

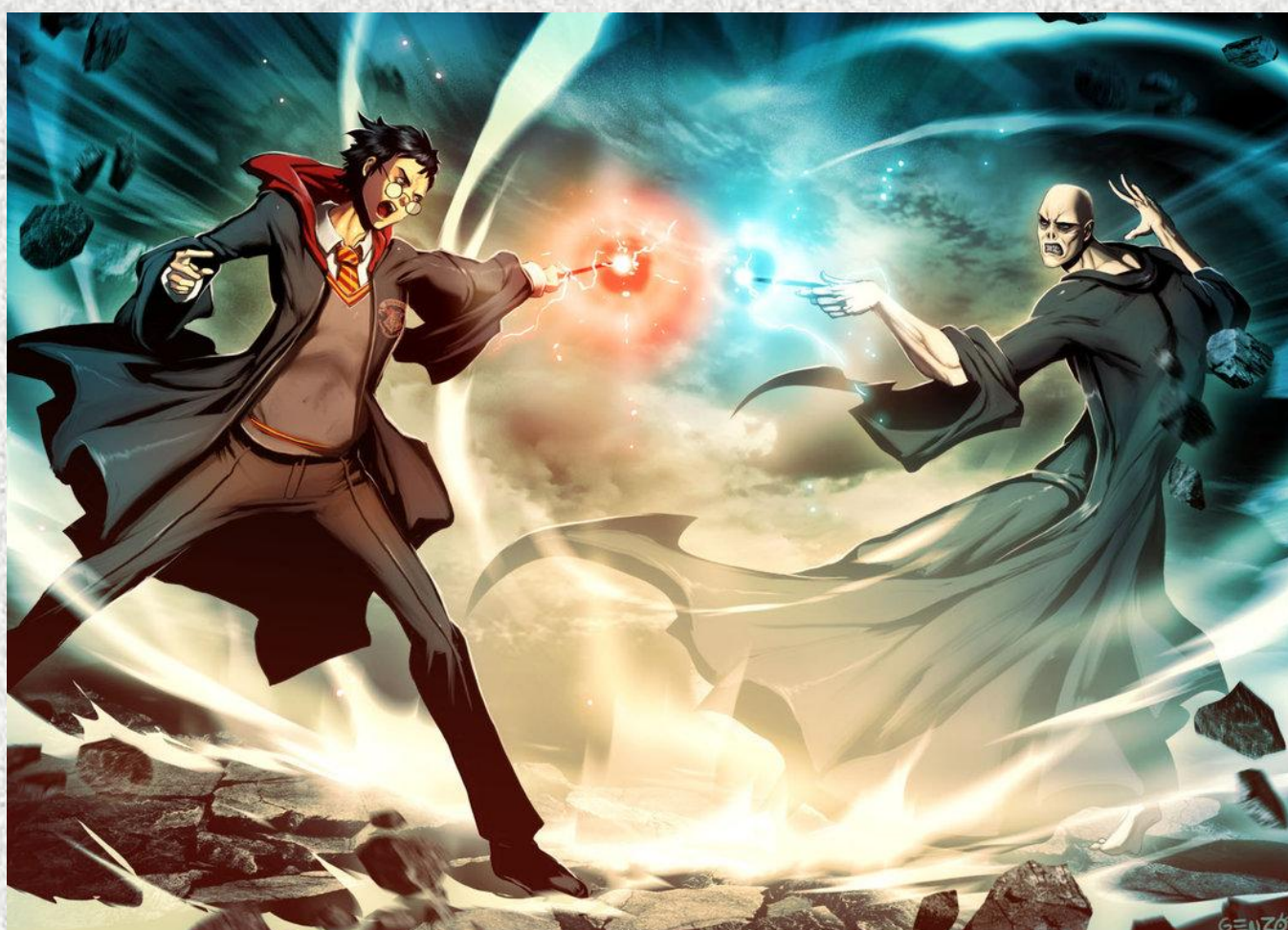
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# CHARMING AND BEWITCHING: CONSIDERING THE *HARRY POTTER* SERIES

Sara Martín Alegre (ed.)





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## Preface: Transforming Fans' Passion into Academic Work (*Sara Martín Alegre*)

The 33 essays on the *Harry Potter* series that the reader will find in this volume have been written by fourth-year students of the 'Llicenciatura en Filologia Anglesa' (four-year BA in 'English Philology') and of the 'Grau en Estudis Anglesos' (four-year BA in 'English Studies', replacing the 'Llicenciatura') offered by the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. All of them, and up to 12 more (some of them auditors), took my subject 'English Cultural Studies: The *Harry Potter* Case' in the Winter/Spring semester of 2014.

This is actually the second volume I edit and publish based on their work for the course. The first one was *Addictive and Wonderful: The Experience of Reading the Harry Potter Series*, which I published in May 2014 on my university's repository, the 'Dipòsit Digital de Documents de la UAB' (see: <http://ddd.uab.cat/record/118225/>). More than 430 persons have downloaded it so far, which is more than I would have expected for a volume written by undergraduate students. If *Charming and Bewitching: Considering the Harry Potter Series* is half that successful I will be certainly satisfied.

As you may guess, I have used the *Harry Potter* course as a testing ground for teaching methodologies which are new to me. I might never teach the course again if the Ministry of Education's plans to transform our four-year BA degree into a three-year version proceed; the fourth-year electives, which is what this course was, might simply vanish. This is why I wanted to leave something behind, not just a memento for those committed students who took the course, but something which other lovers of *Harry Potter* might enjoy. *Addictive and Wonderful*, of which I am very proud as a university teacher (and as a 'Potterhead'), is a collection of more than 50 personal essays in which students recall their experience of reading the series as children. It is

proof that for the generation born in the late 1980s and early to mid 1990s Rowling's saga was an event of enormous significance, arguably the main one in terms of how they became readers.

*Charming and Bewitching* is, to be honest, more conventional (but not less exciting) as it gathers together the academic papers written by the students to validate their credits. That was, precisely, the 'problem' with the course: no matter how thrilled we all felt by the chance to discuss *Harry Potter* together, our academic duties had to be fulfilled: the students' in proving their proficient command of English and of the required academic skills; mine in teaching them how to turn a fan's passion into proper academic work (as we do in Cultural Studies all the time).

The method I chose was to draw a list of 50 topics connected with the series, for them to choose and develop. Because of the individual choices and my own selection of the papers, which has led me to disregard just a few for publication, some topics have not been finally covered (I am particularly missing here James Potter). One topic, Sirius Black, I kept off-limits, as a strategy to embarrass myself into finally writing the long overdue article on everyone's favourite character (still in progress). I have decided to arrange the volume simply following the students' surnames in alphabetical order, concerned that any other arrangement would show asymmetries. Feel free, however, to navigate the papers as you wish and to enjoy the connections.

The instructions students received were that they should write an argumentative paper of an extension between 2,500 and 3,000 words (this corresponds to a 20-minute conference communication, a format I believe they should practice as soon as possible). They were asked to quote at least three valid academic sources, using other sources as extras. The section 'Further Reading', which you will see in most papers, names texts that students read but did not quote from. My editorial intervention has been intense and I must warn you that the text in your hands includes all my corrections. This is not, however, *my* text nor do I intend at all to offer here a word-perfect, pseudo-native-authored volume. This is 85% the students' original work, 15% mine, not only as regards language but also the edition, which I have unified. If there are errors or missing items (some abstracts), I apologise. For

good or for bad, this is a realistic approach to how university students work today and I don't wish to offer an adulterated version.

Finally, you might consider that publishing undergraduate work only adds to the unnecessary proliferation of substandard academic work circulating on the internet (and I do not mean only undergraduate). One very important lesson that I am learning from my students is that their criteria to choose secondary sources has to do with (online) availability. Choosing quality comes next and, generally speaking, they have done quite a good job of that. This means that quality papers that remain inaccessible to students simply do not exist (and I must point out that my impoverished university still offers a very good service regarding online access to peer-reviewed academic work). And the other way round: if whatever is available online is no good, then it sinks into limbo, gathering, as a student joked, 'digital dust'.

Students (and myself) often wonder whether quoting BA and MA dissertations available online is as legitimate as quoting peer-reviewed work in journals and books. *Academia.edu* and other research platforms have added fuel to this fire by allowing anyone to self-publish academic work (the same goes for blogs and websites). A BA dissertation on BBC's *Sherlock* by my student Melissa Caro (<http://ddd.uab.cat/record/112443>) has been downloaded so far by more than 750 persons, many more than will see most A-list journal articles. It is beginning to be, then, a case of 'sink or swim' and whether undergraduate work can 'swim' because others find it valuable remains to be seen. Let's just give it a chance.

At least I hope that undergrad (and postgrad) *Harry Potter* fans are happy to read their peers' work. I myself am happy enough to publish it, and will certainly repeat the experience as soon as I can.

Mischief managed!

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## Xenophobia and International Relations: *Harry Potter*, Quidditch and the Triwizard Tournament (Chris Arms)

ABSTRACT: In this essay I plan to look at the International Relations in the Wizarding world and argue that these are largely defined through Wizarding sports and games, especially the Quidditch World Cup and the Triwizard Tournament, both taking place in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. I will show how the Wizarding community, at least in Britain, appears to be xenophobic and insular, with little interaction between the separate communities apart from within the realm of sports.

In Britain international relations have played a key role in shaping the culture of the country. Through its role as the centre of the Commonwealth Britain has not only influenced many cultures around the world but also had its own influenced largely through the great influx of immigrants from the West Indies and India after World War II. As an important figure in the modern world, Britain also plays an active part through its role in world organisations such as the United Nations (UN) and World health Organisation (WHO) and through its active trade with other countries. In the world of *Harry Potter* we see much less interaction, however, between different Wizarding nations around the world with perhaps the best example coming through participation in sport, most notably the Quidditch World Cup and the Triwizard Tournament, both appearing in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. This development of international relations through sport has also started to play a role of increasing importance in the Muggle world since the birth of modern sports in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In this essay I will look at the role that sport has played in the international development of both the magical and non-magical worlds.

Apart from the obvious magical differences between the Wizarding and Muggle worlds, there are certain similarities as, like Muggles, “Magicals live in nation-states, identify with their countries of origin, have developed state structures that are similar to our own, and participate in rudimentary international institutions and cooperative activities” (Sterling-Folker and Folker, 2006: 103). As in the Muggle world, wizards and witches identify with nations they come from although their attachment is always to the Wizarding community than to any real nation state. This is evident in the fact that

in the magical world nationalism and nation states play no role in magical conflicts (Sterling-Folker and Folker, 2006: 103); instead, these are fought on other dividing factors, most notably between pure and non-pure bloods, whereas in the Muggle world conflict almost always is between different nations. The fact that the Wizarding world doesn't seem to identify strongly with nations means that international relations are not so important for them.

The Department of International Magical Co-operation, the Magical equivalent of the Foreign Office, has only 3 separate sections, relating to trade, international law and the International Confederation of Wizards, the magical UN. Although these channels for international relations are available, the different magical communities around the world keep largely to themselves, with most co-operation between the different communities based on trying to keep the Wizarding world hidden from Muggles and the organisation and participation in Quidditch. The Wizarding world, at least in Britain, seems to be quite outdated in its interaction with the wider world, mirroring some of the ideas of the British Empire. This can be seen by looking at how “the Weasley brothers (Charlie and Bill) 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” (Anatol, 2003: 164). These post graduate careers seem to resemble those of Imperial Britain: sending people to less developed countries in order to bring wealth back home. The influence of the ideals of the British Empire is seen in other aspects of the *Harry Potter* series as well, such as at the conclusion of *The Goblet of Fire* when “The British school promotes international goodwill, the inspiration for the battle against evil, and stands as the emblem of enlightened thought” (Anatol, 2003: 172).

In the Muggle world sport has started to play a role of increasing importance in international relations, mostly since the end of World War II as “modern sport is increasingly and perhaps essentially international and has had an international dimension almost from the outset” (Allison and Monnington, 2002: 106). Before 1945 sport has maintained itself as fairly autonomous, with no government intervention as it was not viewed as being particularly important and its role as a tool of international

relations was not being utilised. This is in direct contrast to the Wizarding world, where we see that the Quidditch headquarters are in the Ministry of Magic, showing a much closer tie with the government than in the Muggle world.

Sport has been used in several ways in the process of international relations, generating a country's own prestige and even by boycotting events or nations as a punishment. Indeed, originally sport was first used as a means of creating goodwill between countries, such as when the British Foreign Office would ask the Football Association to send England's team to countries with whom they wanted to build a stronger relationship. Sport was first also used by the USSR as a means of generating prestige, as they believed that their 'superior' athletes would prove they were the superior nation, and specifically that Communism was the way forward. Sport also played an important role in the Cold War, as it was the only direct competition between the US and the USSR and so "from 1952, when the USSR re-entered the Olympics, until the empire's 1990s collapse, 'big power politics' were manifest in the struggle for supremacy in the Olympics medal count. It became commonplace to measure the state of the Cold War through the Olympic prism" (Stoddart, 2012: website). Sport has also been used as a means of punishment through boycotting, notably by the US in the Moscow 1980 Olympics and the USSR four years later in Los Angeles. The most successful use of boycotting as a tool in international relations was undoubtedly the boycott of the South African Rugby Union and Cricket teams in the 1970's and 1980's, which was regarded to play an important role in helping to end Apartheid (Stoddart, 2012: website).

Sport, nonetheless, has not always been viewed as helping to develop international relations. As George Orwell argued in his work *The Sporting Spirit*, "sport is an unfailing cause of ill-will" since "international sporting contests lead to orgies of hatred" (1945: website). This view however has become less popular overtime with the benefits now beginning to be truly recognized. Although sport does not play as important a role in the less globalised Wizarding world, it is through his participation in playing games, specifically Quidditch and the Triwizard Tournament, that Harry is able to discover the international relations of the Wizarding community (Long, 2006: 130).

We can see here how sport is an important factor in introducing Harry to the rest of the Wizarding world, a role that it also plays in the Muggle world as “sport is an important part (...) of the process of socialization of young people into global society” (Allison and Monnington, 2002: 106). Before Harry attends the Quidditch World Cup only vague mentions had been made to the wider Wizarding world, so it is here that he first truly comes into contact with foreigners and realises that wizards and witches exist outside Britain as well. Unlike in the Muggle world, sport has probably played a larger role in helping to introduce witches and wizards to the wider world as the Quidditch World Cup has been held every four years since 1473, while the modern Olympics by comparison has only been staged every four years since 1896. This would mean that there is a far greater awareness of other cultures in the Wizarding world than in the Muggle world, where little would have been known of events occurring outside their own region in the remote historical past.

One of the main points that seem to arise from looking at international relations in the Wizarding world is that the different magical communities around the world seem to be very insular and we can see that in Britain at least there appears to be a distrust of foreigners and xenophobia. Hagrid sums up this attitude when stating “The less you lot ‘ave ter do with these foreigners, the happier yeh’ll be. Yeh can’ trust any of ‘em” (*GF*: 612)<sup>1</sup>. These ideas are strengthened by the fact that danger is often seen as coming from foreign lands: the awesome Fluffy comes from Greece and three of the four dragons used during the Triwizard Tournament are also from abroad. Professor Quirrell encounters the returned Voldemort while travelling in Albania, where the Dark Lord captures and murders Ministry worker Bertha Jorkins, “further intimating the perils of travelling abroad” (Anatol, 2003: 170). While the Triwizard Tournament is seen as positive in that “Its purpose is to lay the foundation of relationships between young wizards and witches of various nationalities” (Anatol,

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<sup>1</sup> Editor’s note: The seven novels by J.K. Rowling that compose the *Harry Potter* series are listed at the end of the volume, not in the individual ‘Works Cited’ list. I have used an abbreviated title for the parenthetical references.

2003: 171) it is also noted how “Rowling succeeds in perpetuating certain national and ethnic stereotypes against the British wizards’ competition” (Anatol, 2003: 173). The French students of Beauxbatons are well dressed in fine silks, and have well-cultivated tastes in food and art, whereas the Durmstrang students from Eastern Europe wear only heavy, functional furs and seem in awe of Hogwarts refined cultures. It is also interesting that while the Triwizard Tournament is seen as a way for the younger generation to build stronger international ties that none of schools are from outside of Europe. This shows how “although the *Potter* series attempts to embrace ideas of global equality and multiculturalism, the stories actually reveal how difficult it is for contemporary British subjects such as Rowling to extricate themselves from the ideological legacies of their ancestors” (Anatol, 2003: 165).

British writing is still heavily influenced by the Victorian writers of the 19th Century who write about the glory and successes of Britain and the British Empire. Hunt and Sands argue that “As Britain in reality grows less and less important in the world, British (...) fantasy delights in isolationism, tradition and monoculturalism” (cited in Anatol, 2003: 167). This shows during the series as we see how the majority of British characters remain sceptical of the outside world although this could be changing as “Harry and Hermione suggest that although the Wizarding world can be more insular than the Muggle world in some ways, as the ‘next generation’ of wizards and witches, they will encourage more tolerance and an international outlook” (Anatol, 2003: 168). Although this xenophobia still exists in the Muggle world it is to a far lesser extent than we see in the Wizarding world. I believe that this stems from the greater forms of communication that exist in the Muggle world, whereas owls are still used almost exclusively for communication in the Wizarding world. This leads to there being very little multiculturalism in the *Harry Potter* universe, unlike in the Muggle world.

T.S. Eliot asserted that “the cultures of different peoples do affect each other: in the world of the future it looks as if every part of the world would affect every other part” (in Walton, 2007: 42). He believed that cultures are not sealed from one another but they in fact draw on one another (in Walton, 2007: 42) something which we can

now see in the multicultural society that we live in, which is in large part due to the strengthening of international relations in the recent past. In the Wizarding world these international relations have not been properly developed meaning that they live in a monolithic culture which is not evolving as it is not drawing on the cultures of other Wizarding communities, leading to the distrust of foreigners and xenophobia that we see.

Throughout the *Harry Potter* series we see little evidence of international relations between wizards and witches around the world, with the only real examples coming from participation and watching of sports. Although I have highlighted how sport has played a role in international relations in the 20th century it is not one of the main ways to build closer ties with other countries and as this is the only way that seems to exist in the magical world we have seen how this has resulted in a world devoid of multiculturalism and full of fear from the outside world.

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## Ginny Weasley: Harry's Limited Heroine (*Sara Bello Serrano*)

ABSTRACT: In this paper I argue that Ginny Weasley is not a very well developed character and that she does not have a strong relationship with Harry throughout the whole saga. However, Ginny Weasley is the girl whom Harry Potter chooses as his wife at the end of the saga in spite of the fact that he has a much better relationship with Hermione Granger, a girl who is his best friend from the beginning of the saga and who helps him with everything she can.

