The Persistence of Gender-Based Stereotypes in the Language of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* and *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*

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Abstract

Harry Potter-series are widely popular fantasy-novels that have influenced young readers all over the world on various issues, one being gender. Many arguments have been proposed to explain how the Harry Potter-series has a gender-biased attitude. Although previous research has covered a wide variety of claims, this essay will focus on examining the language and word choices made to describe the male and female characters of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* and *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. The word choices consist of both traditionally masculine adjectives and verbs as well as adjectives and verbs with negative connotations. To obtain a comprehensive view of the gender-biased tone of the two novels, the essay will not only examine the language, but also investigate if there is a gender-biased way of portraying the characters based on how their behaviour is described. These observations will be combined with previous research which includes Sara Mills’ investigation of sexist language and indirect sexism, Heilman and Donaldson’s critical perspective on the Harry Potter-novels, and Turner-Bowker’s study of stereotyping in young readers’ literature. These studies support my arguments and show that that there is a gender-bias in the way the characters are described, both through language and in the way that the character’s act in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* and *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*.

**Keywords:** Stereotyping; indirect sexism; language; Harry Potter;
J.K Rowling’s *Harry Potter*-series is one of the most popular fantasy series ever written and have influenced young reader’s ideas on numerous issues, one being gender (Tries 472). The novels have been well regarded for the strong heroine, Hermione Granger. However, despite the fact that she is portrayed as an intelligent and brave problem solver, there is still an underlying gender-bias in the way she and other female characters are described. Accordingly, this has resulted in different views where some literary critics claim that the books feature women in secondary positions of power, promoting female and male cultural stereotypes (Heilman and Donaldson 139), whereas opponents insist that the female characters are fully invested in the adventures and are the source of logic (Bell 5,6). This essay will show that there is a gender-bias in the way the characters are described, both through language and in the way that the character’s act in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* and *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*¹. The *Harry Potter*-series consists of eight novels, whereas *The Philosopher’s Stone* (1997) is the first novel and *The Goblet of Fire* (2000) is the fourth novel of the series. I chose to investigate *The Philosopher’s Stone* because it is the first novel of the series where we are earliest introduced to the characters and the language. *The Goblet of Fire* was chosen because the characters become teenagers and the Triwizard Tournaments take place, where gender roles become most salient. By analysing these two books, this essay will also investigate and show that there has not been a change in how the genders are portrayed. Even though research regarding the *Harry Potter*-series and the issue of gender stereotypes has been analysed in previous

¹ From now on I will refer to *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* and *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* to *The Philosopher’s Stone* and *The Goblet of Fire*
literary studies, there is a sparsity of researchers investigating the language of the *Harry Potter*-series. To clarify, previous studies have briefly mentioned the distinction between adjectives and verbs targeting the different genders, yet they do not show to what extent the distinction occurs or if the word choices become more neutral later in the series. Naturally, language is a major component to investigate when reviewing a text’s gender-biased tone because it is a natural tool, which reflects our reality as we perceive it. Therefore, a discriminatory form of language originates from larger societal forces which show an inequality of power in our society, and is thus important to examine (Mills 1, 2). However, it must be noted that the time difference of the novels’ years of publication differs with three years. By showing that there has not been a change of language between the two novels, it could be considered an exaggeration to say that it reflects societal structure. Also, a time difference of three years is fairly limited. Still, the *Harry Potter*-series is considered to be a part of the mass production and pop culture, so it is important to show the lack of reactions towards the language during these three years. Moreover, it is at the young age of 3-4-year-old children begin to acquire understanding about gender stereotypes (Turner-Bowker 462), and therefore it is important to identify these stereotypes, particularly in a widely popular series as the *Harry Potter*-series where there are divided perceptions of the gender issue among critics.

