Triwizard Tournament and the Quidditch World Cup, it is mainly Charles and Bill Weasley's jobs that echo British imperialism. Bill, the oldest Weasley brother, works as a charms breaker for the wizarding bank Gringott's and in this position robs Egyptian tombs of their treasure, bringing them 'home' to Britain, as he puts it. Charlie, the second oldest brother, works

with dragons in Romania, which suggests that the locals need British knowledge to deal with their wild-life. Lisa Anatol comments fittingly:

The Weasley brothers are engaged in ventures that bring apparently superior European knowledge and experience to the 'frontier' – developing areas of the world – and, more importantly, that bring its rewards back 'home' to the heart of the empire. (2003: 164)

ASSIMILATION AND TOKEN INCLUSIONS

While the Durmstrang and Beauxbatons students are the largest group of culturally different people in the novels, there are also some minor characters from different cultures at Hogwarts itself. The twins Padma and Parvati Patil, who are in Harry's year, are presumably from an Indian or Pakistani family, Cho Chang, Harry's love interest in the fourth and fifth novel, is probably Chinese, and Lee Jordan and Angelina Johnson seem to be black. The reason why the reader has to guess many of these characters' ethnicity is that Rowling hardly ever explicitly names the race or ethnic origin of any characters. Literal otherness in the school itself rather than in its visitors is thus only represented in names and marginally in outward appearance, seldom in actual physical difference and never in different cultural practices: Padma, Parvati and Cho are never described in terms of, for instance, skin colour and it is in fact possible that they are just white children bearing exotic names. While Lee Jordan is described as having dread locks when he is first introduced, a very round-about way of stating his skin colour, Angelina's ethnicity is not mentioned at all until the fourth novel when she is suddenly described as 'a tall black girl' (Rowling 2000: 230). Heilman very fittingly calls this late mentioning of Angelina's skin colour a 'diversity afterthought' (2003: 228). Since the ethnicities of pupils are hardly ever mentioned but at the same time all important roles are occupied by whites, the inclusion of these characters appears as 'an attempt to be politically correct rather than an honest attempt to include others' (Heilman & Gregory 2003: 225): they are token inclusions.

The aim of these characters' inclusion is arguably to create an atmosphere of multiculturalism in which questions of race and ethnicity have no impact upon people's lives. Similarly, a member of the audience in one of my talks about this topic argued that there is a thin line between presenting characters from different cultural contexts in such a way as to show that they are a valuable part of the dominant culture while still retaining a culture-specific 'aura', and being patronizing about the cultural differences: Yes, you can make your protagonist black, Indian or Caribbean, and yes, you can make them celebrate Hindu festivals – but to what avail? Will your characters not become unbelievable? Will it not take attention away from the main plot, drown your novel so deeply in political correctness that it bores and alienates the reader? These arguments are very valid, but I still feel that the author has to make a conscious decision with regards to so-called political correctness: why mention the skin colour at all if

it does not have any consequences in the story? Why pretend that you have included racial minorities when all of your main characters are white (and, for that matter, mainly male)? Why involve cross-cultural and cross-racial romantic relationships when everyone ends up with a partner from their own culture anyway?⁷ I agree with Ostry who argues that Rowling's merely casual mentions of the race or ethnic origin of a character produces the message that 'race does not matter, so the differences should not be noticed, much less discussed' (2003: 94). Differences between cultures are then ignored and glossed over rather than understood and, ultimately, embraced. The novels portray 'not integration, and acceptance, but complete assimilation' (Anatol 2003: 174).

It is important to note that the novels actually try to create a world in which race and ethnicity do not matter and where everyone is regarded and judged for who he or she is and not to which cultural or racial group they belong. The novels do not succeed in this aim, however: none of the main characters belongs to a minority group, the minorities at Hogwarts act as white children painted in whichever colour was picked for them, the French characters are arrogant and choosy, and places of evil as well as evil characters are generally from dark spots in Eastern and Northern Europe. Mendlesohn thus argues that the novels are laden with

a muddled morality that cheats the reader: while the books argue superficially for fairness, they actually portray privilege and exceptionalism... in a specifically hereditarian context that protects some while exposing others. (2002: 180)

Real-life prejudices and stereotypes thus play strongly into the presentation of foreigners and minorities in the novels and are confirmed and reinforced throughout the whole series.