Ginny Weasley is the youngest of Arthur and Molly Weasley's children and the only female. She is one year younger than Harry and that is the reason why she does not appear much in book One, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. However, her interest in Harry is already seen there, since Ginny goes to King's Cross station in order to say goodbye to her brothers and she realizes that Harry is also on the train. She insists on boarding the train before it departs to Hogwarts just to meet him. However, her mother does not allow her, which saddens Ginny. When the year passes and students return from Hogwarts, she feels excited and points at Harry while with her mother frowns on. These two events in the first book already indicate to the readers that Ginny is going to have a special interest in Harry Potter, although Harry's interest in her is not going to be revealed so easily.

Harry Potter will eventually find in Ginny Weasley some special features which will make him fall in love with her and even marry her. However, in the first books of this saga his interest in her is inexistent and it is not until the last books when readers start to realize that Harry is harbouring some kind of feeling towards her. On the other hand, readers can see Harry's friendship with Hermione Granger from the very beginning of the first novel. They are true friends throughout the whole saga, they trust each other and have a deep relationship. In comparison, it would seem more logical that Harry had chosen Hermione as a wife instead of choosing Ginny.

To start with, Ginny and Harry suffer from an important lack of communication and Ginny shows her embarrassment every time Harry is near: "Oh, are you starting Hogwarts this year?" Harry asked Ginny. She nodded, blushing to the roots of her

flaming hair, and put her elbow in the butter dish” (CS: 23). It is peculiar indeed that at the end of series they manage to end up together despite this early lack of communication as shown in the first books. In the third book, this lack of communication shows up again, as readers can see:

Ginny, who had always been very taken with Harry, seemed even more heartily embarrassed than usual when she saw him, perhaps because he had saved her life during their previous year at Hogwarts. She went very red and muttered ‘hello’ without looking at him (POA: 40).

However, taking into account that Harry had saved her life the year before, in *Chamber of Secrets*, she could have tried to do something more elaborated to thank him, or at least try to talk to him. Harry’s interest in Ginny cannot be developed as long as Ginny has this attitude towards him. On the other hand, Hermione’s friendship and loyalty have already been noticed by Harry. They have no lack of communication, they are constantly talking to each other and trying to face all the problems together. Hermione is Harry’s best friend (together with Ron, of course) and they have a much better relationship than Ginny and Harry. Unlike Ginny and Harry, Hermione and Harry are constantly communicating, having fun together and trusting each other. As another reader criticises, this is an important gap in the text:

Hermione Granger has given him moral support, excellent advice, and loyalty. Her brains have saved him many times. Harry cares for her a great deal and needs Hermione in his life. She has sworn to remain at his side during his final quest to rid the world of Voldemort. She even attempted to explain the mysterious ways of girls to him when he was fifteen. Yet at sixteen, Harry picked Ginny Weasley to be his romantic partner. (Gowdie, 2006: website)

In terms of personality, Ginny is described as an intelligent girl. However, Hermione’s intelligence is really significant too, so this feature is not the one that makes Harry prefer Ginny rather than Hermione: “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. It is nearly always Hermione who solves the puzzle, spots the clue, provides the inside or answers the question” (Bell, 2012: 7). Regarding



personality, Hermione herself gives Ginny the advice of being more natural and trying to go out and meet some other guys in order to arise Harry's interest in her. This advice seems to work properly, and even when Harry is told about this situation, he admits that Hermione has had a good idea with this recommendation. Again, Hermione's personality seems to fit better Harry's one, since following Hermione's advice on her behaviour makes Ginny succeed. Before Ginny decided to follow Hermione's advice, Ginny's presence was not really relevant for him.

Ginny becomes more natural in the last books and a strong moral supporter for Harry. She is the one who chooses the name of Dumbledore's Army in *Harry Potter and the Order of Phoenix*. However, Hermione has always been an indispensable supporter and friend from the beginning and seems to be ahead of Ginny: "At other points in *Goblet of Fire*, we see Hermione the giggler (on page 77), Hermione the helpful and capable (on page 302), Hermione the emotionally expressive (on page 314), and Hermione the clever (on page 631)" (Cherland, 2008: 278). In that book, Ginny also starts playing Quidditch, the only mutual hobby that she seem to share with Harry (she eventually becomes a professional player).

Moreover, in terms of personality again, Ginny does not seem to be very brave. For instance, when Harry splits up with her because he does not want to put her in danger: "She did not cry, she simply looked at him" (*HBP*: 423). An actual heroine would have done anything in order to stay close to her beloved, so this lack of reaction indicates, arguably, cowardice. Hermione would have remained close to him if they had been dating, whatever happened, since she is always with him fighting against all kinds of evil. In *Prisoner of Azkaban*, for instance, Hermione saves Buckbeak and Sirius Black with her clever use of the time-turner:

The duo succeeds because of her wariness, skill, and cunning ability to adapt to challenging situations. Hermione essentially saves the day (...). She becomes incredibly empowered as a female character in the series, and is shown to be the most essential member of the core character trinity. (Alexander, 2012: 20)

In the last book, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, Ginny, like the rest of Harry's friends and most Hogwarts teachers, fights against Voldemort and their Death Eaters. When Harry is believed to be dead, Ginny is the one who is most shocked and sad. Again, however, her reaction is insufficient she just remains in shock. During the final battle against Voldemort, Ginny fights but does nothing extraordinary. Others, like Hermione but also even Neville, are more effective and relevant.

The main difference between Hermione and Ginny seems to be their physical appearance. Ginny seems to possess, according to Harry's subjective telling of the story, more beauty and Harry develops a stronger physical attraction: the explanation for why they become a couple "is very simple –Harry has a very strong sexual desire for Ginny. He has no such feelings for Hermione" (Gowdie, 2006: website). Hermione's physical appearance does not attract Harry at all, as he claims she has "very bushy brown hair and rather large front teeth" (*HBP*: 379). On the other hand, Ginny's physical appearance is attractive: there are many boys who find her pretty, though others, like Malfoy, do not think she is that beautiful: "But that Weasley girl! What's so special about her?" (*HBP*: 194). However, there are other beautiful girls, such as Cho Chang, whom Harry also finds very attractive, though their relationship did not succeed. So, if Harry is interested in Ginny just for her appearance, it is difficult to understand why it succeeds.

When Ginny is described we are told through Harry's subjective narration that she is "small and red-haired" (*GF*: 33) and she has "a pair of bright brown eyes" (*CS*: 26). As the reader nicknamed 'Red Monster' writes:

Ginny is the only Weasley whose eye colour has been provided, and it is named in one of the first few scenes in which she appears. In addition to giving us the colour of her eyes, Harry also says they are "bright". There is something about Ginny's eyes that Harry likes. (2005: website)

It is true that Harry claims that Ginny's eyes are "bright", but in comparison, it seems that Harry's description of Luna's eyes is more complex than that of Ginny's, making Ginny's physical appearance not that relevant to choose her as his future wife.

Whereas Ginny's eyes are just "bright", he describes Luna's ones as: "protuberant", "oddly misty", even "slightly mad" (*OPH*: 160).

Another reason why Harry could prefer Ginny rather than Hermione could be her sense of humour and her popularity. J.K. Rowling seems to be giving 'fun' much importance, since Harry also seems to be looking for fun in his future partner. Before the final book (particularly the epilogue), clarified that Harry and Ginny succeed as a married couple, a reader wrote:

Rowling has now established that humour will be a key desired trait in any future romantic pairing for Harry. He simply does not find Hermione to be that funny. This fact is explicitly stated during his falling out with Ron in fourth year. (...) Hermione gives Harry many things, but she cannot fulfil his desire for humour. (Gowdie, 2005: website)

Readers can see, in contrast, Ginny's sense of humour while practicing spells in Dumbledore's Army. This is a good chance for Harry to start noticing a bit closer Ginny's presence, since she tries to make some jokes. She is also a popular character and likes going with Fred and George, making jokes all the time. Harry, himself a serious boy, does not find much humour in Hermione, though they do have good times together.

Harry could also be looking for a stable family, and, in a way, the Weasleys give him the family which he does not find in the Dursleys. Therefore, marrying Ginny Weasley is the last step to having a good family: "finding substitute parents in the Weasleys" is "an act that ultimately augurs the start of his own family with Ginny Weasley" (Roslyn and McMahon-Coleman, 2012: 151). Moreover, Harry could be seeking as well in Ginny a similarity to his dead mother Lily, using her as a kind of substitute: "Ginny is a second example of future mothers, and is also, and perhaps significantly, red-headed like Lily" (Roslyn and McMahon-Coleman, 2012: 158). Despite all this, J.K. Rowling has recently admitted in an interview that she may have met a mistake: "I wrote the Hermione/Ron relationship as a form of wish fulfilment. That's how it was conceived, really. For reasons that have very little to do with literature and far more to do with me, clinging to the plot as I first imagined it, Hermione ended up

with Ron” (in Croft, 214: website). That might be why Ginny and Harry do not form a credible couple.

To sum up, there are few arguments why Harry Potter would prefer Ginny rather than Hermione. He has got a far better relationship with Hermione in all senses, they have no communication problems, highly trust and help each other constantly. As Andrew Blake contends, “Hermione is arguably the second-most important character in the stories” (in Pugh and Wallace, 2006: 262), and she should have been the one chosen by Harry: his actual heroine. Apart from her nice physical appearance, her sense of humour, and Harry’s wish to belong to a real family like the Weasleys, it is difficult to understand that Harry prefers Ginny –who is not really his heroine.

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## The Life and Lies of Albus Dumbledore, Manipulator (*Lara Blasco Solís*)

ABSTRACT: Albus Dumbledore, Hogwarts's Headmaster, is from the very beginning presented to readers as one of the wisest and most powerful wizards all around the world, capable even of fighting Voldemort. Dumbledore's main role within the series is that of Harry Potter's mentor and guide, or at least he is supposed to be so. However, as the series moves forward, Dumbledore is exposed as the manipulator he is, specially in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. As readers learn more about Dumbledore's past he no longer seems to be an honourable person. His behaviour all along the series regarding Harry leads readers to question whether he is in fact acting as Harry's mentor or just manipulating him in order to achieve his own goals.

Albus Dumbledore, the Headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry is one of the main characters in the *Harry Potter* Series. He is presented as a wise man whom everyone admires and as the most powerful wizard who has ever existed. He was the one who defeated the dark wizard Grindelwald and who always fought Lord Voldemort. Dumbledore is presented, from the very beginning, then, as a man who fights against evil in order to preserve peace. He is also presented as one of the supporters of the Muggles and a defender of those Hogwarts students who are born in Muggle families. Throughout the series we all believe in him, despite the fact that he is an ambiguous character.

Within the magic world of *Harry Potter*, taking into account that Harry is the hero of the saga, Dumbledore's role would be the one of mentor. The figure of the mentor has been constantly used in novels following heroic patterns. The mentor, a wise person, is the one who has to provide his knowledge, the one who has to guide the hero and prepare him so that he is able to defeat evil. In the case of Harry, Dumbledore should be the mentor who would guide him throughout his adventures. Moreover, Dumbledore becomes the father figure who Harry has always been looking for, though he is also "the father figure whose flaws and imperfections Harry most fully

confronts” (Wolosky, 2010: 111). However, analysing the series we can conclude that he totally fails in his role as a mentor.

Dumbledore not only fails in this key role but also as a man and a wizard. In the last book of the series, *Deathly Hallows*, his true personality is exposed. Due to this exposure, readers must recall previous books in order to analyse deeply Dumbledore’s behaviour throughout the series. Dumbledore’s exposure takes place in book Seven, when Rita Skeeter publishes her book, an unauthorised biography titled *Life and Lies of Albus Dumbledore*, in which she talks about the wizard’s life. The book contains some information about Dumbledore which is controversial, since it not only discusses his family, but also his friendship with Gellert Grindelwald, who later on would become one of the most powerful dark wizards in the world. This revelation causes a great controversy, not only in Harry’s world but also among the saga’s readers, since until that moment Dumbledore was believed to be the best and most honest wizard in the world. Once this revelation takes place, we can see his true personality, discovering that he is not the noble and honourable man we have always thought.

As explained before, the role of the mentor is that of guiding his pupil and transmitting his knowledge to him in order to prepare him to defeat evil once he is gone (the mentor usually dies so that the hero finally matures on his own). Throughout the series Harry gets to know Dumbledore more deeply than any other student. He admires and respects him. However, from the very beginning Dumbledore fails when fulfilling his role.

A proper mentor, one who really cares about his pupil, would take care of him. Harry is left with his mother’s family, the Dursleys, who will take care of him although not in a loving sense. Once he first attends Hogwarts, Dumbledore knows that his family has not taken care of Harry as they should have. They have mistreated him, abusing him and leaving him to survive as he can in a closet under the stairs. If Dumbledore were a good mentor, one who really cares about his pupil, he would have prevented that situation. Instead, he leaves Harry there, forcing him back each summer knowing that he will suffer mistreatment again. In this case, Dumbledore can be justified because when he meets 11-year-old Harry this is the first time that he sees

the child after leaving him as a newborn baby at the Dursleys' doorstep. However, as Harry grows up, Dumbledore does not change his mind, and does nothing to save Harry from his foster family, the abusive Dursleys. This point is related to the one about preparing the hero for defeating evil, as I will explain later.

The first time in which Dumbledore's actual personality can be seen and, thus, his failure as a mentor appreciated, is when the Prophecy appears in book Five. In *Order of the Phoenix* Dumbledore has completely disappeared, leaving Harry alone at a moment when he really needs attention and caring. At the end of the book, when he finally appears, we can finally know about the weapon Voldemort is looking for, the Prophecy. This reads as follows:

The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches... born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies... and the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not... and either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives... the one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the seventh month dies... (*OPH*: 841, original ellipses)

Dumbledore has known about the Prophecy since Trelawney predicted it, but he has never talked about it with Harry. According to Dumbledore himself, he has not done so because he wanted to save the boy more suffering. He has hidden the truth from Harry for years. Once Dumbledore finally tells him about it, they discuss its meaning. Dumbledore wants Harry to understand that it was Voldemort who, after knowing about the Prophecy, actually just half of it, decided that Harry was the one who might defeat him. At the beginning the prophecy was not really about Harry, but Voldemort decided that it was him that the prophecy referred to. It is at this moment when Dumbledore tells Harry that he has a choice, that he can choose to fight Voldemort fulfilling his role as the 'Chosen One' or that he can reject this.

This is the first time we can see Dumbledore as the manipulator he is, since he is lying to Harry. Voldemort has already decided that Harry is the one he has to kill in order to succeed in his plans. This means that, even if Harry refuses to fight him, Voldemort will chase him until he kills Harry because he has already marked him as his

equal (and victim). Dumbledore knows that Harry has actually no choice. After knowing Harry for four years and getting to know him better than anyone else, Dumbledore knows thoroughly Harry's personality. Dumbledore knows that Harry is an honourable boy who will do whatever is need to be done in order to defeat the man who killed his parents. Moreover, Harry knows that if Voldemort recovers his power, plenty of people will die. Harry will not allow people to die if he is the one who can defeat Voldemort. Dumbledore knows this, he knows that Harry will accept, but he has to tell him that he has the choice, so that Harry thinks he is the one taking the decision. Thus, when Dumbledore answers "yes" to Harry's question "one of us has got to kill the other one... in the end?" (*HBP*: 844) Dumbledore is forcing Harry to choose. Or, rather, to make a false choice.

His failure as a mentor regarding this point in the series is clear. If Dumbledore has known for years about Harry's destiny, not only he should have told him earlier, he should have trained him to face it. A proper mentor would have accepted Harry's staying at home with him in order to teach him particular lessons on spells and defence. We are told about the importance of Harry's going back to the Dursleys so that the protective spell that was created when her mother sacrificed herself keeps on working. However, Harry could have stayed for a couple of weeks there and then go back to Dumbledore in order to be trained, since with him he would also be safe. Harry is not supposed to be a superhero, but if he wants to survive he has to work hard and learn more than he learns at school. If Dumbledore wanted him to survive he should have trained him, because it is impossible that a child like Harry can defeat alone the most powerful dark wizard ever. This leads to the second part of Dumbledore's manipulation.

In book Seven we learn about Dumbledore's past, about his relationship with dark magic and his plan to rule over the Muggle world "for the greater good" (*DH*: 312). It is at this moment when we really start to realize that Dumbledore is not the perfect man we had been told. However, we really are able to see his dark personality when Harry accesses Snape's memories and learns about his future. Even Snape himself is appalled when he understands what Dumbledore intends for Harry:



Snape looked horrified.

'You have kept him alive so that he can die at the right moment?'

'Don't be shocked, Severus. How many men and women have you watched die?'

(HBP: 687)

Dumbledore has known during all along that Harry is another Horcrux, and that he has to die so that Voldemort is defeated. This means that he has been taking care of Harry so that he could die at the convenient moment: "these actions all take on a sinister quality" (Adam, 2012: 04). This means that not only has he not trained Harry so that he can survive, but also that he has known since the very beginning that Harry needs to be killed "for the greater good". Dumbledore may appreciate Harry after all they have been through, but he is ready to sacrifice Harry's life if this means that Voldemort will be finally defeated. When Harry talks to Dumbledore at King's Cross station limbo, Dumbledore tells him that he expected that only Voldemort's soul would die. He is right, that is exactly what happens, but he was not sure about it. He could not know about how their confrontation would end, meaning that Harry could have died indeed.

If Dumbledore truly wanted Harry to survive, he would have trained him. As Adams wonders, "Given the amount of time Harry and Dumbledore spent together in Book Six, *Half-Blood Prince*, how is it that Dumbledore never showed Harry how to recognize or destroy a Horcrux?" (2010: 46). Harry knew nothing about how to recognise, much less destroy, a Horcrux, which means that without Hermione, he would probably not have found any of them. Dumbledore knew he was dying, that is the reason why he allowed Harry to go with him to the cave, so that Harry started to learn what it was all about. However, he did not tell him anything. He always lied to Harry, keeping the most important part of the information for him so that he could manipulate Harry as he wanted.

Dumbledore not only manipulates Harry, but also Snape. He takes advantage of Snape's love for Lily and uses it for Snape to act as his spy. We can see his manipulation also at the end of book Seven. Dumbledore wants Snape to kill him so

that the Elder Wand becomes Snape's. However, he also knows that Voldemort is greedily chasing the powerful wand at any cost. This means that Dumbledore knows that Voldemort will kill Snape to get it, yet he asks Snape to kill him anyway, showing that he does not care about Snape's fate once he himself is dead.