To investigate this, I will need to present the theory of feminist literary criticism and the phenomenon ‘indirect sexism’. Feminist literary criticism is important to introduce since reviewing stereotypical ideas in literature is mostly done within the framework of feminist literary criticism. The phenomenon ‘indirect sexism’ is included to show how gender stereotyping is formulated through language. Moreover, this study will involve literary critics supporting the claim that *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* and *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* involve a gender biased language and stereotypical behaviour of female characters. Finally, I will combine this with my own arguments and a calculation of gender stereotypical adjectives and verbs that will be followed by a discussion and analysis.

**Indirect Sexism and Stereotyping Language**

Feminist theory presents different frameworks that can be used to analyse different aspects of the patriarchal structure of society. However, Eliza T Dresang suggests that
feminist literary criticism is more limited than general feminist theory, and the way feminist critics test their theories relies on the chosen framework, since the texts are read in different contexts. For instance, texts can be interpreted through women’s experiences or we can study the examples of gender structure in language (217).

Sexist language has been debated since the 1960s by feminist groups who had the ambition to change language which diminishes women. According to Sara Mills the debate about sexist language has expanded and is not only a topic that revolves around feminist theory (1). Consequently, sexist language can be seen in different contexts; therefore, Mills limits her research and bases it on interrogating the definition “the practices whereby someone foregrounds gender when it is not the most salient feature” (9). This is established through a liberal-feminist notion that sexism is based on an error made by the writer or speaker due to lack of awareness and that the error can be revised once it is brought to their attention.

In addition, Mills presents the phenomenon indirect sexism as a concept based on the values of linguistics (10). To clarify, indirect sexism is the kind of practice that is identified through the use of linguistic traits, which means disregarding non-linguistic elements such as stereotypical ideas, for instance “women like pink” (11). Thus, indirect sexism includes the investigation of the choices of words, pronouns, naming, transitivity and processes. ‘Naming’ involves processes like deciding a name for someone and using existing words to denote something. Accordingly, naming is an essential part of indirect sexism and simultaneously a process that also affects stereotypical perceptions. It relies on us regarding language as a system reflecting our reality as we perceive it. Therefore, the distinct gender structure that lies in our social sphere results in gender stereotypes being embedded in language (44). Consequently, it could be suggested that if language presents females in a derogative way, social change of the female position must take place for the words to reflect that change, whereas other theorist think inversely (if language would change, people will change). However, Mills, proposes that instead of seeing language as a reflection of societal values, it could be seen as a system that contains certain ideas. These ideas are continuously relived to the extent that they are not noticeable and they become normalized (44). Despite this, Mills states that there are words that have negative connotations and are regularly used to describe women. She argues:

The adjectives ‘shrill’ and ‘feisty’ are used almost exclusively to describe women, and seem to have connotations of excess, even when they are used
positively. ‘Shrill’ generally presupposes that certain women’s voices are unpleasantly high or loud, in relation to an assumed female norm of quietness and a male norm of low pitch. ‘Feisty’ is used to refer to women who are strong and independent, but there is an association of this word with contexts, which are relatively negative, which leads to the term having connotations of excessiveness. Although ‘feisty’ can be used in positive ways, it is generally used to refer to someone who is seen as exceptionally assertive thus suggesting that women should not act in this way. Underlying these terms is a contrast with a male norm: males are ‘independent’ and ‘strong’ by right but not ‘feisty’; male voices are at the ‘normal’ pitch, and even when they are high, they would generally not be described as ‘shrill’. (44-45)

Mills suggests that this kind of naming (denotation) is a typical example of indirect sexism and still occurs in modern literature when female characters are presented. It is a way of categorizing people and nourishing certain associations (45). However, indirect sexism is not always expressed consciously since some linguistic trends are engrained to the extent that they are not noticeable. Still, this subtle sexism has begun to be recognized and it is suggested that despite its elusive expression it still originates in women’s insecure position in society and in stereotypical ideas about gender (158, 160).