BIOLOGICAL DETERMINISM: (FANTASTICAL) CREATURES PERPETUATING REAL-LIFE STEREOTYPES

On the surface, the *Harry Potter*-novels seem to be making a stand against racism and biological (or even cultural) determinism. In fact, many critics define anti-racism as one of the major themes in the books (see for example Ostry 2003 and Whited 2006). Most of the wizards on the good side strive for racial harmony as well as harmony between wizards and non-wizards; the most striking supporters of this attitude are the Weasley family and their Muggle-loving father Arthur in particular. Racism and racist bigotry are widespread only on the dark side (see Zimmermann & Mac Neille 2003: 2). While the Death Eaters are particularly racist concerning Muggles and Muggle-born witches and wizards, it is other dislikeable characters such as the Durmstrang headmaster Karkaroff and the Dursleys who are marked as racist towards real-life cultural groups.⁸ Similarly, Hermione's commitment to the house-elves' liberation has led many critics to compliment J. K. Rowling on her support of social activism and her criticism of inequality and discrimination (see for example Nel 2001 and Carey 2003). Carey even goes as far as hoping that 'a generation of children are... to be

spurred into political activity by Hermione's example' (2003: 107). These critics do not regard the unfortunate naming of Hermione's Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare, S.P.E.W. (see Rowling 2000: 198), as a sign of authorial ambivalence towards Hermione's aims but rather as an important part of her political socialization and education (see Carey 2003: 106). In a similar vein, Nel believes that the main characters' prejudices – against house-elves, for example – are meant to illustrate

that prejudice and hatred is not something that *other* people do. These are powerful beliefs embedded in the culture, which all of us absorb and know, even though we may not be conscious of ever having learned them. (2001: 45)

Though this statement about socialization into stereotypical thinking is very valid, the notion behind Nel's argument is questionable. If Rowling indeed wanted to explicate the power of prejudices and their prevalence in society, the protagonists' prejudices would have to be uncovered and dealt with explicitly within the novels. Yet most of the prejudices exhibited especially by Ron are never challenged, let alone contradicted. I am also struggling to accept Carey's interpretation of the name S.P.E.W. as a deliberate part in Hermione's political socialization: Hermione never shows any signs of regret for having chosen such an unfortunate name, neither does she ever voice any plans to change it into something more practical and user-friendly.

Even though Rowling has apparently attempted to counter xenophobic and racist notions, then, the underlying discourse of the novels actually supports many of these prejudices. Fictional creatures such as the house-elves are represented as inferior and Rowling embraces and reproduces many of the prejudices surrounding other nations and draws them as stock characters: the (biological) descent of a person rather than his or her upbringing is defined as the most influential factor in their socialization. Thus, a student's family's affiliation determines which house he or she will join, along with which comes an array of character traits and virtues (or, in the case of Slytherin, vices). These instances of seemingly inherited patterns of behaviour could be argued to be down to socialization, of course. However, several instances within the novels make it clear that at least the main characters postulate genetic inheritance of character traits, the main proof being Harry's own history: with Harry, Rowling creates a Dickensian character who, despite the worst upbringing imaginable, turns out to be not only a brave hero but a virtuous angel who cannot be tempted by any aspect of the dark side. Furthermore, we are repeatedly told that Harry resembles his father not only in looks but most of all in temperament and daring – all of this without ever really having met him. This characterization is a manifestation of the boy's wish to have known his father and his desire to live up to James' shining example. However, it also proves that nature wins over nurture, that socialization can (and will) be overrun by genetics.