"Everyone has always trusted on Dumbledore, he is the individual who outlines the nature of the moral battle that is taking place, usually in his conversations with Harry" (Mendlesohn, 2002: 176), but in the end we realize that he was not the proper person to trust. He has been using an innocent child to fulfil his purposes. He could not tell Harry the truth because he needed him to go on willingly to face death so that he might survive. As can be seen through the analysis of the series, Dumbledore is not the mentor he is supposed to be, neither the perfect and honourable man we had been told. Instead, we learn that he is able to sacrifice other people's lives to achieve his own ends: not only Snape, but also an innocent child, Harry, "for the greater good".

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## The Limitations of Hermione Granger as a Feminist Heroine: Challenging Patriarchal Values (*Laura Calvo Zafra*)

ABSTRACT: In the context of the *Harry Potter* series, Hermione might be regarded as a feminist heroine. She is constantly challenging the patriarchal values that the Wizarding World is based on, questioning the gender roles imposed on her and denouncing the discrimination and slavery constructing that society. However, as I'll argue here, Hermione has many limitations within the text that make her, in the end, accept the status quo. She is constantly tested; needing to prove herself a useful friend but without becoming an annoyance. She has no support in her fights and she is not usually taken seriously when she tries to rebel, and is even mocked in her beliefs.

In the *Harry Potter* series there are many female characters, but the main female hero is without a doubt Hermione Granger. Amongst the female characters, she is the one who holds the strongest voice and is constantly challenging everything that she does not feel is right. She confronts the patriarchal values the Wizarding World is based upon and fights not only for herself but for others, which might make her be considered a strong feminist heroine. However, as I will argue here, Hermione has many limitations within the text that make her, in the end, accept the status quo. She is constantly restrained from her own fights; her intelligence, when not mocked, is usually in the service of the male hero's fight and battles.

The Wizarding World is a patriarchal society, in which men hold the stronger places of power and in which families are still based on the traditional structure of the mother taking care of the house and the children, while the father works to bring money home. In a world in which job opportunities are limited and in which women still only have secondary positions of power, Hermione works to make her voice be heard and to change the injustice of the society she lives in. From the first to the last

book she matures, developing ideals that agree with the feminist pursuit of change in society, and her strength flourishes. In the words of Gwendolyn Limbach, “through her manipulation of common narrative tropes and subversion of expectations of femininity, Hermione creates her own construction of girlhood” (2007: 2); in doing so, she threatens the patriarchal basis of the magical world. In the first book, Hermione is presented as a bossy, know-it-all girl who follows all the rules and annoys everybody with her knowledge. In the last book she has become a powerful and respected witch who has played an important part in the Battle of Hogwarts and in the fall of Voldemort. Hermione is “a prime example that information brings power” (Dresang, 2002: 223) as she is constantly solving the problems that the trio comes across. She helps not only herself but others, and she grows up to be one of the most complex and best developed characters in the series.

However, even if she has certain feminist traits, Hermione has many limitations within the text that restrain her from being a fully feminist heroine. *Harry Potter* carries forward the tradition of the boy’s school story and the hero tale; one of the main differences being that Hogwarts is a co-educational school. What seems to be a “fantastically post-feminist world where sexism no longer undermines women’s power and agency” (Pugh and Wallace, 2006: 260), is actually a veil that hides the series’ conventional gender roles and heteronormativity. That is, *Harry Potter* only seems to challenge the constructions of gender and sexuality but in fact silences gender equality and sexual diversity. Hermione is actually an example of the lack of gender equality in the story. Pugh and Wallace argue that “hero stories are gendered as well as school stories, and the heroism demanded for the protagonist of these narratives typically depends upon an alpha-male model of masculinity that systemically marginalizes most other characters, especially in relation to gender” (2006: 261). *Harry Potter* could never be Hermione’s story, as much as it could never be a ‘Harriet Potter’ story.

Hermione is the most prominent female character, but she is still marginalized like the other women in the story. Rowling stated in an interview that “a woman can fight just the same as a man can fight, a woman can do magic just as powerfully as a man can do magic” (*YouTube*, 2013: website). Yet in her story women still do not hold

the same power as men. She fails to show how a world in which women are leaders is viable. In Hogwarts there is a tradition of male and female Headmasters, presenting Hogwarts as a pro-diversity institution, however, in the time the story is set, the strongest positions of power in the Wizarding World are all taken by men: the Minister of Magic, the Headmaster of Hogwarts, and even the main villain of the story are male. Women are always put in secondary positions of power. Despite their talents, many women choose to keep traditional gender roles, like motherhood, which is portrayed as incompatible with having a job. Of course, it is not bad that they chose to be mothers; the problem is they let go of their independence –as, for instance, Molly Weasley and Narcissa Malfoy do. On the contrary, women who have economic independence or a job live a life incompatible with motherhood, being the main cases Minerva McGonagall, Dolores Umbridge or Bellatrix Lestrange.

The female character with more influence in the series, Hermione, has become a role model for thousands of readers, especially girls. Her actions and ideas have had an impact on them. Hermione teaches how important fighting for one's rights and accepting oneself are. But in the end she surrenders to her environment to settle for the status quo, failing to construct a solid feminist characterization. Hermione is repressed by the text; she is constantly mocked by other characters and even by the narrator. She is usually described with adjectives such as 'bossy', which put her in a negative position, and referred to as someone annoying to have around. Rowling created Hermione as a caricature of herself when she was little, but she constantly "allows Hermione to lose sight of her own strength and revert to stereotypic behaviour, and she facilitates this by employing gender-related stereotypic words (...). Repeatedly Rowling has Hermione "shriek", "squeak", "wail" "squeal" and "whimper", verbs never applied to the male characters" (Dresang, 2002: 223). These verbs are practically never applied to male characters. It is true that as Hermione grows up these verbs are less frequently used to refer to her persona, but they are still strongly linked to the stereotype of the hysterical woman. Furthermore, her crying happens so regularly that it lacks credibility; it adds nothing to Hermione's character development. For children to cry when their feelings are hurt is normal, but Hermione "bursts into

tears” so often this eventually becomes insubstantial. This is a gendered stereotypical behaviour that not only harms Hermione’s credibility but reinforces the impression that girls are weak and silly.

The lack of support that Hermione receives from other characters is another pointer of how Hermione’s feminist heroism and character development is limited within the text. At the beginning of her relationship with Harry and Ron, Hermione is rejected by them. At first they found her irritating for her interfering; the superiority tone that she uses to address them does not aid her defence. In their first-year flying lesson, Hermione was so nervous that “she bored them all stupid with flying tips she’d gotten out of a library book called *Quidditch Through the Ages*” (PHS: 108). When the boys and Hermione come back from their first adventure and Hermione points out that the three-headed dog they see is guarding something, the boys still do not recognize how valuable her intelligence is. Instead, they only focus on how angry they are at her for being so, yet again, bossy. The truth is that Muggle-born Hermione does not like breaking rules, and she is afraid of being expelled because now that she knows she is a witch she cannot possibly get banned from the place that offers her so many possibilities. She has found her place and she does not want to lose it.

Hermione is finally accepted when she saves Ron and Harry from McGonagall’s punishment. Her loyalty is rewarded with the boys’ friendship. Only then, her love for learning starts being appreciated. Hermione helps the boys with their homework, which is very useful for them: “it was very lucky that Harry now had Hermione as a friend. He didn’t know how he’d gotten through all his homework without her (...) She had also lend him *Quidditch Through the Ages*, which turned out to be a very interesting read” (PHS: 132). The situation is reversed and what Harry first thought to be boring information has become interesting. Hermione has a significant use as a friend for her helping them with their homework, but they still cannot stand her tiresome attitude. Any situation that puts Hermione in a position of intellectual inferiority is found good for her. It is okay to be a ‘know-it-all’ just to a certain extent, just as far as it does not become annoying or she does not hold too much dominance.

She is only accepted when she breaks the rules, losing sight of her beliefs and becoming, therefore, more like the rest... of the boys.

The cold-minded logic and wisdom of Hermione has proved useful many times in the story, especially in moments of tension needing a quick reaction. Hermione learns to trust herself, to believe in her instincts and rely on her intelligence, but her brains and talents are usually used in service of Harry and his fights. Hermione becomes another example of how women in the series are no more than second in command. Furthermore, when Hermione starts to fight her own battles she is not given practically any support or credibility. She is mocked by her friends and schoolmates and her attitude is ridiculed even by the narrative. When she starts S.P.E.W. to demand working rights for the house elves, no one takes her seriously, neither her friends nor even Dumbledore himself. In Cherland's words:

Hermione (...) realizes that the house elves (...) are in fact unpaid slaves. Hermione is horrified (...) But Ron Weasley is quick to mark her desire for justice as silly and irrational. He claims to know that house elves don't mind working hard and being exploited. (2008-2009: 278)

Ron, whom she eventually chooses as a boyfriend, dismisses the idea that Hermione might have a point and ridicules her beliefs; he does not support her at all. Hermione wants desperately to make her voice be heard and defend other oppressed people like her, but she cannot do it alone, and she is not given any support whatsoever. Hermione stands her ground and insists on going against any authority she believes is unjustified, like slavery or any misogynist disposition. Sometimes she is so willing to change the unjust situation that she does not realize it might be important to understand all the points of view and address her campaigning in a correct direction, as happens with S.P.E.W., which utterly fails. Much like her friends ignore her views and are condescending to her, she ignores and is condescending to the very elves she is trying to save –she never questions that she might be wrong. The people in her environment, instead of helping her redirect her cause, dismiss her and find her bothersome. When Harry finds out about the hats that Hermione is knitting for the

elves and Dobby explains to him that she is making the elves angry, he does not offer an explanation nor helps her to find another way to help the elves; he lets her be in hope that she will eventually get tired. This implies that Hermione's fights are not as important as other causes, and she is wasting her time. In other words, when her intelligence is used in favour of the hero and his fight it is valued, but when it is used for her own decisions and battles it is dismissed as exasperating.

There is another aspect of Hermione's development to take into account. She is practically always in the company of Harry and Ron, especially in the beginning of the series, which isolates her from the company of other women. The reader does not even know much about Hermione's mother or her relationship with her, she is cut from her biggest female influence before Hogwarts. This lack of 'sisterhood' while growing up does not stop her from developing anti-misogynistic ideas, but she does lack a "closely knit, supportive same-gender community" (Dresang, 2002: 21) that might help her mature. It is also clear in the books that Harry values his relationship with Ron above his friendship with Hermione: "Harry liked Hermione very much, but she just wasn't the same as Ron. There was much less laughter and lot more hanging around in the library when Hermione was your best friend" (*GF*: 347). Hermione is never entirely valued by Harry, and even though she eventually develops a friendship with Ginny Weasley, she still lacks a female community that fully appreciates her while growing up, something that has been historically present in the lives of witches as narrated by folklore.

When Hermione develops a crush on handsome Professor Gilderoy Lockhart she is instantly mocked by Harry and Ron; they cannot understand her. Hermione, like many other girls, is starting to discover her sexuality. She is maturing faster than the boys and they do not seem to accept this. In fact, there are many times in which Hermione's sexuality is ridiculed, for instance when, aged 14, she starts going out with Viktor Krum in *Goblet of Fire*. Before that, Ron even doubts that she would ever be asked by anyone to attend the Yule Ball. Up to that point, Hermione's looks had never been important in the series; her decision to dress up for the ball and reveal her prettiness actually takes a negative turn. As soon as she starts to be aware of her



attractiveness and enjoy her sensuality, Ron is scandalized. He accuses her of fraternizing with the enemy when he is in fact jealous though he cannot recognize that. Sexuality is not developed much in the series, but often restrained, especially with Hermione. Ron lacks a sexual education that makes him feel embarrassed by it and he often gets angry not only at Hermione but also at her sister Ginny for showing passion.

Yet the problem is not only with the characters but also with the narrative. The narrative only shows partially that girls have sexuality, and often shows hints of the traditional virginal purity of girls. For instance, when, also in book Four, Hermione goes to the boys' chambers, Ron is outraged that she is allowed in there when they are not allowed in the girls' room. Hermione explains that when Hogwarts was founded the four founders did not trust boys as much as girls. This statement implies that girls are not a danger when it comes to sexuality; boys are perceived as predators but girls are by definition chaste and pure. This double standard is harmful for both boys and girls and perpetuates the old idea that boys cannot control themselves and girls do not have sexual thoughts at all. Instead of showing them how sexuality and respect works, they put barriers. Another moment in the story in which it is indirectly implied that girls are purer is when Professor Grubbly-Plank brings a unicorn to class. Only girls are allowed to touch it, for unicorns prefer the women's touch. Unicorns are pure, and they prefer the company of pure creatures, like virginal girls. This all plays upon fairytale and historical conventions (Hogwarts was built in the Middle Ages and therefore reflects this view), but they are barely questioned or challenged. An opportunity for subversion arises but nothing is done about it.

However, the story not only has problems regarding sexual education. Many characters, especially Ron, lack an education on gender roles and how they stereotypes should be fought against. He has grown up in a family in which the mother cooks and the father works until late every day to bring money home. He cannot take care of himself for he thinks he will always have his mother, or the house elves at Hogwarts, to cook for him and look after his needs. Hermione is often mistreated as a result of this attitude. Harris observes that

when Harry, Ron and Hermione are on the run in *Deathly Hallows*, Ron (...) is quick to complain about Hermione's culinary efforts. Hermione directly confronts his sexist attitude (...) but her anger is dismissed and her outburst is swiftly forgotten. (...) her attempt to protest the status quo is presumably curtailed" (2012: 14).

Hermione continuously fights against these impositions, but she lacks any external support and she always gives up in the end. The text itself restricts Hermione's efforts to change her situation, her actions are presented as irrelevant to the main point and her behaviour parodied. Furthermore, many of the girls in the series are stereotyped by gendered discourse as in the case of Hermione, and usually mocked for their physical appearance (like Umbridge) or shamed for her girly behaviour (like Lavender Brown, Parvati Patil or Pansy Parkinson). This creates a dilemma: is it appropriate to talk openly about sexuality in what is considered a children's book, or to bluntly challenge the gender roles imposed by society? If mature themes like death, loss or depression are discussed, why is it not okay for Hermione to finally break the chains that tie her to social conventions imposed on her because of her gender?

In conclusion, although Hermione could be considered a feminist heroine and has many arguments within her persona to support this view, there is a limitation in *Harry Potter* that makes her accept the status quo and prevent her from being truly a feminist heroine. The lack of support she suffers in her fights and the restrictiveness of the text in matters of gender roles and sexuality are some of the aspects that bind her to fulfil her potential only for the sake of the male hero's fight, leaving her own voice eclipsed. However, even if her fight is limited, Hermione still encourages girls around the world to want to be heroes. She inspires them to accept themselves as they are, to challenge the codes imposed on them by their environment and to fight to make their voices be heard.

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### Not my Kind of Hero: Challenging Heroism in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* Series (Rubén Campos)

"After all he's done... all the people he's killed... he couldn't kill a little boy? It's just astounding... of all the things to stop him... but how in the name of heaven did Harry survive?"  
*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*

ABSTRACT: In this paper I question Harry Potter's so-called heroism by having a look at the very definition of the concept and arguing that, although Harry may be the main character of the series, he is only a hero because he has been chosen, both by the author and by the narrative, to be perceived as such. In addition, I will argue that heroism in the series is still based on the old 'good' vs. 'evil' dichotomy,

leaving little to no room for grey moral areas, being the final duel the maximum exponent. To finish, I will conclude by saying that, while not *the* hero, Harry is a mover of people, a leader, not the best or the strongest or the wisest, but someone people are willing to follow. This way, the so-called hero is turned into just another piece of a much bigger and complex puzzle.

Since Harry Potter survived what should have been a certain death that fateful night on Godric's Hollow, many papers and articles have been written about the heroic journey and fate he was marked to follow. Taken away from a family he never knew, the little child is left with a family he will wish he never had to meet, only to realize, much to his own surprise, that he is a hero to a community he has not been aware of for most of his life. Such heroism has been analyzed from many different vantage points, including of course the one of the archetypical hero presented in Joseph Campbell's *The Hero of a Thousand Faces* (1949). While Harry as a character has endured and passed most of the heroic tests he has been subjected to, it is important to note that, as a hero, Harry is a very limited character, having only a prominent role in the series because he has been literally chosen to be 'the one' by both author and narrative. In this paper I would like to analyze in which ways Harry is not *the* hero but just *a* hero, and how J.K. Rowling, in restricting the narrative and its conclusion to the old dichotomy of 'good' vs. 'evil' makes little to no effort to advance or at least break away from conventional heroism.

### The Making of *a* Hero

As Julia Boll very well illustrates in her article "Harry Potter's Archetypical Journey", "the *Harry Potter* heptalogy (...) follows the model of the monomyth or hero's journey not only as a basic pattern for the entire story line, but also for each individual volume" (2011: 85). In the article, Boll applies the Campbellian perception of the hero to Harry Potter, dividing his journey into three main stages or processes the character has to go through: departure, initiation and return. Such stages are divided into several more subprocesses, seventeen in total, most of which can be identified in the novels in one way or another, and most of which can be applied to the protagonist (see Boll).

Although Campbell's conception of the hero suits Harry's journey for the most part, it is important to note that several other characters undergo similar processes, becoming also heroes in and by themselves, Neville Longbottom being the clearest example. What sets Harry apart, what makes him stand out from the crowd, is the fact that he was literally chosen to be a hero by his arch-enemy and the series' arch-villain: Voldemort.

In her book *The Riddles of Harry Potter*, Shira Wolosky discusses many of the issues central to the story, the prophecy that drives the story of the fifth book being one of them. While many heroic narratives are developed on the basis of a prophecy, a vision of the future or the foretelling of the chosen one, in this case the prophecy in itself has no real and direct power over the characters, since "the prophecy itself neither forces nor fates" (2010: 90). As Dumbledore explains to Harry in *Order of the Phoenix* after Sirius's death, Voldemort acted following the dictates of a prophecy he never fully heard, and in doing so, he literally chose and marked Harry as his nemesis: "in marking you with that scar, he did not kill you, as he intended, but gave you powers, and a future" (*OPH*: 741)

Although it is true that Harry "repeatedly proves that he is brave, courageous, daring, cunning, reckless and chivalrous, thus possessing all the characteristics stereotypically associated with male heroism" (Steveker, 2011: 70), what truly makes him a hero is having been marked as such, since all the aforementioned characteristics can also be found in many of the characters throughout the novels. Hence, it could be said that Harry is not the hero of his own story by his own merits, but rather because he has been chosen to be so, because he is the only one with the inherent power to end Voldemort, a power that was bestowed unto him rather than being acquired.