There are various aspects to analyze when identifying these stereotypical trends, but it is important to limit the research to specific aspects. Diane Turner-Bowker presents a collection of studies that investigate different features promoting stereotypes, for instance, characters’ roles, their emotions and how they are described in various lexical terms (465, 467). Besides the investigation of female characters who support the males’ strength and leadership (Nilsen 162), Turner-Bowker puts emphasis on the examination of the words chosen to describe female and male characters (467). In addition, she suggests that adjectives chosen in young readers’ literature are different for the male and female characters. Thus, the male characters are described with lexical terms that connote leadership, masculinity, and strength. Meanwhile, the females are described with words signifying passivity, softness, and femininity (467). Turner-Bowker clarifies that the author's gender is not important to her research about stereotyping. While, it is possible to include the author’s gender in the research as an interesting factor of a discussion, yet, it is not decisive. Furthermore, Turner-Bowker’s analytic data research involves an investigation of both female and male authors and includes both female and male raters from the University of Rhode Island (undergraduates with different backgrounds). They were unaware of the hypotheses and were instructed to identify adjectives and connect them to nouns or pronouns.
Additionally, there was a difference in the most commonly used adjectives between the male and females.

<table>
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<th>Female adjectives</th>
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<th>Male adjectives</th>
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<td>beautiful</td>
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<td>sick</td>
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<td>furious</td>
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<tr>
<td>scared</td>
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Turner-Bowker concludes that the finding proves that female and male characters were presented unequally, and that this partly depends on the differences in adjectives (474). In addition, the differences show that unlike the female characters, the male characters were described as active and powerful, thus cementing gender stereotypes. As we see in the table above, some frequently used adjectives to characterize the male roles were ‘brave’, ‘proud’ and ‘furious’, whilst examples of adjectives to characterize females were ‘scared’, ‘frightened’, ‘sweet’ and ‘kind’. Turner-Bowker states that the adjectives that targeted the males were related to independent and heroic roles and the adjectives that described the females were associated with supportive, passive and dependent roles. However, in my own observations I have not involved words as ‘hungry’, ‘tired’, ‘fat’ or ‘sick’. In this aspect, I do not agree with Turner-Bowker and I will not include these words because I do not consider them to be gendered.

**Critical Perspectives on the Harry Potter-series**

There is a disagreement between literary critics concerning the feminist perspective of the *Harry Potter*-series. Critics like Bell give the novels credit for their strong female characters, which means that Hermione is the real hero of the story, while other critics argue the novels involve a gender-biased language which shows females as fragile and supportive characters. Bell argues against the gender-biased tone of the novels:

Hermione’s essential characteristic, and her role within the Trio, is to act as the brain; she is the source of logic, knowledge and rational thinking. Nearly always Hermione solves the puzzle, spots the clue, provides the insight or answers the question. (7)
Hermione is a character with strong features who has an essential role in the story. However, this is a recurring and relatively protracted argument when critics defend the novels’ neutral gender position. It is seldom we see the opponents state that the language is unbiased. Instead, they let this issue be excluded from their research, and continue to argue for the strong features the female characters possess, such as intelligence. Still, these statements have met several counterarguments saying that the knowledge the females have of magic is extensively used to support Harry’s quests.

Elizabeth Heilman and Trevor Donaldson argue that even though Hermione is well read and contributes to solving cases using her knowledge, she is not very active in the adventures (145, 146). Instead, Ron and Harry are more adventurous, and act more bravely and powerfully, while Hermione is shown as more fearful and emotional.