All in all, the racial theory of the Death Eaters that is so heavily condemned in the novels is at the same time reinstated and fortified through the biological

determinism presented in the portrayal of foreigners and in the portrayal of the Death Eater families and of Harry in particular:

Dieser Rassentheorie wird in den Romanen heftig und wortreich widersprochen, gleichzeitig muss man aber festhalten, dass Rowling aus der Geschichte heraus diesem Rassengedanken und dieser Abstammungslehre herzlich wenig entgegenzusetzen hat, denn tatsächlich entsprechen viele ihrer Zentralfiguren diesem Muster.⁹ (Ehgartner 2002: 78)

While Rowling probably intended to make a stand against discrimination and inequality, her depiction of the house-elves in particular supports exactly the opposite sentiment. The elves are believed to be inferior because they lack intelligence, because they are incapable of living independently and because they like to serve humans. If the novels actually opposed the house-elves' enslavement, the characterization of the elves would, at least in some cases, have to contradict these prejudices as presented by the majority of wizards in the novels. It does not, however: Dobby, the house-elf Harry freed from the Malfoy family, is the only elf who actually opposes his enslavement. He is considered a disgrace by the other elves and, more importantly, is seen as a 'weirdo', as the gamekeeper and Care of Magical Creatures-teacher Hagrid puts it (Rowling 2000: 233), by the wizards and witches in the novels. All of the other elves follow the pattern laid out by Winky, a house-elf we meet in *The Goblet of Fire*. She has been found at the scene of a crime and is consequently fired – that is, freed – by her master. Even though everyone agrees that she is innocent, her master frees her as a punishment because he has 'no use for a house-elf who forgets what is due to her master, and to her master's reputation' (Rowling 2000: 124). Winky completely breaks down after this sentence, becomes an alcoholic and loses all will to live (see for example Rowling 2000: 329–30).

The house-elves' behaviour is a reflection of the so-called Sambo Effect. According to this, 'oppression creates a range of childlike behavior and remakes freedom into a punishment for the institutionalized' (Mendlesohn 2002: 179). Because they are socialized into a system that views them as inferior and flawed in several ways, members of discriminated groups grow up believing in and trying to conform to this system. Lana Whited calls this the 'most damaging kind of racism, ... in which the victim takes up victimization' (2006: 1). Even if the house-elves actually like to be enslaved and do not want to change their position, therefore, the resistance to their potential freedom is 'an indication not of the depths of their hearts' desire, but of the depth of their bondage' (Patterson 2004: 112). In the novels, Hermione picks up this subject when she argues with Ron. Countering his assumption that house-elves are happy with their situation, she shouts: 'That's because they're uneducated and brainwashed' (Rowling 2000: 211). Her argument, however, is swept aside and never mentioned again, despite its obvious importance to the elves' situation. Rather, the other witches and wizards declare over and over again that the elves are happy the way they are (which does not imply anything about the justice or injustice of the system of slavery),¹⁰ while the depiction of the house-elves' behaviour – Winky's seemingly

life-long depression over losing her position, the Hogwarts elves' eagerness to serve students and teachers and the elves' desire to fight for Harry in *The Deathly Hallows* – supports the idea of their inferiority and their natural desire to serve.

Even Dobby, as the most liberal elf, is presented as clumsy, naïve, and unaware of many of his rights as a free elf. Thus, he nearly kills Harry in exaggerated and misled attempts to save the boy's life in *The Chamber of Secrets*. He also does not understand the concept of clothing, asks too little payment of his new boss, Professor Dumbledore, and his speech is full of grammatical errors. Furthermore, even though he has found paid employment and approves of being paid, he feels uncomfortable about asking for and being given money. The main argument for the elves' enslavement, that is, the assumption that it is in their nature to serve humans gratuitously, is reinstated and verified through this. Moreover, although Dobby has never felt the adoration for his master that seems to be characteristic of the other house-elves, he now hero-worships Harry as his master. Dobby's adoration for Harry causes Ron to suggest that when they practice stunning, they 'could use Dobby... I bet he'd do anything to help you' (Rowling 2000: 498). Even though Ron is joking, the gist of his words is right: Dobby would indeed, it seems, do anything for Harry. His adoration of course finds its culmination in the final novel when he dies while rescuing Harry from the Malfoys' mansion. His dying words, fittingly, are 'Harry... Potter...' (Rowling 2007: 385). Dobby's adoration for the boy and his obedience towards him suggest that, even though he is now a free elf, he is still in need of a master and thus incapable of living independently.