Harry's identity as a hero, however, not only comes from Voldemort's choice. In her article about the heroic self in the *Harry Potter* series, Lena Steveker explores the creation of Harry's identity not only through the link between the hero and the villain, but also through the placement and integration of the protagonist in a wider web of relationships: "Since Harry is repeatedly presented as relying on his friends and family in his fight against Voldemort, his identity as a hero clearly depends on the personal

relationships he sets with the people surrounding him” (2011: 69). As it is shown throughout the series, Harry gets the help and assistance of many characters during many momentous episodes, such as the magical tests at the end of *The Philosopher’s Stone* in which he gets the help of Ron and Hermione, the final confrontation with the basilisk in *The Chamber of Secrets* in which he is so timely assisted by Fawkes, the use of Hermione’s time-turner in *The Prisoner of Azkaban* and of course the advice and invaluable assistance he gets in *The Goblet of Fire* so that he can reach the centre of the maze. Such help becomes even more vital to his success as the saga advances, to the extent that most of the quest for the Horcruxes in *Deathly Hallows* is only possible due to the presence of his friends, particularly that of Hermione.

Every interaction, every piece of external advice or scorn, adds to the construction of Harry’s identity as a hero in the sense that they are performed under the scope of Harry’s past, the undeniable and unforgettable fact that he is ‘the boy who lived’. From Malfoy’s disdain and Snape’s mockery to Colin’s adoration and Dobby’s devotion, every act, whether positive or negative, is defined by Harry’s unique status as a survivor. This way, Harry’s identity is being constantly confirmed and reasserted: “(U)ndangered identity structures must be anchored in relations of intersubjective recognition if they are to be somewhat secure” (Habermas in Steveker, 2011: 72), that is to say “successful processes of identity formation necessarily involve other people acknowledging an individual’s identity”(2011: 72).

Hence, it could be argued that Harry’s heroic identity is rooted in Voldemort’s choice and perpetuated by Harry’s own interactions with others, Voldemort included, throughout the novels. While it is true that he possesses many of the qualities typically associated with heroic characters, we must take into account that the most characteristic trait is that he has been marked as a hero, and thus is fated to become one.

### Of Love and Power

One of the most recurring themes of the series is the importance of love and sacrifice. From Lily’s selfless sacrifice to Sirius’s protective instinct bordering on

obsession, the acts of self-endangerment that can be found in the novels are many. Harry, of course, is not an exception, for he is always ready to put himself in danger in order to help others, especially if those others are precious to him. In doing this, the characters not only define themselves but also the shape of the narrative, for such acts are most of the times crucial to the plot. Starting with Lily's sacrifice, every other act of courage and extreme loyalty has a very strong impact in the whole story, whether positive or negative. Consider, for example, Harry's need to help a 'tortured' Sirius in the Ministry of Magic or Barty Crouch's mother taking his place in Azkaban. However, it is important to note that such sacrifices are meaningful because something is lost in the process, pain is endured, life is taken, so that others do not have to endure that pain and can continue to live; in other words: they are the ultimate act of love.

In loving "only power and himself" as Rowling herself notes (*Accio Quote!*, 2007: website), Voldemort is unable to understand the power of sacrifice and is thus in direct opposition to Harry, who is "protected by [his] ability to love (...) the only protection that can possibly work against the lure of power like Voldemort's" (*HBP*: 476) This single trait, the ability or inability to love, is one of the main reasons why Harry and Voldemort are to be found at opposite ends of the spectrum in the balance of 'good' and 'evil' and one of Harry's main assets in the battle against the dark forces.

According to Wolosky, Harry remains protected from Voldemort's influence since "just as power and love cannot coexist in the same soul, Voldemort and Harry, embodying these different forces, cannot coexist" (2010: 140). As the prophecy dictates, a prophecy Voldemort later sealed in marking Harry as an equal, "neither can live while the other survives" which means that, in the end, one will have to kill the other. This, however, poses a moral dilemma, since Harry's killing of Voldemort would turn him into a murderer and would hence corrupt his very being, tainting the inherent goodness that so protects him from Voldemort. To prevent such situation, Rowling comes up with a very clever and elaborate move: Harry has to die so that Voldemort *can* die.

Since the series starts with a sacrifice so it has to end with a sacrifice. The only problem is that it is not a real sacrifice, since Harry dies... and then lives again, leaving

nothing of himself behind. While it is true that he walked towards his own death at the hands of the Dark Lord knowing that he had to die, it is also true that there is no other choice for him, no option, no alternative: if Voldemort is to be defeated, Harry *must* die. By keeping him alive, however, Rowling negates the meaning of his sacrifice only to have Harry and Voldemort fight against each other yet again, diminishing the value of one of the most heroic traits that define the series.

Thus, the saga culminates with a final confrontation in which no real threat is posed for Harry, for Harry has always been and will always be naturally resistant to Voldemort due to his ability to love others and the love he gets from them in return. Although Voldemort is a threat too dangerous to be kept alive, Harry is always reluctant to harm and to kill him. While it is true that killing his enemy would, in a way, take his purity away, it would also be natural for, unlike Voldemort who, in Rowling's words, "valued people whom he could use to advance his own objectives" (*Accio Quote!*, 2007: website), Harry would be using power and causing harm for a greater cause: the people he is trying to protect and whom he loves.

### Conclusions

As we have seen, Harry is indeed a hero, the hero of his own story, but at the same time he is *only one* of the many heroes that populate the narrative. In marking him as his equal, Voldemort gives Harry the power to destroy him, and from that point onwards every act and interaction in the whole series leads him to that fateful last confrontation. However, in keeping Harry alive and inherently good, Rowling also keeps the narrative in the old dichotomy of 'good' vs. 'evil', since Harry is just too good to go beyond his own moral limitations even when the lives of all those whom he loves are at stake. He is just *a* hero, not *the* hero.

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## Conquering the (Wizarding) World: Voldemort's Fascism (*Marta Canals Sánchez*)

ABSTRACT: Voldemort is clearly the main arch-enemy in the *Harry Potter* series. But actually, his functions as a character do not end only after fulfilling the role of the ultimate villain for Harry. In my paper, I argue that Rowling uses this character as a way to raise the awareness of young (and also not so young) readers about the dangers of fascism, which is incarnated in the figure of Voldemort and his followers, the Death Eaters. The sense of political concern, especially in the two last books, is inherent to the series, and I argue here.

The *Harry Potter* series is not just literature for children. It may seem so at first, and especially at the beginning of the series, but as Harry grows and the books become darker, the awareness of the author and the readers about social and political issues also grows. As Chevalier observes about Rowling:

(...) her books have the veneer of fantasy, but she clearly uses it as a way to bring the reader out of the landscape of contemporary Britain, which is often represented in postmodern literature by an unsettling literary landscape of fragmentation, irony, and self-referentiality. She is taking it back to a set of paradigms familiar, at least in literature, through which she can explore issues of social and political justice. (2005: 403)

Clearly, the setting is an integral part of the literature of fantasy, but underneath the main plot about adventures, magic, and the fight between evil and good, there is more than meets the eye. The reader always finds this duality, the coexistence of a magical world that is really far away from our daily life, but that continuously deals with political and social issues that are present in our world, and from which it is difficult to escape even in literature. Certainly, "J.K. Rowling has pulled off a neat balancing act.

She presents us with two worlds, which are really one, so that in our delighted exploration of Harry Potter's magical world we are continually brought back to the absurdities and prejudices of our own" (Behr 2005: 128).

Characters cannot escape this concern. Most of the times, each of them represents a value or a part of the political system, and do not only fulfil their role as good or bad characters. This is clearly the case of Voldemort. He is Harry's nemesis, the reason why he lives such a peculiar and different life, and ultimately, the one who turns him into a hero and almost causes his death several times. Despite this, Voldemort is not the typical villain. His presence in Harry's life, apart from the times when his scar hurts or he enters Voldemort's mind, is very limited. We always observe him from a distance, and, because we know the whole story from Harry's point of view, we are never sure about what is going on with Voldemort and, later on, with his followers too.

In fact, most of the times, he does not even have anything to do with the plot at all. He only fights with Harry using his full corporal form in two of the seven books. They also face each other in *The Philosopher's Stone* and *The Chamber of Secrets*, but in the first one it is Professor Quirrell who really fights Harry, and in the second one it is not Voldemort, but a Horcrux in form of a memory of 'Tom Riddle' in a diary. And at the end, Harry deals with the basilisk, not with the Horcrux itself.

Therefore, it would be superficial, and a misreading of the whole series if we only saw Voldemort as a villain. It is not really his role as villain what characterises him: his delusions of grandeur, his ascent to power and his ultimate reign of terror define him better. As a villain, he is not scary. Yet, as a fascist leader, he makes people panic even more than when he was just the wretched one. No wonder then that, as Voldemort gains more power and establishes his own dictatorship, the books grow darker.

To understand the portrait of Voldemort as the fascist that he truly is, Reverend Amy Morgenstern suggests some points in his regime that have to be taken into account:

The suspension of civil liberties.  
Rushed trials in which terrified defendants are given little chance to clear their names.  
Others being imprisoned without trial, and held in torturous conditions far from society's gaze.  
The division of the country, and the world, into us and them, friends and enemies.  
The guilt-by-association of those who share some characteristics with the enemy.  
The racist mistrust of an entire little-understood category of people, and the exploitation of that mistrust to silence opponents of the administration and push through new laws that undermine free and democratic debate.  
The portrayal of the increasingly fascist nation as a victimized people who must reclaim power, so as to justify acting as a world power that imposes its will unilaterally on other nations. (2007: website)

As she adds, "in a (...) serious sense, it is clear that the books warn against the temptations of fascism" (Morgenstern, 2007). Voldemort becomes the incarnation of these dangers and also of the image of the fascist, hegemonic dictator.

Along the first four books, both the readers and the characters of the series know that Voldemort plans to regain the power he lost after killing James and Lily Potter and attempting to murder Harry. Despite this fact, we do not really know how extended his reign of terror was, and how much he wants to extend it in the case he became as powerful as he was before. In the fifth book, just after Voldemort regains his body, he stays on as a villain, and even though he begins to make himself noticed by both in the Muggle and the Wizarding society, he is not still acting as a fascist. He is just a villain with a fascist mentality.

It is in the last two books, when he takes control over the Ministry of Magic, when readers begin to see how harmful Voldemort's mentality can be. There are plenty of events in which he is involved where we can see that he is a fascist dictator who is planning to rule over Britain, at least. The most astonishing feature of his way of thinking is his absolute hatred against those who are Muggles, half-Muggles or Muggle-borns that have the power to use magic. As Morgenstern (2007) remarks, the trials that Muggle-borns undergo, are not so distant from the trials that took and take place under different fascist dictatorships all around the world.

What also seems a concern for Voldemort, is his version of the 'one-drop rule'. Apparently, users of magic are also required to demonstrate that they belong to a

pure-blood family, and there is no trace of Muggle blood on their own body. It seems as if Rowling considered all the racist tendencies of thinking that had taken place in the real world and introduced them in his books in order to build Voldemort as a fascist.

In the books, the reader can also observe the loss of rights such as freedom of expression. Nothing can be said against the Dark Lord, and he and the Death Eaters take some preventive measures in order to implement this order. The most blatant example is the apparition of Death Eaters whenever someone pronounces Voldemort's name in book Seven. Children are also controlled obsessively at Hogwarts so that they grow up believing in the discourse of the Ministry of Magic: there is no freedom of thinking in education anymore. In fact, there is no freedom of thinking or expression at all, as people are not allowed to say what they think about Voldemort being their leader. Also, wizard citizens are too scared to open their mouth against the Ministry or the Death Eaters.

Another right that is taken away is freedom of the press. It can be said that *The Daily Prophet* is always somehow influenced by the particular opinion of the Ministry of Magic, as when Harry is constantly being bullied by the press after his defence of Voldemort's return. Other media, such as the unconventional *The Quibbler*, which defends and protects Harry in that situation, even falls under the control of Voldemort's government once he is in an empowered position after taking control of the Ministry. It is important to note that Voldemort is forced to gain more power using the power he already has, fear and coercion. Due to this, he does not even present himself as the one governing, but uses Minister Pius Thickness as a puppet when everybody knows that he is who controls everything from the shadows.

Other rights are also taken away, even though they are not so specifically referred to in the books. For example, some secondary characters, such as the wand seller Olivander, suffer imprisonment due to unclear reasons. In general, the suppression of a variety of personal rights and liberties clearly implies that Voldemort's is a fascist regime.

As Morgenstern also suggests, Voldemort uses the dignity of wizards as his excuse to gain power. He tries to convince people that he does what he does just

because wizards are being treated in an unfair way, that they have always been treated wrongly by Muggles since the Dark Ages. He argues that they should not hide themselves from Muggles. On the contrary, they are more powerful, so they should rule the world. As happens in the real world, though, this kind of situation sometimes leads to rebellion of the oppressed, uprising against the government. In this case, we do not have only an only war, but two Wizarding Wars that take place respectively under the two reigns of terror of Voldemort.

The imagery used by the Ministry under Voldemort's government is also clearly fascist. All the signs, the pamphlets, the books, the slogans and so on that the Ministry sends are not that different from similar propaganda used in real fascist dictatorships. The most obvious image of fascism found in the books is the statue of the wizards ruling over the Muggles and the non-human creatures that is placed in the atrium of the Ministry of Magic, bearing the chilling motto 'Magic is Might'. Voldemort's ideology goes so far that it even affects other creatures apart from humans, Muggles or wizards and witches, as for example house-elves, goblins and giants. It is impossible to find a comparison between the situation in the book and one from the real world because of the simple fact that there are no other beings in the world with the complex intelligence as humans have.

Obviously, all those features have made readers believe that Voldemort is the image of Hitler in the series, his fictional impersonation placed in a fantasy world. An example of this tendency can be perfectly seen in Hodges' article:

The Holocaust can be compared to the means that were used by the Death Eaters and Voldemort. The Nazis used a systematic way of killing off all the Jews, much like Voldemort directed the Death Eaters to do to the Muggles and half bloods. The Nazis also forced all non-Aryan races to register with the government just as the Ministry of Magic eventually did with all non-pure bloods. (Hodges n.d.: website).

As a reader and also as an academic writer, the comparison is a temptation difficult to resist. There are many features that Hitler and Voldemort, and the Nazis and the Death Eaters share. The problem, is that focusing only in the similarities make readers lose

sight of all the differences that there are between the two regimes. I would say that, even though Rowling probably took some characteristics out of Hitler and the Nazis, she only used those to help her create Voldemort as a character. In order to warn children against the dangers of fascism in general, she had also to incorporate features from different fascist regimes. Besides, readers should take into account her effort to create a character original in himself, not just one based on a real person. That is what historical novels exist for, and the *Harry Potter* series does not belong to that genre at all.

There are many problems involving Voldemort's dictatorship, and even without Harry inadvertently leading a rebellion against him, it would have probably failed later on. The first problem is that, like North Korea's leader Kim Jong-Un, one of the most ridiculed and parodied persons on the internet and other media ever, he is not charismatic at all. The Death Eaters follow him basically because they fear him or they want to empower themselves. Only in the case of Bellatrix Lestrange can we say that he is truly loved (or more accurately, that he is the main target of an obsessed woman). Not even his appearance is likeable. Only a small group of people would really enjoy following a man who does not even have a nose, and whose physical appearance recalls that of a snake.

Another problem is that, similarly to Hitler, Voldemort defends something that he actually is not, so that, in the end, his goal is absolutely ridiculous. Hitler defended the Aryan race though he had dark hair and, seemingly, brown eyes. Voldemort defends pure blood and fights against Muggles, Muggle-borns and half-blood people, when he is the son of a witch, Merope, and a Muggle seduced by her love potions. Obviously, whereas anyone could tell Hitler was no Aryan, Voldemort's half-blood nature is not visible at first sight, and remains his best-kept secret.

We also never know, as I have noted before, to which extent Voldemort is planning to extend his dictatorship. Apparently, he wants wizards to rule over Muggles but there is never a clear plan. We also never know, either, whether this hegemony is intended to be limited to Britain or to spread all over the world. As Deets argues, "a few international organizations are only mentioned in passing and there is oddly never

any real international dimension to the fight against Voldemort” (2009: 743). It is not even clear whether wizards outside Britain would fight against Voldemort if he ever tried to expand his regime beyond British shores. This may be a clue to makes readers see that Voldemort is just planning to remain in Britain, and that other countries do not feel threatened by him. In any case, the author’s choice of narrator and point of view limits the information that the readers receive.

Despite all those gaps in the narration or even in Voldemort’s plan, it is obvious that he is not simply a villain that wants to turn the life of the main character into a complete ruin. In fact, in his search for power, he plans to control everyone’s life and to ruin them as much as he can. He may not be scary himself, but his methods and especially his ideology and the way he sees the world and himself, are truly scary. Voldemort is not, then, only a villain. He is the way Rowling has to warn her young and adult readers against the mechanisms and characteristics of fascism, by showing in the context of her fantasy world how fascism works in reality. She raises our awareness of what can happen if real governments start acting the way the Ministry of Magic acts under Voldemort’s control.

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## Translating Words into Images in the *Harry Potter* Movies: Production Design and the Problem of Faithfulness (Álvaro Delgado Ordás)

ABSTRACT: The aim of this paper is to analyze the construction of three fictional spaces in the *Harry Potter*'s movie adaptations in order to evaluate the degree of faithfulness achieved in their translation from written descriptions into images. The three spaces correspond to a chronological sequence which turns out to give evidence of a certain pattern: the chosen spaces in the movies grow darker and less faithful to the descriptions in the books as we move on in the series. The first impression of Diagon Alley (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, 2001) seems to be quite accurate but both the Department of Mysteries (*Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, 2007) and Godric's Hollow (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Part 1*, 2010) show a variety of dissimilarities in comparison to the books.

The successful movie adaptations of the *Harry Potter* series were always kept under the supervision of the author, J.K. Rowling. She was to be consulted about any doubt or problem concerning the development of events in the narrative, adapted mainly by Steve Kloves. Moreover, she also supervised the selection of actors and actresses and a huge range of production details. Despite this tight control, nevertheless, the person ultimately responsible for translating the physical spaces from the pages of the books to the screens was Stuart Craig, Production Designer and Art Director of the whole series. His own interpretation of the story, as well as his vision of the artistic necessities of the movies, must be taken into account in order to explain the omissions or exaggerations of certain features of the atmosphere, architecture or light in the sets analyzed.