Heilman and Donaldson exemplify:

Hermione shrieks, screams and speaks “nervously” — reactions the boys do not have. Though Hermione’s knowledge helps him along, Harry sends her back. She agrees with this decision, throws her arms around Harry, and says “Harry—you’re a great wizard you know.” He says, “I’m not as good as you.” And she responds, “Books and cleverness! There are more important things—friendship and bravery and—oh Harry be careful!” Thus, Harry’s ability to make friends and be brave establishes him as the true great one, and he is the great one in every book. (146)

Heilman and Donaldson suggest that when it comes to a conflict, the female characters in the novels respond differently than the male characters. Hermione becomes more like a helpmate whose knowledge only reaches a certain point, and then she submits the information to Harry and Ron who bravely fight the battle. This is shown in the scene from *The Philosopher’s Stone* when the three are faced with the troll and the boys heroically save Hermione who “couldn’t move, she was still flat against the wall, her mouth open with terror” (*Philosophers Stone* 188). Even though Hermione’s intelligent characteristics can also be perceived as heroic, there is still a stereotypical gender idea that shows a female in distress and males who fight for her. Besides Donaldson and Heilman’s arguments regarding Hermione’s passivity in *The Philosopher’s Stone*, they also argue that Rowling portrays females as fragile and emotional and claim that it is also a stereotypical aspect that is shown throughout the book (149, 150). Females are repeatedly crying in the book, which the males rarely do, even after deaths. When Hermione is crying in the bathroom, Paravati Patil tells Lavender about it. Thus, females are portrayed as gossipy, crying and giggly characters. Furthermore, Heilman
and Donaldson do not only respond to the stereotypical behaviour of the different genders, but they also react to the stereotypical language. They exemplify with the repeated “terrified voice” and “petrified whisper” Hermione speaks in, and state that the males are not described in this way (149). Dresang agrees with Heilman and Donaldson and notes that Hermione’s female stereotypical behaviour is reinforced by the language in the novels (222). Dresang claims:

Rowling allows Hermione to lose sight of her own strength and revert to stereotypic behaviour, and she facilitates this by employing gender-related stereotypic words to Hermione’s behaviour again and again. Repeatedly, Rowling has Hermione “shriek,” “squeak,” “wail,” “squeal,” and “whimper,” verbs never applied to the male characters in the book. (223)

Dresang follows this by criticizing the adverbial phrases and states that Hermione is often crying and acts “hysterically” (223). The language differs when Harry and Ron are described and portrays them as much more sensible and calmer characters. Even Minerva McGonagall is described with negative adjectives, for instance “unfair and hasty”, and she is said to observe her students as a “wrathful eagle” (235). Liza Anatol also suggests that the students do not see her as charismatic, and instead look up to Dumbledore. Furthermore, Anatol claims that most of the female characters in the novels have conventional professions for women. For instance, Pomfrey is the school nurse, Professor Sprout is a professor in Herbology, Professor Trelawney is described as an erratic and nervous teacher, and finally Madam Pince, the librarian looks like an “underfed vulture” (19). Ruthann Mayes-Elma explains that a characteristic way of stereotyping and marginalizing female characters is to portray them as meek and nurturing, or as the evil stepmother type (18). This is applicable to the Harry Potter-novels since most females have a nurturing character, except for Aunt Petunia who is depicted as the evil stepmother.

According to Heilman and Donaldson, the Harry Potter-series is complex with various representations of gender, and the last books present females in more powerful and richer roles (140). They state that there has been an expansion of the number of female characters in the later books, which even show females as villains, for instance Bellatrix Lestrange. Moreover, Angelina Johnson’s role develops in The Goblet of Fire and she is presented as the captain of Gryffindor’s Quidditch-team and as a potential competitor for the Triwizard Tournament (142). Accordingly, Bell suggests that The Goblet of Fire represents third-wave feminism and is the novel that features women as powerful activists (11). However, Heilman and Donaldson do not seem as convinced,
and they argue that even though some female characters have developed, the later novels still show females as marginalized and stereotyped (140). Similar to the first Harry Potter-novel, *The Goblet of Fire* also involves stereotypical female professions. For instance, the journalist Rita Skeeter makes her first appearance, reporting news and gossip for *The Daily Prophet*. Heilman and Donaldson argue that even though her character is ambitious and persistent, she is still perceived as manipulative and untrustworthy. She is constantly discredited by Harry who even gets “nauseated” by the image of her (*Goblet of Fire* 23). Moreover, Rita Skeeter’s articles are popular and get attention, but she is repeatedly twisting the truth, which gives the impression that her career is built by lies (Heilman and Donaldson 145). Still, Rita Skeeter is not the only female character who is described as enjoying gossip. Heilman and Donaldson claim that most of the females are portrayed as “giggly, emotional, gossipy and anti-intellectual” (150). There are numerous occasions where the book makes references to giggling girls, and never to giggling boys. When Victor Krum appears at Hogwarts he is surrounded by a group of giggling girls who spy on him (*Goblet of Fire* 317). Even Cho Chang has giggling girls around her, and Parvati Patil “falls into a fit of giggles” (*Goblet of Fire* 396, 401).