Harry's treatment of Kreacher,¹¹ the house-elf he 'inherited' from his godfather Sirius, reinforces the notion of the elves' enslavement and their inferiority: Harry commands Kreacher around against his will and makes him obey orders which he knows the elf detests (see for example Rowling 2005: 394–5). While several people criticize Sirius, Kreacher's former owner, for mistreating the elf, Harry's mistreatment of him, importantly, is never condemned or even remarked upon. When in the final novel, however, Harry starts to feel sorry for the elf and treats him with respect, the change in Kreacher's behaviour is remarkable: he grooms himself and the house, is suddenly friendly and pleasant and seems pleased to be able to fulfil his duties to a master again (see for example Rowling 2007: 185). His behaviour underlines the idea that house-elves need a master to look up to and to serve in order to bring out the best in them. The nicer the master is to them, the more obediently they will serve him.

The house-elves' desire for serfdom is highlighted in the last fighting scene of *The Deathly Hallows*: When Kreacher leads the elves to fight against Voldemort, he screams: 'Fight for my master, defender of house-elves' rights!' (Rowling 2007: 588). From Kreacher's point of view, thus, Harry seems to be defending house-elves' rights because he wants them treated nicely – not because he demands equal rights for them. Importantly, furthermore, Kreacher still regards Harry as his master. Whatever he considers elfish rights to be, freedom from enslavement and serfdom are not included. Fittingly, therefore, Hermione and her striving

for house-elves' freedom are forgotten, even though her intended changes for house-elves would have been far more radical.

On top of all this, the house-elves speak, as Philip Nel calls it, 'a pidgin dialect that borders on caricature' (2001: 46). Unlike a pidgin dialect, however, the house-elves do not share a common grammar. While Dobby always speaks of himself in the third person (for example, 'So long has Dobby wanted to meet you, sir'¹² [Rowling 2000: 18]) and lets nearly every sentence trail off with '... ' or '-', Winky uses the third-person form of the verb for everyone including herself (for example, 'I is not sure you did Dobby a favour' [Rowling 2000: 89]).¹³ The elves thus do not share a common language that, even if interpreted as a bastardized version of English, could be considered a language or at least a dialect in its own right. Their language resembles that of children, of migrant workers (see Heilman & Gregory 2003: 245) or of the stereotypic language of African-Americans in the US. The house-elves can then be interpreted as representing black slaves (see e.g. Mendlesohn 2002: 180). Seen from this point of view, their depiction as unintelligent and inferior becomes especially critical.

CULTURAL AND NATIONAL OTHERNESS IN *HARRY POTTER*: CONCLUSION

Through the depiction and, in fact, creation of otherness in the *Harry Potter* novels, different types of selves are created and reinforced. Hogwarts is founded as a nation-like structure through the exclusion of foreigners, Harry is constructed as a benign hero through his friendliness and consideration for seemingly inferior races and Gryffindor and the other houses are fortified as families through the near biological determinism that leads their members to each other (see Rana 2009). The characters and groups presented as Others through their depiction as stupid, evil, arrogant, dangerous or fragile highlight Harry's identity as a courageous and brave wizard. Without them, Harry's identity could not be countered against anything and he would remain pale and uninteresting.

Ethnic and cultural discrimination and bias in children's texts are, as Beryle Banfield states, not 'a personal aberration on the part of an individual author but a reflection of the institutionalized racism that pervades every facet of society' (1985: 37). The prejudices exhibited by Rowling through her work thus in many parts equate those of society as a whole. Her French are arrogant and choosy, her Eastern Europeans barbaric and criminally minded, and her version of black slaves, the house-elves, are naïve, uneducated and servile. While she pays lip service to multiculturalism through the inclusion of token characters (such as Cho Chang) and token actions (such as Hermione's political activism with S.P.E.W.), she reinforces cultural prejudices, racial hierarchies and ideas of biological determinism at the same time.

As such, the novels actually portray the opposite of what multiculturalism implies: not so much a mingling of cultures and a process of mutual learning, but

rather different cultures' suspicious coexistence along well-defined and equally well guarded borders. During the course of the novels, Harry and his friends thus break up their relational ties with ethnic, national and morally foreign Others, and increasingly adhere to the borders between human and non-human. Hagrid's advice as quoted in the title of this article thus rings true for the protagonists' lives: the less they have to do with metaphorical and literal foreigners and the more they stick to their own cultural and biological roots, the happier Harry and his friends are.