Craig was very much aware of the impossibility of creating a cinematic world that could coincide a hundred per cent with Rowling's magical universe. In his own words: "it's not possible for the films to be faithful to the books" (in Barnwell, 2010: 2). However, he made it clear later in that interview that he knew it was his duty to maintain as many details as possible in the sets, and he acknowledged the difficulty to satisfy the readers' expectations. Here, Craig introduced a problem that is very



common to book adaptations for the cinema. Sometimes critics but, especially what is called 'fandom', judge a book adaptation by how faithful it is to the original narrative and thus, how well has it fulfilled their expectations. They often underestimate, thus, relevant reasons for the omission of certain parts, such as length, rhythm of the story or age target, to name some. McFarlane explores the issue of unfulfilled expectations extensively in his study:

It is, however, quite common to come out of a cinema after viewing an adaptation or to engage in casual conversation about it afterwards and to hear such comments as (...) 'I think I liked the book better'. It is a subject on which everyone feels able to have an opinion, and most opinions (...) still tend to foreground the criterion of fidelity, whether in explicit terms or by tacit assumption. (2000: 165)

In terms of fidelity to the original narration, the three chosen locations, Diagon Alley, the Department of Mysteries and Godric's Hollow fit a chronologically decreasing trend in terms of accuracy in relation to the written description. They also show several features added to increase their adequacy to the moment of the plot they appear in, such as a particular type of illumination (or the lack of it), changes in the objects that should be present in the scene (or the absence of some elements).

Readers' first impression of Diagon Alley in the novel *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997) coincides with the first appearance of a completely-magical environment in the story. The setting is described very vividly and in great detail, with the intention of astonishing the reader with all the magical instruments, potion ingredients and sundry objects: "There were shops selling robes, shops selling telescopes and strange silver instruments Harry had never seen before, windows stacked with barrels of bat spleens and eel's eyes, tottering piles of spell books quills and rolls of parchment, potion bottles, globes of the moon..." (PHS: 56). This luminous description is well translated into the first film, in terms of fidelity. Everything is there, the shops, the crowd of wizards, the animals, even the Nimbus 2000... and this transmits a sense of joy, of discovery (thanks also to a particularly happy piece of the score by John Williams, later repeated a few times). The camera changes from Harry's surprised face to the fronts of the shops, seen from a low perspective, similar to

Harry's and this also contributes to that sense of happy joy, the one that is expected as Harry walks into is new life as a wizard. A life that is bright and shiny in comparison to his confinement in the Dursleys' cupboard under the stairs.

Both the first book and the first movie succeeded in creating a particular feeling, that of a boy with new and happy expectations who is leaving a hard, sad life behind him. The translation of the set is quite exact, and it conveys a sense of realness which, as Craig explained in an interview (Halligan, n.d.: website), was the result of using physical sets, instead of virtual constructions. The architecture of Gringotts, the bank of the Wizarding world, also fits the book description perfectly, including a snow-white front and the marble hall where the goblins count their money. However, the significant warning engraved in the entrance doors addressed to "those who take, but do not earn" never appeared in the films, probably in an attempt to cut length. In Diagon Alley there is another space that possesses plenty of significance: Olivander's, the wandmaker's shop. In the book, this is given a particular old, dusty, solemn atmosphere, which is also quite well reproduced in the movie:

A tinkling bell rang somewhere in the depths of the shop as they stepped inside. It was a tiny place, empty except for a single spindly chair which Hagrid sat on to wait. Harry felt strangely as though he had entered a very strict library; he swallowed a lot of new questions which had just occurred to him and looked instead at the thousands of narrow boxes piled neatly right up to the ceiling. For some reason, the back of his neck prickled. The very dust and silence in here seemed to tingle with some secret magic. (*PHS*: 63)

We can observe in the movie the piles of boxes containing the wands. The environment seems to be full of the dust Rowling mentions and the yellow illumination which comes from some old lamps helps to reproduce the decrepit atmosphere described in the book. It is interesting to remark that all the illumination details, camera movements, etc. help, along with the set, to construct a particular scene but, especially, an impression on the spectator, a reaction to the scene complementary to the reaction to the events that happen. As Finch explains in relation to young spectators: "a developed understanding will incorporate evidence of a character's qualities from all of the relevant film codes (e.g. not just how she interacts with others,

but also the shot composition, lighting and camera movement)” (2012: 41). Not just the plot, then, but the whole of the production design, all the film codes, give each scene its particular atmosphere in order to move the spectators in a certain way, or to generate empathy or antipathy against a particular character.

Diagon Alley was translated quite faithfully into the movies, but other magical locations, such as the Department of Mysteries, were not. The visit to the Department at the end of *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (2003) is a key point in the story, as the prophecy is destroyed, the Order, helped by the Aurors, fights against the Death Eaters and Sirius is killed by Bellatrix Lestrange. The atmosphere in the Ministry’s impressive atrium presented in the written description is not shiny, but is definitely much lighter than the one which appears in the movie: “The light was dimmer than it had been by day; there were no fires burning under the mantelpieces set into the walls, but as the lift slid smoothly to a halt [Harry] saw that golden symbols continued to twist sinuously in the dark blue ceiling” (*OPH*: 678). The light is soft but golden, there is no impression of darkness. However, in the movie the predominant colour is black. The whole atrium seems to be built in black marble and the atmosphere is dark, far from golden. Except for the elevators, which do have a kind of golden light, the rest of the spaces remain bluish black, almost dark green sometimes. These colours connects the Ministry with Slytherin in the spectators’ minds, and thus with those places where evil awaits in the series, like the Chamber of Secrets, somehow anticipating what is going to happen.

The illumination and the creation of shadows are very remarkable in this passage of the movie. Considering light and colour, British Craig explained in an interview a little bit of his craft:

I think (...) there’s a tradition here [in Britain] –more than in America, certainly more than in California– of kind of limiting the palette. Maybe it’s because we live in a gray, rainy place... maybe our sensibility is just different. With Stephanie McMillan, the decorator (\*Oscar winning set decorator) I consult all the time on matters of colour and we do have this technique of limiting the palette very, very severely so the subtlest of colour changes registers quite strongly (...) I also do love to obviously build sets with potential for dark shadows and initially consider

each set as something abstract... (Admin, 2011: website; original ellipses, except those in parentheses)

As Craig explains, the palette is very limited in the scenes in the Ministry, and then in the Department. Everything is black, with some bursts of blue, white, green and gold, creating a cold atmosphere that helps provide the adequate feelings that the moment needs. We have to take into account that the fifth book and also the fifth movie change radically in tone, offering a darker and more frightening series of events, and striking a new balance between good and evil in which evil seems to be gaining ground:

The main characters of *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* start the story in a time of darkness and danger, suffering from painful loneliness and longing for the only place –the school of magic– where they can be together and face the tasks and acquire the knowledge needed to fight against the injustice and fear that threaten their lives. (Falcón and Díaz Aguado. 2014: 152)

In order to transmit these feelings and the growing pressure, it is understandable that Craig and his team decided to build the Department of Mysteries and the whole Ministry as dark and as unwelcoming as possible. Nevertheless, some things were omitted in the Department of Mysteries. The revolving room and the mysterious doors, including the one leading to a room with a tank full of brains, and the first glimpse of the amphitheatre with the veiled gateway, are not present in the movie. In the film, the Order goes right into the room where the prophecies rest in high aisles, as we can see in this passage of the novel:

They were there, they had found the place: high as a church and full of nothing but towering shelves covered in small, dusty, glass orbs. They glimmered dully in the light issuing from more candle-brackets set at intervals along the shelves. Like those in the circular room behind them, their flames were burning blue. The room was very cold. (*OPH*: 685)

This blue, cold atmosphere is perfectly translated into the movie, where we can observe as well, how tall the room is. However, the place looks even darker than in the novel; there is an almost complete absence of illumination except from the foggy light

that the prophecies and the children's wands emit. The reason for moving straight into the prophecies room might be that, since *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (2003) is the longest book in the series, many passages had to be left out of the adaptation to make a film with a manageable length. Also, the tank with the brains may have been a little too much for the expected age target. As in any other movie, the production team must contribute to attracting as many spectators as possible and that particular scene may have been too macabre for young fans. The rest of the scene, including the prophecies falling down and breaking, the particularly memorable chase of the Order and the ensuing battle with the Death Eaters in the amphitheatre (a circular room in the movie) is very adequate in terms of fidelity. I would say that it is more epic, if that is possible, on the screen, due to a great amount of special effects and to Helena Bonham-Carter's (Bellatrix Lestrange) and Jason Isaacs' (Lucius Malfoy) vigorous interpretations.

In the last book of the series, *Deathly Hallows*, there is a particular segment which is much relevant to the psychological development of Harry's character, as he and Hermione visit the village where he and his parents lived until they were attacked by Lord Voldemort: Godric's Hollow. Later in this passage, they visit Bathilda Bagshot's house and she turns out to be Voldemort's snake, Nagini. This scene is attached much importance in the movie, but it is in the previous depiction of Godric's Hollow where there are a few missing points. The first impression of the village is quite different from the novel: it looks much more empty and sad in the movie, in consonance with the characters' desolation in their lonely search for the Horcruxes. In the book, we read:

Strung all around with coloured lights, there was what looked like a war memorial in the middle, partly obscured by a wind-blown Christmas tree. There were several shops, a post office, a pub and a little church whose stained-glass windows were glowing jewel bright across the square. (DH: 264)

Again, the production design of the movie sacrifices fidelity to the original text in order to strengthen certain features. There is a little pub where some Christmas lights shine in the distance, but there are no shops in the movie, no Christmas tree and the whole

village looks empty. The atmosphere is bluish dark, light snow is falling and, again, using a limited palette of dark tones and a general greyish filter, Craig gives the scene an air of gothic desolation. The war memorial, which according to the book includes Harry's family, does not even appear. Harry's house is shown in ruins without any distinctive mark, making his feeling of loneliness stronger. On the contrary, in the book the house holds a golden inscription as a "reminder of the violence that tore apart their family".

The graveyard is presented in a simpler way in the movie. Spectators only see Ignotus Peverell's grave and those of Harry's parents. In the book, the graves of Kendra Dumbledore and her daughter Ariana also appear, as well as an extra inscription on the Potters' grave, which is in fact one of the most famous quotes in the series: "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death". In the movie, all this is omitted and the information is given rather through the dark ambience and the gloomy set, through the church bell ringing and the low illumination, creating an unpleasant feeling that reaches its highest point in the horrific events in Bathilda's house.

*Harry Potter* adaptations to the screen, to conclude, relied on a competent, ingenious production design and art direction, in order to make up through visual resources for the limitations in length which made it impossible to include all the details present in the texts. Out of the three spaces analyzed, it would be far to say that Diagon Alley is translated almost exactly into images, fulfilling the 'fidelity criterion' and expectations. However, the other two locations, the Department of Mysteries and Godric's Hollow, are less exact in terms of fidelity, omitting certain details or passages and changing some others. They strengthen the darkening atmosphere of the scenes through light and colour resources, as well as by presenting desolated spaces or shadowy halls. Thanks to these spaces, the movies are capable of transmitting particular feelings and impressions more easily. Production details serve as instruments to provide a more powerful insight into the story to spectators. As Stuart Craig summarized: "I think because it's storytelling that's a significant difference between fine art and the kind of art we're talking about. It serves the purpose of the story, it tells the story" (Admin, 2011: website). And it works.

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## Neville Longbottom, the Unexpected Hero: From Irrelevant Sidekick to True Hero in *Harry Potter* (Saray Díaz Suárez)

ABSTRACT: The destruction of Voldemort's Horcrux Nagini by Neville in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* is the ultimate demonstration of his heroism. He is presented as a character of little consequence at the beginning of the series but he progresses quite far. In this paper I argue that Neville could have been the hero and that he grew to be a true hero even in his secondary character position. The main arguments I defend here are that Neville was always capable of being a hero. He's not just Harry's second best but a character with an identity of his own, although J.K. Rowling's characterization of Neville makes it difficult to see him as a hero.

The presence of heroes in the *Harry Potter* series is quite evident from the first book onwards. Some of those heroes are more easily identified while others have to wait until the last books to be considered heroes. Those unsung heroes play, however, parts as important in the story as the main characters. They are not always taken into account as what seems to matter are only the three main protagonists, Harry above all.

One of those unsung heroes is Neville Longbottom. He begins his journey as a minor character with small, almost irrelevant parts in the first four books but he gains importance as a character from the fifth book to the end. This evolution from sidekick

to hero is effortlessly appreciated in the books; however, what is not as quickly acknowledged is that the journey that ends in his final heroic act can be predicted from the beginning. In this paper, I will argue that Neville could have been the heroic alternative to Harry and that, even in his secondary character position, he manages to become a true hero. By claiming that Neville could have been the alternative lead, what is meant is that he possessed the capacities to be this kind of character.

Neville was always capable of being a hero and, therefore, he could have been the hero. This capacity to be a hero can be realized through small moments and acts in the books. The first moment which gives a clue that Neville has it in him to be a hero is his sorting into Gryffindor. As it is explained in the first book, all the students belonging to Gryffindor are “the brave at heart” possessing “daring, nerve, and chivalry” (*PHS*: 95) The Sorting Hat, then, suggests to us the possibility that Neville has these qualities and therefore that he is more than he seems. Surely, Neville could be an exception just like Peter Pettigrew, but, at the end, Neville is able to take Gryffindor’s sword out of the Hat itself, something only a true Gryffindor can do, thus supporting his status as a leading hero.

In the five first books, Neville is just a sidekick to the hero with little importance, though the small acts that he performs –and those begin earlier than most would think– give us hints that he may be capable of more. Neville performs his first exceptional act when he stands up to Malfoy for the first time with the words “I’m worth twelve of you, Malfoy” (*PHS*: 167), and later even starts a fist fight with Malfoy’s minions. This does not mean he obeys Harry in all he does, quite the opposite. Even Dumbledore praises him, as “it takes a great deal of bravery to stand up to our enemies, but just as much to stand up to our friends” (*PHS*: 221). J.K. Rowling herself acknowledges Neville’s bravery in an interview as a main trait:

I wanted to show Neville doing something brave. It’s not as spectacularly brave as Harry and Hermione do, but he finds true moral courage in standing up to his closest friends, the people who are on his side, but he still thinks they are doing wrong and he tells them so. (*Accio Quote!*, 1999: website)



In the second, third and fourth books, Neville's presence is reduced to being just Harry's follower. Sometimes, he gets in trouble because of this but it is not until the fifth book, *Order of the Phoenix*, when Neville shows again his brave side and, more precisely, that he is capable of being a hero.

He stands up for Harry when he supports him and his belief that Voldemort is back while most of the other Gryffindors and friends do not (*OPH*: 199). Again, Neville shows his loyalty when he joins Dumbledore's Army, and when he attacks Malfoy for speaking badly about St. Mungo's (*OPH*: 327), ready to defend the hospital his parents are in. Neville's development as a student is also remarkably important when considering his capacity to be a hero because the performance of heroic acts requires certain abilities. Harry describes Neville's improvement in his magical capacities in more than one occasion, for instance when he states that "in nobody was (the) improvement more pronounced than in Neville. (...) only Hermione mastered the (Shield) charm faster than Neville" (*OPH*: 499). Neville's capacity to be a hero is also shown as he tries to prevent Umbridge's Squad from taking Ginny (*OPH*: 671) and finally, as he stands up to Harry so that Ginny, Luna and him can also go to the Ministry of Magic to save Sirius despite Harry's objections:

'We were all in the D.A, together', said Neville quietly. 'It was all supposed to be about fighting You-Know-Who, wasn't it? And this is the first chance we've had to do something real –or was that all just a game or something?'

'No –of course it wasn't -' said Harry impatiently.

'Then we should come too', said Neville simply. 'We want to help'. (*OPH*: 687)

Neville does not back off in the face of real danger, and even if he is not the bravest, he quickly accepts whatever is to be done in order to save people, thus demonstrating a moral character indispensable for a hero. In the Ministry, when the Death Eaters appear, he also demonstrates a strength of character one would not have attributed him at the beginning but that he possessed –it just needed a specific moment to reveal itself. He fights with Harry against the Death Eaters when there is just the two of them still standing and even when he is hurt and cannot pronounce spells correctly, he finds a way of helping as he "jabbed Hermione's wand hard into the

eyehole of the Death Eater's mask" (*OPH*: 725) that was attacking Harry. He also bravely fights the Death Eaters in the sixth book, showing again his capacities.

In the seventh book, Neville's journey to becoming a true hero is completed. Neville has become, altogether with Luna and Ginny, a leader of Dumbledore's Army and of the revolt at Hogwarts. Neville's courage and bravery is indisputable as he also commands alone the students' revolt when Ginny does not come back after Easter and Luna is kidnapped (*DH*: 465); it takes a great deal of courage to rebel against the Ministry's agents in Hogwarts. Others acknowledge his leadership (*DH*: 467) and even Harry acknowledges Neville's capacities as he entrusts him with the mission of killing Nagini if Ron and Hermione cannot (*DH*: 562).

A key act that shows Neville's bravery and courage is his standing up to Voldemort when he takes Hogwarts following Harry's 'death', something that no one, besides Harry has done. Neville breaks "free of the crowd and charged at Voldemort" and he, after Voldemort takes him down, struggles "back to his feet, unarmed and unprotected, [standing] in the no-man's-land between the survivors and the Death Eaters" (*DH*: 590). Voldemort praises Neville's bravery when he says "You show spirit and bravery, and you come of noble stock. You will make a very valuable Death Eater. We need your kind, Neville Longbottom" and Neville challenges him, the main villain, fiercely, with his shout that "I'll join you when hell freezes over" (*DH*: 590) showing a bravery no other has. The final act which shows Neville becoming a true hero is killing of Voldemort's pet and Horcrux Nagini, when "with a single stroke (he) sliced off the great snake's head, which spun high into the air, gleaming in the light flooding from the entrance hall" (*DH*: 592). As Wolosky observes, "Here he reverses his initial near Squibhood, and in a sense, makes good the possibility that the prophecy had meant him." (2012: 104)

Neville emerges as a true hero because he is instrumental in killing Voldemort, the greatest villain. Klein suggests that "it is a person's choices and actions that are the defining elements of his moral character. It is not our ancestry, social roles, or wealth that makes us who we are" (2012: 33). Even though Neville, suspected by his pure-blood Wizarding family of being a non-magical Squib, seems to lack the abilities to be a

hero, his choices to stand up to and for his friends and to face death in their fights show who he truly is: a brave and courageous person, namely, a hero.

From another perspective, Neville's life shows some parallelisms with Harry's and as Harry is the hero that would suggest that Neville could have been the hero as well. Wolosky also stresses this parallelism between Harry and Neville and how it shifts: "Neville is more specifically a double for Harry. Neville is with Harry through all seven books. At first, he is almost a clownish figure: the wizard without talent contrasted to Harry's dazzling promise of exceptional fate and power" (2012: 103). Neville manages to create an identity of his own in his secondary character position and to become a hero himself though not *the* hero of the story.