It is not just the giggly personality trait that leads to a gender-biased tone in the novels. *The Goblet of Fire* shows on several occasions the importance of female appearance, especially when it is time for the Yule Ball. Heilman and Donaldson state that the book encourages girls to get makeovers so they will be picked by the boys as dates. They argue:

> Hermione is only presented as the attractive date of Viktor Krum after she has a form of plastic surgery. She lets her teeth remain shorter after a corrective spell. She is transformed like Cinderella and, like many tomboys in teen novels, into a “princess.” She becomes physically acceptable. (151)

It is only a limited group of girls who hold a certain standard of beauty and get dates to the Yule Ball. When Harry and Ron look for dates, Ron says “we don’t want to end up with a pair of trolls” and he mocks Eloise for her acne and later admits that he would “take the best-looking girl even if she is horrible” (*Goblet of Fire* 333). The “best-looking girls” in the book are described to be the Veelas. According to Heilman and Donaldson, the Veelas are portrayed as male fantasy sex objects who seduce and confuse males. Moreover, the Veelas are considered to be semi-human, which supports the argument that females are influenced by unattainable beauty-ideals (152). I do not
agree with Heilman and Donaldson’s argument because Rowling might have had a different purpose. Rowling may have wanted to advocate that certain ideal of beauty is inhumane and chose to use the Veelas as a symbol for the unrealistic beauty standards. However, the males do not seem concerned about their appearance. Heilman and Donaldson argue that this is typical for the hegemonic male. Hegemonic masculinity refers to the masculinity that is culturally dominant, and that is straight, strong and leading. This is not only oppressing towards women, but also towards numerous men that do not reach these standards (155). The hegemonic male enjoys sports and has access to money. Neville Longbottom does not have the masculine hegemonic interests. He is bad at sports and instead he is interested in Herbology, and therefore he is perceived as a wimp and repeatedly mocked (158). *The Goblet of Fire* still has strong fearless men in the leading roles. For instance, in the Triwizard Tournament, Fleur Delacour competes against three males but ends up last. Even in the second task she gets stuck in weed and does not succeed to save her own sister. Harry ends up rescuing her instead (147). Similar to *The Philosopher’s Stone*, *The Goblet of Fire* shows females in secondary position in need to be rescued by men.

Observations and Analysis

As shown above, it is clear that there has been research that shows that there are stereotypical ideas of gender in the way female characters act and how they are described. Literary critics demonstrate the gender-biased attitude through pointing out females’ passivity and emotion, the portrayal of men as heroes, stereotypical female domains, female appearance and the gender-biased language. However, there are aspects of *The Philosopher’s Stone* and *The Goblet of Fire* that have not been brought to attention in the investigation of the stereotypical behaviour and language. For instance, gender stereotypical words like “squeak”, “shriek”, “wail”, “whimper” have been mentioned, yet there are words as “sniffy”, “small voice”, “bossy” and “trembling” that previous researchers have not emphasized. These words have been chosen because they have negative connotations. ‘Squeak’ and ‘shriek’ have connotations of excess while ‘tremble’ and ‘whimper’ have connotations of weakness. Also, it is important to examine the traditionally masculine words, for instance “angry”, “proud” or “demand”. These words have been chosen because they have connotations
of intimidation, strength and honour. Moreover, there is an absence of studies that examines the “traditionally masculine” adjective and verbs in the *Harry Potter*-series. In order to analyse the stereotypical language, it is necessary to show how females are marginalized, but also to view the males’ stereotypical masculine way of expressing themselves. Moreover, by examining the traditionally masculine words, we can also see how females are disadvantaged. In addition, it is of importance not only to mention that these words differ when the male and female characters are described, but also to what extent they differ. To do this, a selection of adjectives and verbs with negative connotations has been made, and a wider range of these words has been chosen. The calculations have been made by downloading *The Philosopher’s Stone* and *The Goblet of Fire* as E-books and typing the chosen words by using the windowpane (Ctrl+F).