NOTES

1. 'Otherness is a relational concept' (*M.R.*).
2. 'an ideological, social and discursive construction' (*M.R.*)
3. See Oziewicz for a more detailed discussion of Britishness and the relicts of imperialism in the novels.
4. Ehgartner and other critics call the Durmstrangs Bulgarians, yet it is not clear where they are from: even though Victor Krum is definitely Bulgarian (he plays for the Bulgarian Quidditch team), Rowling seems to suggest that Durmstrang is located in Northern Europe. In the film *Harry Potter and The Goblet of Fire* (which Rowling authorised before its release), Dumbledore calls the Durmstrangs 'our friends from the North' (Warner Bros 2005). Furthermore, their furred school uniforms suggest cold climate and lead Hermione to the assumption that they are from North-Eastern Europe (see Rowling 2000: 148). Krum tells Hermione about big glaciers and freezing winters at Durmstrang, thus excluding Bulgaria as Durmstrang's home country. Seemingly, then, while there is a British and a French wizarding school, the rest of Europe has to share one institution. For a more detailed discussion of Durmstrang as a 'collective representation of the wild East' (10) see Marek Oziewicz (2010).
5. 'Mainly' in the literal sense since she is half human, half giantess.
6. I do not want to suggest that Ireland belongs to the United Kingdom in any way, but there is evidently a close (cultural) affiliation between the two nations and the British Quidditch fans at the final (despite their sportsmanly admiration of the Bulgarian player Krum) all support the Irish team against the Bulgarians.
7. Harry develops a romantic relationship of sorts with Cho Chang, Hermione with Victor Krum. Both, however, get married inside their own culture and race: Hermione marries Ron, Harry Ron's sister Ginny.
8. Karkaroff for instance distrusts the Hogwarts teachers and students and does not approve of Krum, his favorite pupil, dancing with Hermione at the Yule Ball (see Rowling 2000: 361). Having heard about a baggage handlers' strike in Spain, Uncle Vernon bellows: 'Give 'em a lifelong siesta, I would' (Rowling 2003: 9). Similarly, when Harry returns home with the sick Dudley, Aunt Petunia asks him: 'Did Mrs. Polkiss give you something foreign for tea?' (Rowling 2003: 28). When the Ministry of Magic is taken over by Voldemort, it is the Muggle-born witches and wizards that suffer most from the racist assumptions about their inferiority and criminal nature.
9. 'This racial theory is objected to fiercely and volubly in the novels. At the same time, however, one has to remain aware that Rowling's storyline offers precious little opposition to this racial notion and theory of descent, since many of her central characters are consistent with this pattern' (*M.R.*).
10. Ron is the most fervent in his opposition to Hermione's ideas, and regularly repeats the argument that 'they. Like. It. They like being enslaved' (Rowling 2000: 198). The gamekeeper Hagrid's opinion on the matter is very similar: 'It's in their (that is, the house-elves', *M.R.*) nature ter look after humans, that's what they like'. When Hermione argues that Dobby likes his freedom, Hagrid replies: 'Yeh get weirdoes in every breed. I'm not saying there isn't the odd elf who'd take freedom, but yeh'll never persuade most of them

ter do it' (Rowling 2000: 233). 'If you want to know what a man's like, take a good look at how he treats his inferiors, not his equals' (Rowling 2000: 456) is what Harry's godfather Sirius contributes to the discussion about Winky's dismissal by her master. On a first glance, this statement may be interpreted as supporting Hermione's cause. Looking at it a little more closely, however, one can see that it actually supports the theory of the house-elves' inferiority. It fits Mendlesohn's interpretation of Rowling's fictional world as a modern liberal social system 'where differences are accepted but we all know who is inferior to whom and treat them nicely because they *are* inferior' (2002: 170): The notion that Winky is indeed inferior to her master and therefore should be treated differently (if nicely) is not questioned.

11. Note the pronunciation of the elf's name: he is a *creature*, not a person.
12. See also: 'Dobby has heard of your greatness, sir, but of your goodness, Dobby never knew ...' (Rowling 2000: 21).
13. See also: 'You is surely Harry Potter' (Rowling 2000: 89) and 'House-elves is not paid' (Rowling 2000: 89).

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