The parallelism between Harry and Neville starts with the prophecy. As Dumbledore informs Harry (*OPH*: 761), this could have also referred to Neville as he was born in July like Harry and his parents were also members of the Order of the Phoenix. However, the prophecy did not really specify who the chosen one was; Voldemort decided that his enemy was Harry, as Pierce also notes:

Voldemort's choice to go after Harry, rather than Neville, led to his marking Harry as his equal. According to Dumbledore's interpretation, the prophecy didn't itself determine whether it was about Harry or Neville. Voldemort's choice of Harry made it true of Harry. (2010: 41)

Therefore, if Voldemort had chosen Neville, the prophecy would have referred to him, not to Harry. It is important to stress that Voldemort created his own killer by choosing one child to kill; he chose Harry and therefore, he made Harry his own killer. However, even if he chose Harry, at the end, Neville also had his part in killing Voldemort by killing the last Horcrux, Nagini, demonstrating then that he could have been the one named by the prophecy because he was, in a sense, also his killer.

Other parallelisms between Harry and Neville suggest he could have been the hero. To begin with, both have a difficult childhood and they both want to take revenge on Voldemort for hurting their loved ones (Wannamaker, 2006). Though Neville is not an orphan like Harry, his parents, both Aurors, were made insane by

Bellatrix Lestrange's torture, following Voldemort's orders. Like Harry, Neville is raised by relatives, in his case an often unsympathetic grandmother. Also, they both have seen death and can therefore see thestrals, and, as I have noted, they are both Gryffindors.

Nevertheless, the parallelism begins to shift when Neville begins to show his heroic capacities and "grows in complexity and stature" (Wolosky, 2012: 103). When the parallelism shifts, Neville creates an identity of his own, becoming a hero himself in the end, so he is no longer the counterpart of Harry. This shift supports the idea that Neville could have been the hero just as much as his parallelism with Harry because the capacities that make him a potential hero are seen when he creates an identity of his own, not when he is just a parallel to Harry, even if the parallelism is what suggests the possibility of his being a hero.

The main problem encountered when trying to see Neville as the alternative hero of the series lies in J.K. Rowling's characterization of Neville. The first problem with the characterization is the choice of the name. When analyzed, the name Neville comes from the French terms 'ne' (no) and 'ville' (town), which would make then the name mean something like 'nowhere' or 'nothing'. This makes the name not very appealing for a hero and so does the funny surname Longbottom, which does not sound appropriate for a hero, either. However, the surname seems to have a later purpose, as Agarwal and Agarwal explain:

Neville's last name Longbottom is the name of a leaf, the Longbottom leaf, a rare herb in J.R.R. Tolkien's books. Since Neville is an exceptionally good in Herbology, which makes up for his bad Potions marks, Longbottom is a perfect last name for him. (2005: 45)

Neville's physical characterization is also problematic when thinking of him as a hero. He is presented since the beginning as a "round-faced and accident-prone boy with the worst memory of anyone Harry had ever met" (CS: 72). He also seems to be always whimpering in the first books and he is presented also as a clownish character, a kind of comic relief in some situations –such as when he runs away with the Sorting

Hat still on his head after being sorted into Gryffindor (*PHS*: 97). Another characteristic of Neville is that he was “almost a Squib” (*CS*: 149) which is why his Great Uncle Algie “kept trying to catch (him) off my guard and force some magic out of (him)” (*PHS*: 1, 100). Fenske gives a good description of Neville when he says that “he is neither intellectually nor physically successful, is laughed at by most of the children and even teachers, Neville depends heavily on others to help him out of trouble with his school work as well as in dangerous situations” (2008: 345). Neville also seems to have a really low self-esteem as he states repeatedly negative things about himself like when he tells Luna “I’m nobody” (*OPH*: 170) and also “lack of confidence” (*OPH*: 233) as Professor McGonagall says to him.

However, even if the characterization of Neville makes it difficult to see him as a hero, Rowling designed Neville that way. She did it in order to argue that we must not judge people for what they appear to be but for what they prove to be. Neville, then, appeared to be an irrelevant sidekick but he proved he was not, he proved he is also a hero, just like Harry, Hermione or Ron, with his actions and choices.

In conclusion, Neville could have been the hero instead of Harry because he had the capacities to be one; he was from the beginning capable of being a hero, as he showed repeatedly during the progression of the story. He, then, managed to become a true hero even if he was not the main hero of the story. He also could have been the hero because his parallelism with Harry gave him the same characteristics that Harry had in his hero position but the shift of the parallelism was when he actually becomes a hero himself. Finally, Neville’s characterization makes it difficult to see him as a hero but J.K. Rowling’s purpose was to argue that persons are more than what they appear to be, which is exactly Neville’s case.

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### Ron, the Necessary Sidekick: The Need for Strong Male Characters to Help Harry Play Hero (*Hristo Donev*)

ABSTRACT: Ron is one of the most thoroughly caricatured but at the same time important and decisive characters in the *Harry Potter* series. Many times we underestimate Ron's achievements and heroism because of the many flaws the character shows throughout the series. Still, he is a very important figure who often pushes Harry into heroic actions and who takes important decisions in the right moments. Without the strong sidekick figure Ron is, the hero would have had very hard times going through the challenges in the books. Although the friendship between Ron and Harry is the strongest one, throughout the series the hero also receives much help from other male figures, questioning whether he is a hero at all.

Throughout the *Harry Potter* series by J.K. Rowling, in almost every book Harry Potter is the character that gets most of the credit and admiration from the people in this fictional universe. This happens not because he deserves all of it, or because he achieves great deeds on his own, it is because he is the main character and the plot

needs to be like that. As a matter of fact most of the heroic deeds that the main character does wouldn't have happened if his friends hadn't helped him along the way. Arguably, Harry is not the typical, outstanding hero that we are used to seeing in stories, which is why he needs an even more unusual sidekick to help him on the way. One that is extremely underestimated and even caricatured: Ron.

Usually the sidekick is present so he can help the hero in his journey when executing heroic deeds; but even without him the hero is absolutely capable of maintaining his masculinity and continuing his path as a hero. In the case of the *Harry Potter* series Ron the sidekick is sometimes more important for Harry's heroic image than the actual protagonist. In the beginning, when Harry meets this world of wizards and witches Ron is the one who possesses inside knowledge and can pass it on to Harry. Furthermore, until his eleventh birthday the protagonist has no friends and remains a socially awkward kid; he needs someone with whom he can share his new adventures, someone who needs to be even more awkward than him, so that the hero Harry does not seem too goofy (or crazy).

While going into the series we see that Harry's masculinity is as developed as that of the other boys in the novel, which is why Ron is constantly being feminized. One of the ways to do that is by lowering Ron's achievements and focusing only on Harry's, for instance the way Dumbledore always gives Harry the most points at the end of the school year. Also just by having Ron in the trio the author is helping the protagonist to display his masculinity, because otherwise he would be totally outshined by Hermione. This is the reason why we don't find too many powerful female characters, or if we do they have a rather small role in the novel; also why all the strong male characters die for no actual reason. Their figures are removed because the plot needs it, so at the end there will be no strong male character to question Harry's unstable masculinity. Last but not least, Ron is making the series fun and amusing, because if we leave Harry and Hermione as the only two main characters, the whole series would have been one boring and monotonous dialogue.

At the beginning of *Philosopher's Stone* we see this little boy, whose parents have died and now lives under the stairs with his aunt and uncle. All off a sudden on

his eleventh birthday he understands that he is a wizard and is going to study in Hogwarts, the school of Witchcraft and Wizardry –and also that he has a bank safe full of gold. Just in one night Harry Potter is brought into a world totally different from his, a world where everybody seeks power and dark wizards want to kill him. In this new and foreign world the protagonist needs someone to help him on the way and explain to him what is happening, that is when we are presented with Ron –the cute ginger boy who will later become Harry’s best friend and sidekick. From the first scene together we see that Ron and Harry need each other. Harry needs Ron because he knows how this world works: “the fact remains that Ron comes from a Wizarding family and belongs to the elite society represented in Hogwarts. He may not be wealthy, but he is nevertheless an insider who can explain this world to Harry” (Galway, 2012: 80).

On the other hand, Harry has plenty of money inherited from his parents which he has no one else to share with, so in exchange for his company and knowledge Harry can offer Ron... sweets. But of course the relation between the two boys is far deeper than that from the very beginning. As we can see further into the series both boys are socially awkward and do not have many friends, except for the threesome they form with Hermione. Almost until the end of the series Harry and Ron have no close encounters with girls and they don’t even have female friends except for Hermione. The only difference is that Harry is the protagonist so he should be properly masculine, and with a good social and sexual life. That is why J.K. Rowling created Ron: to be even more socially awkward and sexually inexperienced, so by underlining Ron’s weirdness the reader misses out that Harry is as weird as Ron, even more in some occasions. Ron represents the beta male, which helps the alpha male hero shine, although this alpha male does not really possess the qualities of a leader or a hero.

Certainly Harry is also presented as socially awkward and sexually inexperienced, but not to the extent that Ron is. For example, both boys are rejected by the girls they initially ask to the Yule Ball. However, Harry steels himself to ask his potential date, Cho Chang, directly, and she seems genuinely disappointed that she already has a date. In contrast, Ron blurts out an invitation to the unapproachable



Fleur Delacour, who, Ron says, “looked at me like I was a sea slug or something. Didn’t even answer. And then —I dunno— I just sort of came to my senses and ran for it” (*GF* 399). Further, it is Harry who ultimately secures dates for both himself and Ron (Pugh and Wallace, 2006: 278).

Ron, though, is a far more complex character than a simple sidekick, because the habitual helper of the hero has to be inferior in every aspect and the hero should be able to overcome any challenge on his own. This is the case of Batman and Robin, as Robin appears only to execute actions Batman has the ability to perform but lacks the time or energy; Robin does not affect Batman’s character nor does he have to protect him from bullies. Ron, in contrast, has to protect Harry many times throughout the series. In many occasions we see that Ron is more decisive and experienced than Harry, as for example during the chess game in *Philosopher’s Stone*; later, Ron, acting as prefect is the one that has to protect him from the other students. In multiple situations we see that Ron is physically and mentally stronger than Harry and also he helps him reinforce his character traits.

Nevertheless, the author has taken care that the reader still believes that Harry is the alpha male. Ron is repeatedly effeminized and his achievements downplayed so that he does not question Harry’s masculinity. By putting the sidekick in silly and ironic situations we see him as an inferior and that leaves the hero space to shine. When we see that the closest male figure to the protagonist fails in multiple tasks multiple times our attention is directed towards the actual achievements of the hero. So although Ron is physically better developed (as shown by his incipient moustache) and psychologically more stable (as shown by the way he handles other people’s opinion about their friendship) he is humiliated many times so that the hero can shine.

Harry’s heteronormative heroism is linked to his maturation into an increasingly solitary hero. For example, in the two major challenges that he faces as a first-year student at Hogwarts, he works in partnership with Ron and Hermione. When Hermione is trapped by a mountain troll in the girls’ bathroom, Ron and Harry work together to save her, and Ron casts the spell that ultimately disables the troll. Similarly, in the climax of this first book, Ron, Hermione, and Harry work collaboratively.

Although at the end of the book Harry faces Voldemort alone, he could not succeed in this confrontation without both Ron's skill at chess and Hermione's knowledge of obscure magical plants and skill with logic problems. Indeed, in his adjudication of the House Cup competition, Dumbledore acknowledges this collaboration when he awards Ron and Hermione nearly the same points that he awards Harry for their roles in saving the Sorcerer's Stone. However, Ron is still "diminished in scope" (Pugh and Wallace, 2006: 272-273).

And let's not forget that Ron and Harry have a very strong friendship which helps both of them to keep going in the hard moments. From the beginning of their friendship they share not only goods with one another, they share moments and adventures in the school. Together they are the first ones to break the rules that the teachers have imposed for students. By this action both of them clearly state that this friendship is created on trust and support. Although we don't see many ordinary friendship moments during the series, there are a few moments where we can witness Ron and Harry acting like ordinary friends, bonding together in ordinary situations. Examples for this are the celebration in the male dormitory in the *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, where the boys just have fun together; another example of their friendship is when Ron abuses his prefect powers to protect harassed Harry's feelings in *Order of the Phoenix*; this helps them bond better but also questions Harry's masculinity and power. That is why we are told that Harry was supposed to be the prefect, but Dumbledore chose Ron, because Harry was too busy with other tasks.

Although Ron's role is very insignificant being just the sidekick we do not see him upset about that until the fourth book, when Harry enters the Triwizard Tournament representing Hogwarts. Ron always knew he was second best and he was happy with his role. He always helped Harry and let him take all the glory at the end. In *Philosopher's Stone* although Ron has known Harry only for a few weeks, he is prepared to serve as Harry's second in a wizard duel with Draco Malfoy, a role he has to explain: "A second's there to take your role if you die". In the same novel Ron demonstrates that he's a good second when, in the human chess match he allows himself to be captured by the white queen, so Harry can checkmate and continue with

their search of the Sorcerer's Stone (Whited and Grimes, 2004: 190). Furthermore, Ron plays a very important second role in the trio with Hermione. If he were not present we would more easily notice that Hermione is a far superior magician than the protagonist and she would have turned into the hero, leaving Harry behind. Ron balances the threesome by being the inferior magician of the three, and thus letting us think that if Harry is the alpha male in the group, he also has to be the hero and protagonist, instead of the girl in the team.

Nevertheless, Ron is the only character within the group with a decent sense of humour. If he were taken out of the series all the fun and amusement would perish with him. We witness that when he leaves the trio in *Deathly Hollows*. On the one hand, his actions show us that without him the threesome is doomed to lead a dull and action-less existence; on the other hand, once more his temporary absence reminds us that the sidekick is weak and unlike the hero he can give up on his mission. Ron all of a sudden starts to be a burden rather than a supporting friend, so that we can see Harry as the only possible hero. Although he returns and actually saves Harry from his senseless and irrational actions in pursuing the Horcruxes we don't see the hero as weak. He stands his ground against all odds, whereas Ron leaves simply because of an argument. He somehow needs to redeem himself in order to be worthy of Harry and Hermione's friendship again.

Last but not least, while Ron is constantly being effeminized, there are many strong masculine figures that help the protagonist in his way to victory. And those figures are continuously questioning Harry's power and his ability to finish the quest he has started. Although they are there to help him and teach him at one point their actions are derogatory of the protagonist's masculinity: "Harry is gathering around himself a coterie of adult protectors and champions including Dumbledore, Snape, Black, and Lupin, who seem to obviate the need for Harry to do anything" (Pugh and Wallace, 2006: 274). That is why after the third book we do not see Ron helping Harry so much and that is why in the following books we witness a few deaths –pointless and of questionable authenticity: Sirius Black, Dumbledore and Snape. Those characters are killed in convenient plot twists, unbelievable for the audience, just so that they

leave the hero shine alone in the end. Their actions to help the hero are almost forgotten by the time we see Harry defeat Voldemort 'on his own'. Poor Sirius is not even given a chance to redeem himself from all the false accusations leading him to Azkaban.

Every hero is a projection of the people and events around him. Even though some of them may claim they have achieved everything on their own, always their environment and other people's help lead them to finally succeed. One man cannot change the world if there are no people to believe in him. A leader is nothing if there is no one to follow him. Always question the so-called heroes and leaders, whether they are truly worthy of their sobriquet. Think of Ron.

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### **The Boy Who Didn't Have a Choice: Draco Malfoy and his Misjudged Villainy (*Tania Duarte*)**

ABSTRACT: The nature of the character of Draco Malfoy has been widely discussed since he started making the transition in the series from arrogant child to potentially dangerous wizard. Often –and mistakenly– referred to as 'the boy who made all the wrong choices', it is sometimes forgotten that perhaps he really did not have that many choices to make after all. In this paper I intend to argue how Malfoy's environment (background, family, his own jealousy of Harry Potter) lead him to develop a taste for a life of danger and wickedness, but how ultimately he is revealed not to be a true villain.

For years, the nature of Draco Malfoy as a character has been a bit of a mystery. He starts off as an arrogant, spoilt eleven-year-old boy who might even be considered to be a bully; someone whose jealousy of Harry Potter appears to be strong enough to want to make his and his friends' lives impossible at Hogwarts. As the years go by, though, Malfoy grows up to be a potentially dangerous young man. His most interesting trait corresponds to the ambiguity of whether his villainy is formed on the basis of his inner qualities or whether it is conditioned by external factors –whether he is a true villain at all.

Some of the terms most commonly used to refer to Draco Malfoy happen to be related to villainy but not exactly in a positive way (for a villain): “arrogant villain”, “tragic villain” and “incompetent villain” are some of the most popular labels, so it is easy to guess that the perception the readers have of him is not that of a successful evil character. Villains are often defined as selfish characters that act opposing the hero of the story and who are unable to care about anything else other than their own power and achievements. In Mike Alford's words, “true villainy has to do with the desire to dominate, to subsume the other within the individual self and that without compunction. The villain would appear to lack empathy, the ability to feel for others, to see themselves as a part of a larger whole” (2006: 120). While we can see some of these traits in Malfoy, he still fails at being a convincing villain.

What we know for a fact is that Draco Malfoy is a major antagonist in the *Harry Potter* saga. Various researchers suggest that the difference between villain and antagonist might be that the former knows that they are doing wrong and they do it with a purpose, whereas the latter believes in the rightness of their own actions. The values according to which Draco has been brought up lead him to believe that pure-bloods are more worthy of their place at Hogwarts, that Muggle-born or half-blood wizards and witches should be eliminated and, hence, that Albus Dumbledore and all those other wizards who are against Lord Voldemort's ideals and plans are a shame to the Wizarding world. Draco Malfoy is not stupid, he knows he is supporting the Dark Side and that this is something his family has done for years, yet he believes they are doing it for the right reasons. If we pay attention to Alford's description of true villainy,

there is something that differentiates him from Voldemort: Voldemort wants to dominate the Wizarding world, he only cares about his own power, but the Malfoys – and other Death Eaters– know that they, as individuals, are not going to dominate the world. They appear to be in it for a greater purpose, a greater good if you will, which would be having a Wizarding world made up of only pure-bloods. Funnily enough, “for the greater good” are the words Gellert Grindelwald, the second most powerful Dark Wizard after Lord Voldemort himself, used to justify his own terrible actions during the Global Wizarding War in the 1940s.

We first meet Draco Malfoy at Madam Malkin’s Robes for All Occasions in the first book. He is the first Hogwarts student Harry meets while shopping for school supplies in Diagon Alley alongside Hagrid. Draco is presented as a sharp-tongued, spoilt little kid who has always got what he wanted from his parents and, something that will become even more relevant for his character development, as someone who openly takes pride in his family’s pure blood and social status, despising all those other wizards and witches that may come from Muggle (or partly Muggle) families. He may have been the first student to ever try to befriend Harry, but both the hero of the story and the reader decide they dislike Malfoy straight away because of his snobbishness.