Here, it is shown that females are overrepresented when Rowling uses verbs and adjectives with negative connotations in *The Philosopher’s Stone*. Although some of the words were used to describe both males and females, they are used in different contexts and portray the characters differently. For instance, if we examine the verb “‘tremble’, when Hagrid speaks “his every syllable trembled with rage” (*Philosopher’s Stone* 54) in contrast to Hermione, whose “lip trembled, and she suddenly dashed at Harry and threw her arms around him” (*Philosopher’s Stone* 308). This shows that Hagrid is presented as powerful and Hermione as fearful and vulnerable. The verb “squeal” was equally used when describing male and females and the adjective “nervous/nervously” was mostly used when describing males, even “whimper” was
only used related to males. However, the book involves a higher number of male characters (45 males 29 females), and more of the verbs and adjectives are used to describe male characters. Therefore, it is remarkable that females still are overrepresented in the use of these lexical terms.

The chart above shows that females still are overrepresented when Rowling uses verbs and adjectives with negative connotations in *The Goblet of Fire*. However, similar to *The Philosopher’s Stone*, the adjective “nervous” is mostly used when the male characters are described and the verb “whimper” is equally used for males and females. Therefore, Rowling uses the same verbs with negative connotation for males as she did in *The Philosopher’s Stone*. However, the adjectives “shrill” and “bossy” are almost equally used to describe both males and females, which in this later novel results in a small change. Still, females are again overrepresented in every other word with negative connotation, for instance “shriek”, “giggle” and “tremble”. The contrast becomes clearer if we pick a section of the book and read the words with negative connotations in context, for instance at a Quidditch- game: “‘They’re going to crash’ shrieked Hermione. ‘They’re not’ roared Ron. ‘Lynch is’ yelled Harry.” (*Goblet of Fire* 96). Moreover, when the females laugh, it mostly occurs foolishly. For instance, “Hermione was overcome with such a strong fit of the giggles.” (71), or “Groups of giggling girls often turned up to spy on him from behind bookshelves” (268).
The chart also shows that there has been an increase in the use of these adjectives and verbs. However, it shall be taken into consideration that *The Philosopher’s Stone* is 330 pages long and *The Goblet of Fire* is 616 pages long. Furthermore, there is still a higher number of male characters in *The Goblet of Fire* (50 males and 33 females), which results in more words being used to describe the males.

The chart above shows more traditionally masculine adjectives and verbs. These lexical items were used to describe males to a greater extent than females. As mentioned earlier, males are mostly focused on in the Harry Potter-books, simply because there is a higher number of male characters. In addition, two of the three main characters are male, so as a result there are more words used to describe them. Therefore, that the statistics show that the males are overrepresented with certain adjectives and verbs may not be crucial to prove a stereotypical language. However, the result we see in the third and fourth chart is that there is a large difference between males and females where males are overrepresented, while the first and second chart show females with a higher result. Moreover, there is not a single part of the book where the females are described with the adjective “great” and this cannot be defended by stating that the males are mostly focused on. Meanwhile, the males are angry or speak/looking “proud/proudly” up to 9-10 times in the book, while the females “shriek” or speak in a “trembling voice”. Furthermore, the third chart shows that the females are described as angry to a lesser extent than males, and when Hermione is finally described as angry she is “hissing at
them as an angry goose” (Philosopher’s Stone 166). This results in females being ridiculed when they show strong emotion, while the male characters are described as powerful when they show these emotions.