Once Draco finds out that Harry is, in fact, the great and famous Harry Potter, things change. His attitude goes from being that of a boy who wants to show off to being genuinely interested in befriending Harry –though, of course, not for the right reasons. As somebody who is used to being considered the centre of the universe by his own family (and he is, in a way, as he is the only heir to the Malfoy legacy), Draco is attracted to superficiality, to the fame and buzz that constantly surround Harry. As Christopher and Sarah Patrick observe, “In addition to hating what the other believes and stands for, however, they are both jealous. Malfoy wants the fame, adoration, and love that Harry generates from others” (2013: 99). However, Harry and Draco have very different criteria when choosing the people they want to spend their time with at Hogwarts and so Harry makes the wise choice of rejecting his friendship, which makes Malfoy show his true colours very clearly:

'I think I can tell who the wrong sort are for myself, thanks', he said coolly. Draco Malfoy didn't go red, but a pink tinge appeared in his pale cheeks. 'I'd be careful if I were you, Potter', he said slowly. 'Unless you're a bit politer you'll go the same way as your parents. They didn't know what was good for them, either. You hang around with riff-raff like the Weasleys and that Hagrid and it'll rub off on you'. (PHS: 75)

From that moment onwards Harry and Draco's relationship is that of two people who markedly dislike each other, and actively act on their feelings of antipathy towards one another. Yet, most of the time Draco is just an obstacle in Harry's way and not really a major threat. That is, until the fourth book. While Draco's family is mentioned through the first four volumes and we actually get to see enough of his father to have an idea of what they are like, we do not know that much about them until *Harry Potter and The Goblet of Fire*. The first time the Death Eaters appear, during the Quidditch World Cup, we suspect Lucius Malfoy may be associated with the Dark Side, but it is not until Voldemort comes back to life that we know that he is unquestionably one of the Dark Lord's most loyal followers. We are aware that his father is a relevant referent for Draco as he has previously shown signs of following his exact same ideals and opinions, so the reader might start to suspect which side Draco is attracted to. Additionally, he is in Slytherin after all, and as Fouque observes,

Most of the Slytherin students are portrayed at the outset as dark wizards in training. As the conflict becomes more serious throughout the series, the Slytherins evolve from unkind and bullying children into young supporters of Voldemort, incidentally a Slytherin himself when he was at Hogwarts. (2012: 75)

However, while *Goblet of Fire* is essential to find out more about the Malfoys and where they stand, *Half-Blood Prince* is vital to understand the nature of the character of Draco Malfoy. The sixth volume finds Lucius Malfoy in Azkaban due to his failure at the Department of Mysteries the previous year and no other than his son replaces him as Death Eater. More importantly, not only does Draco become overtly the Death Eater he always was, but he is also given a crucial mission by Lord Voldemort: Draco is put in charge of committing the murder of Albus Dumbledore, one of the most significant crimes in the saga. Pretentious as he has always been, Draco's

first reaction is to brag about this commission as he feels that the Dark Lord might be favouring him. However, the harsh truth is that nobody believes he will be able to fulfil his duty –and that is the exact reason why such a difficult mission was given to him. As his own mother, Narcissa, points out, Lord Voldemort “has chosen Draco in revenge!” (*HBP*: 27) simply to punish his father for letting him down.

To understand Draco’s willingness and attitude when he is first asked to carry out that extremely dangerous duty, we must go back to the jealousy factor. He has always been envious of Harry and his ‘Chosen One’ status in the Wizarding world so, unaware of Lord Voldemort’s actual reasoning behind his choice, he is ecstatic to be the Chosen One of the Dark Side. He is convinced that by completing the task on his own (it is important to remember that he keeps rejecting Snape’s help throughout the sixth book, thinking that all he wants is to take credit for his mission) he will achieve the glory he so passionately longs for. He is simply blinded by the thought of being praised and admired, just as Harry is, through pursuing the life of evil that he has always been so attracted to. After all, surrounded by a family of supporters of the Lord Voldemort, the Dark Side is all he has ever known.

However, being a Death Eater comes with a price. Additionally, when it comes to a sixteen-year-old boy whose price to pay should he not fulfil his duty would be both his life and his parents’ lives, the pressure is much higher. Soon enough Draco is able to see the real danger of the mission and after two attempts to kill Dumbledore, injuring two fellow Hogwarts students, the situation starts to take a toll on him. Not only does he start failing academically, with Professor McGonagall mentioning that he has missed a couple of assignments and has even been in detention, but the strain also starts showing on his physical appearance, with noticeable dark circles under the eyes and “a distinctly greyish tinge to his skin” (*HBP*: 214). Even Harry and his friends, who do not know for sure if he has been branded with the Death Eater’s Dark Mark, know that something is wrong with him. Once things start getting tougher, Draco himself realizes that what he has been asked to do might just be impossible to complete, though he knows it is too late to back out. As Misty K. Hook argues,



[In Harry's final year at Hogwarts], Harry notices that Malfoy is pale and less cocky. Harry hears about his breakdowns in front of Moaning Myrtle, and, when Malfoy refuses to kill Dumbledore, Harry realizes that Malfoy is trapped by evil. Thus, Harry goes from hating Malfoy and wanting him beaten at all costs to having compassion for him. (2013: 99)

Draco's story can be compared to that of another Death Eater, Sirius' younger brother Regulus Black. The Blacks have been known to be associated with the Dark Side, which they take pride in. While Regulus' parents were not Death Eaters themselves, they were loyal followers of Lord Voldemort and they appeared to be extremely proud of their youngest son for taking a step forward and becoming a Death Eater in his youth. However, like many other people, Regulus regrets his choice as soon as he finds out how cruel Voldemort is and the lengths he is prepared to go in order to amass more power. After using the Blacks' house-elf Kreacher to test the defences around Salazar Slytherin's locket and nearly killing him afterwards, Regulus makes the decision to replace the original locket with a fake one, getting himself killed by the Inferi in the process. With Kreacher keeping the promise of not telling anyone, the real story of how Regulus died is kept a secret for a long time. That secrecy leads Sirius to believe that Regulus has been killed for wanting to leave the Death Eaters, which was, in fact, partly true. As Sirius tells Harry:

'[Regulus] was murdered by Voldemort. Or on Voldemort's orders, more likely; I doubt Regulus was ever important enough to be killed by Voldemort in person. From what I found out after he died, he got in so far, then panicked about what he was being asked to do and tried to back out. Well, you don't just hand in your resignation to Lord Voldemort. It's a lifetime of service or death'. (OPH: 104)

Just as Regulus did, Draco realizes that things are becoming too extreme and he starts to doubt whether he wants to be a part of Voldemort's plans. Neither of them were forced to join the Death Eaters, they did so happily by themselves (although in Draco's case he may have been influenced by the need to redeem his family's name – nevertheless, it was undoubtedly something that he had always wanted). Still, both realize that the idea of being on the Dark Side is much more appealing from the outside. We are told that these characters have been attracted to evil from a very

young age and while we do not know much about Regulus, we do know that Rowling made Draco very poorly equipped for the life of villainy that he (and we) thought he enjoys and that is shown through his decadence throughout the sixth book.

The truth is that there is a limit to every villain's wickedness and ability to perform evil and Draco's own limit is murder. While he is deadly scared and doubtful of his own skills through the school year, it is not until he is faced with Dumbledore that he realizes he cannot do it; even the Headmaster himself, who knows about the plot, wonders if Draco's heart "has been really in it" (*HBP*: 387). Somewhere along the line the Dark Side becomes more terrifying than exciting and by the time Malfoy has to kill Dumbledore, he is just a boy torn between the idea of becoming a murderer or having himself and his family killed. Draco's confident and arrogant self seems nowhere to be found and instead he shows his weak side as he has never done before. Ultimately, Snape takes over the task from him and murders Dumbledore himself. Lowering his wand, Draco realises that there might be a choice for him outside the life of evil he thought he wanted to lead. He is finally willing to go over to the right side, once his family's safety is guaranteed.

In fact, Draco's family may actually be the main factor holding Draco back from becoming a killer. In Rowling's words, "I think one could argue that Draco, who is ultimately revealed not to be an evil character, got his goodness from his mother" (*YouTube*, 2013: website). Narcissa Malfoy is also associated with evil, but her inclination towards the Dark Side does not get in the way of her being a good mother. In a family in which very often what matters most seems to be power and loyalty to the Dark Lord, she betrays her beliefs and puts her son's safety before anything else, even forcing Snape to protect Draco and implicitly fulfil Draco's duty when he is not able to do it himself. Once fear takes Draco over, he realizes that his actions could not only have him killed but also have his parents, and if he has learned from someone to want to protect his family, that is from Narcissa.

Draco is often, and wrongly, referred to as 'the boy who made all the wrong choices', but the truth is that he really did not have that many choices to make. As he confesses to Dumbledore in a panic, "I haven't got any options! I've got to do it! He'll

kill me! He'll kill my whole family!" (HBP: 390). He never claims he wants to kill Dumbledore, or that it is the right thing to do. After that night, the Malfoys decide to take refuge with Voldemort until the war is over because Draco, despite failing to complete his task, is still considered a criminal for letting the Death Eaters into Hogwarts. The only way out for him while keeping the family together is to stay under Voldemort's orders –reluctantly. This reluctance becomes very clear during the Battle of Hogwarts, with Draco refusing to have Harry killed and Narcissa lying to Voldemort to save Harry. By then, the Malfoys' place in the Dark Side is no longer a matter of loyalty, but rather a matter of safety.

One could argue that Draco is a coward, and that so are his parents, but we must remember that he was just a sixteen-year-old boy with a mission that everyone knew was way too big for him and he just failed at proving them wrong. Draco's failure does not lie in his being an unsuccessful wizard –he masters Occlumency, after all, something Harry was never able to do– but in the realization that he may not be as evil as he thought he could be. Draco may be an antagonist, and he may have been a racist and arrogant bully during his first few years at Hogwarts, but he is not a villain. He was then attracted to the Dark Side because that is really all he had ever known, but the idea of it was much more appealing before getting to experience it all first-hand. In the end, the life of villainy he thought he wanted turned out to be too much to handle.

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## House-Elves: Rowling's Irresponsible Representation of Slavery (Laia García Jordà)

ABSTRACT: J.K. Rowling has had a great impact on 21<sup>st</sup> century society, especially on children. With her *Harry Potter* saga, she has filled the imagination of many with magical elements and fantastic creatures. Nevertheless, she has been criticised for her portrayal in her books of social and political systems as well as certain issues that still today are very sensitive. In this paper I will deal with the representation of slavery in her series. With the presence of house-elves, the issue of slavery and of the dominant and the oppressed has raised many critical responses examining Rowling's intention in including this topic in her books. Through Kreacher and Dobby I will analyse the roles house-elves have in the story and the discriminatory treatment they receive from the other characters. Moreover, we will see how J.K. Rowling's behaviour towards slavery is confusing and at the same time potentially irresponsible.

Magical creatures are present in the *Harry Potter* books since the very beginning. In fact, the number extends to more than fifty different types of creatures which are carefully classified into different classes, mainly 'beings' and 'beasts'. The difference between these two categories lies on the intelligence of the creature and its capacity to understand the laws within the magical community as well as to take responsibility in their making (Rowling, 2001). Therefore, the ones with sentience are catalogued as 'beings', whereas the ones showing more animalistic features are more likely to be classified as 'beasts'. However, according to Rowling's own spin-off *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* (2001), house-elves are classified as neither beings nor beasts. This uncertain status in which house-elves are left complicates the way they should be understood, either as creatures close to humans or as fully non-human. This lack of definite identity could be one of the reasons for the frequent dehumanising treatment they receive either from institutions and from society itself, which do not see them as beings "with feelings as acute as human's" (OPH: 731) but as mere objects at the wizards' disposal.

In the series, the organism in charge of classifying the magical creatures is, in fact, the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures of the

Ministry of Magic. The classification is clearly made on human species' standards, with human beings placing themselves above all other creatures. In addition, the name of the department clearly shows the superiority of humans, specifically witches and wizards, who are the ones 'controlling' and 'regulating' other non-human magical creatures. In relation to house-elves, we could say that wizards conform in relation to them a clear example of a hegemonic power. According to Antonio Gramsci, a hegemonic power manifests itself in the form of a superior social group that dominates the others under moral and intellectual leadership (Gramsci, 1971). Therefore, if we have the figure of the dominant and of the oppressor we must have the one of the oppressed, in this case represented by the house-elves.

Among all the magical creatures, house-elves are the only ones to endure a stronger type of oppression. Their function in the Wizarding world is reduced basically to serving their masters from the moment they are born until they die. This we know from Dobby, the house-elf property of the Malfoys, who explains that he is "bound to serve one house and one family forever" (CS: 16). In the case of Kreacher, who is older than Dobby, we see that also his ancestors served the same family he has been serving for years, the Blacks. Actually, Kreacher's mother is mentioned in the books as the previous servant to the house. House-elves are then bound for life to the family that owns them and this servitude is extended throughout generations until the house-elf is freed or the family line ends; in this case, they are redirected to the closest relative. Freedom can only be achieved if the master presents them with clothing or simply tells them that they are free, though, as we see in Dobby's case, freedom is not without serious problems.

It is inevitable not to make the association between house-elves and African American slavery. We can justify this with Jackie C. Horne's article on "Harry and the Other: Answering the Race Question in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter*" where she states that "Rowling's depiction of Dobby and his fellow elves contains uncomfortable echoes of many of the stereotypes held by whites of enslaved African Americans" (2010: 80). They are the object of ownership and sometimes trade, exclusively among the most noble and powerful magic families. House-elves must do what their masters order

them, otherwise they routinely go through a process of self-inflicted pain. In the second book, Dobby hits himself and even burns his hands after breaking his master's rules because he has warned Harry about the danger he is in. Another characteristic of house-elfish slavery is the poor conditions in which they live: they usually have a closet as their room and they are always dressed with filthy old clothes as a mark of their servitude. They are also used to bad and even violent treatment from their masters. Instances of house-elves mistreatment are shown especially through Dobby, who receives constant beatings from Lucius Malfoy, and Kreacher, who is ill-treated by Sirius Black: "Sirius seized Kreacher by the back of his loincloth and threw him bodily from the room" (*OPH*: 109). Although abuse is seen as normal inside the master-servant relationship, house-elves are aware that they are being mistreated, as Dobby sadly highlights: they are treated like "vermin" (*CS*: 133).

Dehumanization is one of the most painful processes slaves undergo. In the case of house-elves, we know that they are not anatomically human and, according to the Ministry of Magic, are not even classified as beings. However, they do possess human-like traits such as sentience, which is the ability to feel and be conscious of the environment, and indeed language. The first time that a house-elf appears in the saga this is in the second book. In Harry's sudden encounter with Dobby, when the house-elf apparates in his bedroom at the Dursleys', he questions Dobby's identity wondering silently whether he should refer to the elf as a 'what' or a 'who': "He wanted to ask 'What are you?' but thought it would sound too rude, so instead he said, 'Who are you?'" (*CS*: 15). Of course, we see here that Harry's natural response would have been dehumanizing but politeness makes him avoid this option. Still, being polite does not eliminate the dehumanizing factor from the equation, it just hides it.

Having proved how house-elves embody the figure of the slave, we must see how and through what institutions slavery is sustained in the Wizarding world of *Harry Potter*. We notice that, in general, the enslavement of house-elves is accepted by nearly all the characters in the story. A clear example is Ron Weasley, who not only accepts but defends it: "Well, the elves are happy, aren't they? You heard old Winky back at the match... 'House-elves is not supposed to have fun'...that's what she likes,

being bossed around...". (GF: 140, original ellipses). Clearly, Ron does not really understand what elfish slavery means as in no way does he consider it an act of oppression from his Wizarding society. In this case, Ron distinctively represents the individual that has absorbed the cultural conventions of the Wizarding society, as Horne explains:

Ron, as he does throughout the series, here embodies the naturalized beliefs of the Wizarding culture, beliefs that dismiss any claims of institutional oppression as mere 'complaining' and 'lying'—protests that social justice educators often hear from their students when first beginning to teach dominant-member groups about institutional, rather than individual, racism. (2010: 94)

Instead of considering Ron a speciesist<sup>2</sup> we could think that he is just a victim of society and of the Wizarding institutions that perpetuate house-elf slavery. In fact, according to Horne, "racism can be defined not simply as individual, personal acts of prejudice, but also as cultural and institutional structures and policies that create advantages for dominant group members and disadvantage for people (or creatures) from subordinated groups" (2010: 88). In the house-elves case, we should substitute racism for speciesism, since they are a different species from the human one. Therefore, we see that speciesism is not limited to an individual but it expands to culture and institutions, in this case the Wizarding culture and the Ministry of Magic, and it is expressed by means of oppression and slavery. Of course, the dominant groups see advantages in having another species oppressed. The problem comes when this is presented as inherent in the society and, like Ron, perceived as natural.

Apart from being oppressed by society, culture and institutions, J.K. Rowling's representation of house-elves can be deemed contradictory and even irresponsible. We can justify this by her portrayal of elves as a species that "claim to love their servitude" (Schulzke, 2012: 119). Not only are they determined to remain slaves but they willingly accept their subordinate position in the hierarchy. According to

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<sup>2</sup> 'Speciesism', a term coined in 1970 by Richard D. Ryder, refers to a superior status of a species or discrimination against other species; especially human speciesism against animals.

Gramsci's theory of the hegemonic power, the subordinated class is persuaded by the oppressive one that it is in their own interest to remain as such (Gramsci, 1971). That is why house-elves fear so much freedom and sometimes when freed, like Winky, they live in misery and disgrace.

In the opposite case, Dobby, freed by Harry, claims to be very proud of being a free elf. Yet, he paradoxically contradicts himself when he asserts his free will by announcing that "Dobby will do whatever Harry Potter wants him to do" (HBP: 499). In a way, it seems that Dobby is not actually free but has just passed onto a more amiable pseudo-owner, Harry. There is a scene in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (2003) when house-elves revolt against Hermione's attempts to free them, which they find insulting, and respond by not cleaning the Gryffindor Tower any more so as to avoid finding the items of clothing she's scattering there. It is clear how they are manipulated into seeing the world from the oppressors' eyes and consequently end up being in complicity with the oppressive power.