The fourth chart shows that males are still overrepresented when Rowling uses traditionally masculine verbs and adjectives in The Goblet of Fire. There is not a single part of the book when a female speaks “bravely” or “demanding”. However, there are parts of the book when the females are angry or fighting. Occasionally when the females are angry, they a described in a pejorative way. For instance, during the Quidditch-game: “The veela on the other side of the field leapt to their feet, tossed their hair angrily, and started to dance again” (Goblet of Fire 93). The females are rarely described with powerful angry outbursts, instead they wave their hair around in a sensual way.

The kinds of word choices shown in the chart are related to indirect sexism, which means that they are not always expressed intentionally by the author, and could be altered when pointed out to him/her. Additionally, in discussions regarding a gender-bias in the Harry Potter-series, I have been questioned by a fellow student who wondered how there could be a gender-bias since J.K Rowling is herself a female. My response was that it is possible for anyone, regardless of gender, to use a stereotyping language, since this often occurs at times unconsciously, as we are so ingrained with
the word choices we make that the sexist word choices are almost not noticeable. The reason why some word choices are deeply rooted depends on the gender stereotypes in our society, which later is reflected in our language. Therefore, it is important to break from gender stereotypical thinking so it reflects the language in young readers’ literature. Seeing that it is at a young age that we are receptive to stereotypes, it is important that young readers’ do not read about females that are constantly “shrieking”, “trembling”, or “sniffling”, because it will give the impression that women are insecure and weak, and young men could be pressured to feel macho.

Beyond the word choices found in *The Philosopher’s Stone* and *The Goblet of Fire*, there is a certain stereotypical behaviour that the female characters possess which previous literary critics have excluded from their research. For instance, when Hermione Granger is introduced in the book, she is described to have “a bossy sort of voice” (*Philosopher’s Stone* 112). She is also hectic and talks very fast, which contributes to the audience perceiving her as frantic, particularly in contrast Harry and Ron who in this scene sit back, calmer and says “Whatever house I’m in, I hope she’s not in it” (113). Harry and Ron are often seen as more relaxed and reasonable, even though Hermione is the problem solver. Hermione’s hasty attitude is reinforced by the verbs with negative connotations. For instance, she is described with verbs like ‘shrieking’ or ‘giggling’, which the males rarely are. Moreover, Hermione has a condescending attitude and Harry and Ron perceive her as annoying. Harry and Ron’s unaccepting attitude towards Hermione is seen throughout the first half of the book, and leaves Hermione in a position of always having to prove herself to the boys. Eventually, Hermione is accepted by them after assisting them with her knowledge of magic. However, their disapproval of her seems based on her emotional manners. She is described as “having her bad temper” (173), “giving a rare smile” (143) and “marching away with her nose in the air” (178). Hermione’s stereotypical female character and the boys’ disapproval of her become clear after their encounter with the dog Fluffy:

“She stood up glared at them. ‘I hope you are pleased with yourself. We could all have been killed or worse, expelled. Now, if you don’t mind, I’m going to bed.’ Ron stared after her, his mouth open. ‘No we don’t, mind’ he said. ‘You think we dragged her along, wouldn’t you?’ . . . Hermione was now refusing to speak to Harry and Ron, but she was such a bossy know-it-all that they saw this as an added bonus.” (173-176)

In this passage, Hermione’s behaviour almost becomes a parody of smart women. She seems very assertive and nags the others, which leaves an opportunity for Ron to
nonchalantly insult her. In addition, Harry and Ron are pleased when she ignores them and instead of being described as a smart and decisive young woman, she is a “bossy know-it-all”. They do not care about Hermione at first and they belittle her, making her seem like an irritating character. In this paragraph, we see that Hermione has an excessive way of expressing herself, in a rather emotional way, making the boys look more calm and sensible. However, many readers may perceive her behaviour as amusing and characteristic. It is common that people find entertainment in stereotypical characters, perhaps because they are easily analysed and do not require a challenging interpretation (Turner-Bowker 463).

Even though there are literary critics like Bell who state that Hermione develops into an independent young woman in *The Goblet of Fire*, there are examples that show the opposite, which has not been mentioned in previous research. As in *The Philosopher’s Stone*, Hermione is still repeatedly defended by the males. This is shown when Malfoy mocks Hermione because of her muggle-background:

‘Hermione’s a witch,’ Harry snarled. ‘Have it your own way, Potter,’ said Malfoy, grinning maliciously. ‘If you think they can’t spot a Mudblood, stay where you are, ’ ‘You watch your mouth!’ shouted Ron. ‘Never mind, Ron,’ said Hermione quickly, seizing Ron’s arm to restrain him as he took a step towards Malfoy. . . ‘Come on,’ Hermione repeated, and she pulled Harry and Ron up the path again. (*Goblet of Fire* 104, 105)

This shows how Harry and Ron are blustered, ready to battle for Hermione, who stands in the background and tries to restrain them. Here, Hermione can be interpreted as calm, rational and responsible. Although it can also be read as a gender-normative situation, where the males assert themselves and the female does not. The intimidating manner the males possess reoccurs in later in the book. For instance, the entrance that the Durmstrang and the Beauxbaton parties make when they arrive to Hogwarts is clearly different. To clarify, the Beauxbaton party is not passive, however, they strut in with robes made of silk, shivering and “staring up at Hogwarts with apprehensive looks on their faces” (*Goblet of Fire* 206). The entrance the Beauxbaton party makes is not perceived as intimidating, neither does it make a powerful impression. However, the Durmstrangs arrive in a massive skeletal-looking black ship moving “slowly and magnificent”, creating huge waves and ruckus, scaring Madame Maxime’s horses. The males march in determined and leave the audience whispering, which is different from the reaction the Beauxbaton’s party get. Instead the Beauxbatons receive flirtatious
looks from the boys around them, which proves the stereotypical gender roles that females shall be admired for their looks, and men for their abilities.

Conclusion
To summarize, both literary critics’ and my own observations prove that there are stereotypical ways that the characters are described in *The Philosopher’s Stone* and *The Goblet of Fire*, both through language and how the characters behave in the novels. Although some female characters’ roles have developed and received more attention, there is no significant change of the gender-biased tone of the later book. This depends on the varied word choices to describe males and females, as well as the arguments that show stereotypical ideas such as females being rescued by males, the importance of appearance for females, and females as more emotional. The stereotypical behaviour that appears in the novels is similar to Turner-Bowker’s study, which is that the female characters are perceived as more emotional than the male characters, and that we repeatedly find the females in more passive roles supporting the male characters. Moreover, the difference in the adjectives and verbs to describe male and females reinforces the stereotypical gender roles. For instance, when females are seen “shrieking” while males “roar” this encourages the idea of females as tense and hysterical, and males as powerful, and thus shows outdated gender values. However, Mills’ research about indirect sexism suggests that this kind of gender-biased language is not always expressed intentionally by the author because we are engrained with certain lexical items. Either we must change gender structures in our society to transform the language, or we shall start with identifying these errors, altering the language to create a change in society. Therefore, it is important to read the *Harry Potter*-series with the gender perspective and reflect over how different characters are portrayed. Moreover, it is necessary to pay attention to these portrayals and word choices, because the Harry Potter-series has a huge cultural impact. Over 450 million books have been sold and they have been translated in 67 different languages (Brown and Patterson 522). This shows that the series has a global cultural influence and targets readers all over the world. Therefore, it is important to make people aware of a gender-biased language and stereotypical characters. We should discuss the issue on a global scale and aim to have a gender-neutral perspective of society.
Works Cited