Unlike Ron, Hermione is the only character to take an active response to house-elf injustice, maybe because she is Muggle-born and she easily sympathises with individuals who are in any situation of social discrimination. She is the only one to recognize their situation for what it is and shout it out loud: "it's slavery!" (GF: 140). From then on she is moved to pursue justice for house-elves and starts an organization against slavery, unfortunately named S.P.E.W. (Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare). The problem is that Rowling ridicules Hermione's activism and makes all the other characters despise it: "Many regarded the whole thing as a joke" (GF: 203). This could be interpreted as Rowling not really caring about elfish slavery or considering it an irrelevant issue. Moreover, it seems that the attitude she mostly defends is the one Dumbledore and later Harry adopt, which is that being nice and kind to house-elves, treating them with equanimity and not equality, is more than enough. Their attitude, compared to Hermione's, is a passive one and although they do not comply with Lucius' or Sirius' aggressive treatment, they do not endorse any kind of criticism against the immorality of slavery. This gives the impression that just by being kind, elfish slavery can be accepted in the Wizarding world.



Another factor that accounts for Rowling's irresponsibility in portraying such a conflicting issue as slavery is the way house-elves are marginalized in the story. By this I mean that, like Harry, we do not know of the existence of house-elves until the second volume of the series and later on they only make short appearances. Moreover, once we know of their existence, the reader and some main characters are not really aware of their exact labours at Hogwarts (where they do the cooking, they clean the rooms, make the beds and wash the linen among other things). Before knowing about their presence and function in the school, all these tasks are simply attributed to magic. That is why we can say that house-elves are also marginalized in the story.

Apart from being marginalized, Rowling again hinders our sympathy for house-elves by describing them in very unattractive ways and by taking away their dignity in turning them into objects of mockery. Funny or crazy, house-elves are negatively represented within the immoral institution of slavery. Dobby is a little creature with bulging green eyes, pointy nose and long, bat-like ears. Although he is the example of a more open-minded, revolutionary elf who has achieved freedom, "Dobby proves more an object of humour (as were many black characters in twentieth-century popular culture) than a model of what a free elf can accomplish" (Horne, 2010: 81). Therefore, Rowling's comical portrayal of Dobby downgrades his rebellion against slavery and terminates any kind of hope in initiating a new era of elfish freedom. Whereas Dobby represents a new kind of revolutionary elf who rejects slavery and achieves a freedom that he enjoys despite the many problems it brings (like finding employment), Kreacher is the conservative kind of house-elf whose main desire is to serve a worthy master and fulfil his duties by being loyal and upholding the family's honour. Rude Kreacher is called by Ron a "nutter" (*OPH*: 72) because "His life's ambition is to have his head cut off and stuck up on a plaque like his mother" (*OPH*: 72). Kreacher's description is even creepier than Dobby's:

Except for the filthy rag tied like a loincloth around its middle, it was completely naked. It looked very old. Its skin seemed to be several times too big for it and, though it was bald like all house-elves, there was a quantity of white hair growing

out of its large, batlike ears. Its eyes were a bloodshot and watery grey and its fleshy nose was large and rather snoutlike. (*OPH*: 100)

At the end of the saga, Dobby, who only found employment at Hogwarts, dies an honourable death. Kreacher, also employed at the school, leads the house-elves against the Death Eaters during the final battle. Harry, his owner, only thinks of him when he feels the pangs of hunger.

In conclusion, we see that J.K. Rowling does not take seriously the issue of house-elf slavery, which has echoing connotations from African American slavery. House-elves undergo ill-treatment from their masters, dehumanization, marginalization and even ridiculing from the main protagonists. In presenting such a serious issue in a book saga in which children have an important role as readers, J.K. Rowling can be deemed irresponsible. She does not do a good job in convincing the characters of the severe situation of these fellow creatures and of the injustice that is being upheld by their own institutions and society. She not only marginalizes them in the story but takes away their dignity as sentient beings by ridiculing them. Consequently, she reduces any gleam of light towards a change in favour of elfish freedom by considering any action against slavery as a joke.

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## **Killing God in *Harry Potter*: J.K. Rowling's Religion-Free, Magical, and Moral World (Cristina González Varo)**

**ABSTRACT:** The absence of God in the *Harry Potter* series has raised much controversy, eliciting strong criticism from the religious audience. The novels have been criticized for corrupting children with sorcery and 'the occult'. However, taking into account J.K. Rowling's religious beliefs, my view is that she did not intend to corrupt (or play) with children's beliefs in a dangerous way. In this paper, I argue that despite the controversy, the *Harry Potter* world offers a moral choice based on good and evil –useful for readers of all religions or none.

From the very beginning of the journey, Joanna Rowling's moves have been calculated to achieve the goals that she and her publishing house had in mind. One of these carefully considered ideas, as explained in her biography (2012), consisted of using the author's grandmother's name (Kathleen) as her own middle name, to form the ambiguous J.K. Rowling penname. This was designed to appeal to the young, male audience for whom the series was originally intended. There can be no doubt that the author and her publishing and film teams have deliberately chosen and discarded different ideas throughout the series. This makes us wonder why the *Harry Potter* world lacks religion and a powerful deity figure, a lack that has created much controversy among the adult readers. Is this also a strategy?

Some of these adult readers have gone so far as to declare that J.K. Rowling's intentions to manipulate children and young people into 'the occult' should be reason enough to ban the series. However, it seems more reasonable, given the care with which Rowling constructed the series, to believe that the author was constantly aware of the consequences of her decisions. Bearing in mind this and her religious convictions, it seems more likely that what she actually intended to do was not to manipulate or corrupt children's minds, but to offer a religion-free alternative, a moral choice based on good and evil, which would fit any child's world, keeping aside their religious beliefs or their lack of them.

### One Book, an Infinite Number of Interpretations

As Lev Grossman comments in the article “Who Dies in *Harry Potter*?” (2007), Rowling’s work is often regarded just as kids’ books, ignoring the radically Godless content she includes in her children’s material. Here, Grossman criticises the outrage the believers have been proclaiming since, for him, they are missing the point of the series –the total absence of belief:

If you want to know who dies in *Harry Potter*, the answer is easy: God. (...) Rowling isn’t a Satanist –if anything the Satanists should be as offended as the Christians. *Harry Potter* lives in a world that has been scrubbed clean of any religion or spirituality of any kind. (Grossman, 2007: website)

He further contends that a key component of success in this magical world is the force of love. This highlights the moral values and the ethics of individual responsibility noticeable throughout the series, which contrasts strongly with the traditional religious framework based on faith and a supernatural, benevolent entity in some degree in control of all our lives.

In a very subtle and quiet way, Rowling has commented on her religious beliefs –she is a member of the Church of Scotland, but she sidelines this institution in order to avoid what she feared: Christian readers trying to find Christianity in *Harry Potter*. The series has gained both enemies and fans, but if we analyse the audience at a religious level, there are two subcategories within the ones who are believers: those who are convinced that *Harry Potter* is a bad influence, a manufactured idea to corrupt children and make them believe in sorcery and dark magic; and those who decided to be less confrontational about the issue and attempt to seek out the Christianity within the pages of the books. In fact, there are many published books on *Harry Potter* and the underlying religious messages buried deep down, so much so that, as Macy Halford suggests,

It follows that she [Rowling] wrote the books in a way that obscures their underlying religiosity, that the Christianity in *Harry Potter* is buried so deep that a whole host of books has had to be published to dig it up. It follows that readers

who aren't looking for Christian parallels, which is to say the vast majority of *Harry Potter* readers won't even know they're there. (2010: website)

Halford also comments on the work of Greg Garret, *One Fine Potion: The Literary Magic of Harry Potter*, which is one of the books devoted to seeking out religion in the series. Halford quotes Garret's claim that "Rowling's 4100-page epic was the best and most powerful contemporary retelling of the gospel narrative I'd encountered" (in Halford, 2010: website). It is due to this kind of commentary that, despite Rowling's efforts, the issue of religion has become more and more important and central in the discussion of the series.

In a way, Garret has played with the topic in a shrewd fashion. His comments have been controversial enough to generate great interest and he has attracted greater numbers into paying attention to his analysis. He has managed to avoid an association with the more extreme and offensive attacks headed by fundamentalist Fathers and Priests and Pastors who all agree on the same radical idea that every single aspect of Rowling's magic world –from potions to dark magic, is a direct attack on them and their religious beliefs. The critique involving *Harry Potter's* beliefs might be considered offensive by those who take it on a personal level, but if the author of the series seems impervious to it, this might be due to the unspoken yet known secret: there is no such a thing as bad publicity.

It is not a matter of gaining or wanting more success or fame, but the fact that more and more readers are joining the *Harry Potter* community by some strange force –some might call it sorcery, others, plain peer pressure. Whatever this is, it is certainly helping the books to be more popular world-wide, if that is even possible. In an interview, Rowling was asked to what extent did it bother her that a fundamentalist group of believers were buying her books and then burning them in protest against the fantasy that was leading their younger generations to believe that something else apart from God could be in charge of life. She replied, laughing, that at least her books were still being sold. The work of the author is to tell a story, to narrate a series of events, with the sole purpose of transmitting that story from one point, the author's mind, to the other, the audience. What the author cannot foresee is the reaction the

reader will have to those words, so it seems fair to argue that Rowling's reaction is as good as any other.

### Seeking Christianity in *Harry Potter*

The parallels between Christianity and *Harry Potter* are not entirely invalid. As with any fundamental struggle between good and evil, certain aspects are shared with religious doctrines. Dumbledore's self-sacrifice to save the world is very naturally compared to the death of Jesus on the cross. In both accounts, the benevolent agent willingly submits to death to achieve a greater goal. Dumbledore instructs Snape to kill him if Draco Malfoy fails to perform the deed. He does this in order to protect Draco and preserve Voldemort's faith in Snape. Jesus, of course, suffered crucifixion at the hands of the Romans in order to absolve the world of sin and, in doing so, to conquer death. Jesus' sacrifice was performative in that, in doing so, he achieved his goal, whereas Dumbledore's was merely instrumental in that it facilitated the achievement of his goal. This is the first difference although it does not entirely invalidate the religious connotations of the act. There is, however, another interpretation of Dumbledore's sacrifice, as Nikolaus Wandinger states: "Dumbledore's laying down his life for the higher good would be a genuine Christian sacrifice if it did not involve making Snape a culprit. Since it does involve this, it is no shining example of Christian sacrifice" (2010: 35).

However, religion does not have a monopoly on the concept of self-sacrifice. This is an idea contained in many ethical philosophies and, so, the dissolution of the true parallel with Jesus invalidates this saga as a piece of religious symbolism. In fact, it is possible to attack this parallel further since Dumbledore's own sacrifice is in no way as profound as that of Jesus: Dumbledore was already dying because of a cursed ring and merely instructed Snape to hasten that process for reasons important only for the achievement of his personal aims. In fact, Dumbledore, as an inscrutable, benevolent agent, is more obviously like God, as Lykke Guanio-Uluru argues in her essay "Dumbledore's Ethos of Love in *Harry Potter*": "In the course of the first six books,

Dumbledore is elevated (by youthful Harry) to the position of a supreme all-knowing God. (...) In such a reading, Dumbledore becomes God” (2012: 89).

A key component of Harry’s development is his understanding that death is an important part of our existence. Harry, who actually dies and is resurrected, can be likened to Jesus. Again though, this parallel is incomplete. Harry’s motivation is to destroy a part of Voldemort’s soul and thus render him vulnerable to death. Jesus (who was completely innocent) died to absolve the world of sin and to renew the promise of eternal life for his believers. This more accurately reflects Voldemort’s goal of conquering death than Harry’s.

The other most attractive parallel one can draw is between Voldemort and the Devil. Both are the embodiment of evil in the world in which they exist and the personification of the ultimate power against which our heroes struggle. The conception of the Devil held by the Church of Scotland’s (and therefore, one might infer, by Rowling as one of its members) is as a primarily seductive entity. The Devil is an agent who plays on our own desires to achieve his own ends. There is an element of choice in Voldemort’s regime in that one can choose to defect to his cause. However, this overlooks the more central element of Voldemort’s ethos: purity. Wizards born from Muggles are considered inferior and unworthy. Voldemort’s idea of a chosen people and superior race has more in common with certain outdated ideas of God (particularly predestination) than with any conception of the Devil. This fundamentally racist idea is a central pretext for the evil that occurs within the series and against which our heroes are completely opposed throughout. The ethos of the protagonists has, at its core, individual responsibility and the ability to choose the right course of action.

Harry comes to understand the full implications of this in *Chamber of Secrets*, when Dumbledore explains that “it is our choices (...) that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities” (18). This message is crucial to the philosophy of the protagonists and its antithesis is equally vital to the villains of the series but cannot be meaningfully likened to the central message of Christianity: that of turning the other

cheek, loving one's neighbour and forgiving sins. While these are not diametrically opposed, to draw a comparison between them would be fatuous and unconvincing.

### The Underlying Truth of Rowling's Purpose

J.K. Rowling's conveys a different, new concept of a Godless world and it is understandable that certain religious individuals might feel attacked, but those who believe that the author's purpose was to demolish their religious universe completely misunderstood her goal. Rowling offers a world free of religion, free of any kind of superior force; instead, she introduces moral values as the leading factor in everyone's lives. Her world offers a moral choice based on good and evil –useful for readers of all religions or none, which strikes believers as unthinkable and outrageous. What the author intended was to reach as many readers as possible, and how could one achieve such a goal if the figure of God is certainly going to restrain such limits? Her motif seems wise and disrespectful at the same time if the one judging such action strongly believes her writing to be part of a crusade against religion.

If we analyse the books, the substitute of God is easily found: death. From the very first pages the reader encounters Harry's loneliness due to his parents death, and throughout the series death is vividly present. There is no need to wonder why Voldemort wanted to conquer death –it is what we, readers, wizards, Muggles, are most afraid of. The morality in Rowling's books shows the supreme force that one might have if s/he were conscious of the importance of good and evil, being able to choose between both. The moral lesson goes beyond any kind of religion, since it is known to mankind that before the different religious beliefs were established, before God and the Devil were present in the human life, humanity was all that mattered. The message Rowling wants to convey in her work is the following: the humanity within any human being is what puts individuals in charge of their own life.

To conclude, J.K. Rowling's work stopped being a mere collection of books for children the moment they became extremely popular. The power of celebrity alerted religious groups, since the lack of God in the series was seen as a direct attack towards their conventions. However, as seen in this paper, there is much controversy when it



comes to opinions: some believe Rowling's intentions to be offensive, while some others try to find evidence of the existence of God within the pages of the novels. What those who criticise the series missed is the actual message the author wants to convey. The importance of moral values and independent thought throughout the books is the lesson J.K. Rowling wants to teach, the power of the individual. She shows how powerful love and humanity can be, against the traditional religious conventions of a superior force. It is fair to establish that J.K. Rowling was aware of the consequences of the creation of a Godless world, but the fact that the series are worldwide known and have reached many young readers –of all religions or none, is the proof that she accomplished her goal.

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## Threatening Witches' and Wizards' Safety: Careless Legislation about the Improper Use of Magic in *Harry Potter* (Álvaro Juárez)

ABSTRACT: The Improper magic usage seems to be conscientiously prosecuted by the Ministry of Magic. However, even underage Hogwarts students are allowed to perform spells, charms, curses and hexes that might put into risk other students' lives. In this paper I argue that J.K. Rowling purposely failed to describe the Ministry's responsibilities towards this issue in order to create a comical effect in her novels. The author dismisses the use of traditional literary dark magic in the saga, since there are not explicit references to it. Nevertheless, examples are found in the text that witches and wizards in training can make an attempt on other students' free will with no reprimand from the authorities.

In the *Harry Potter* world, underage students are allowed to perform magic inside Hogwarts' walls. That is reasonable, taking into account that they do not have enough magical ability, and they have to learn how to make a correct use of their power. So, the best method is by practicing. Among the subjects of the Hogwarts' curriculum it is compulsory to attend 'Defence against the Dark Arts' which is also essential, considering the historical events when Lord Voldemort first tried to rule. Nevertheless, in the very first book we see that whoever has to supervise that children are being taught correctly is either very busy or unworried about it, as "The class everyone had really been looking forward to was Defence Against the Dark Arts, but Quirrell's lessons turned out to be a bit of a joke" (*PHS*: 100).

J.K. Rowling creates a political system that is supposed to look after the secure use of magic. However, evidence is found in the books that show how the Ministry is not doing its job correctly; not only regulating the improper use of magic, but also establishing order in the magical world. One of the first instances of the Ministry's lack of concern about its duty is found in the second book, *Chamber of Secrets*, when Hagrid is sent to Azkaban for no justifiable reason and Cornelius Fudge explains to Dumbledore that he is acting just to keep up the appearances:

‘Look at it from my point of view’ said Fudge, fidgeting with his bowler. ‘I’m under a lot of pressure. Got to be seen to be doing something. If it turns out it wasn’t Hagrid, he’ll be back and no more said. But I’ve got to take him. Got to. Wouldn’t be doing my duty –’ (CS: 193)

Traditionally, magic has often been seen as something negative. In the historical past, witches were prosecuted and sent to the bonfire since they were believed to be responsible for unfortunate things happening to other people: changes of weather, poor harvests, economical problems, deaths, illnesses, etc. Bailey (2006) claims that witches could use their magic powers to achieve good purposes, such as healing and relieving pain; but still, their power was always associated to the demon. Thus, according to Bailey, magical power seemed to come from a demonic source:

Witches could cure illness, heal, and relieve suffering, but all their acts, regardless of effect, were inherently evil because the operative power behind them was demonic. Authorities were deeply concerned that people who believed themselves to be bewitched in some way not turn to further witchcraft for relief. (2006: 390)

Opposed to Bailey, other authors such as Flanagan (2003) and Lara Alberola (2010) defend that the witches and wizards of the *Harry Potter* saga have no relationship at all with the demon or dark magic. Neither Satan nor a superior force exists in the books. Hence, the Ministry is the organism that has to take care of the magical world and its people. Of course, the magical world of *Harry Potter* is very similar to our culture. Regardless of the fact that people have magical powers, it is a matter of witches and wizards’ moral and ethics whether to use them for good or for evil. As Flanagan points out,

In the magic Harry learns at Hogwarts, there is no raising of demons, no calling on spirits. This magic is much more like the science of our own culture (...), a tool that can be used for either good or evil depending on the goals of the people using it. (Flanagan, 2003: 80)

The complexity arises when controversial situations make it difficult to decide whether the use of magic that attempts directly on other person’s free will is justified

or should be punished. For example, when Hermione uses the body-bind curse *Petrificus Totalus* against Neville Longbottom in *Philosopher's Stone*:

'Neville,' she said, 'I'm really, really sorry about this.'  
She raised her wand.  
'*Petrificus Totalus!*' she cried, pointing it at Neville.  
Neville's arms snapped to his sides. His legs sprang together. His whole body rigid, he swayed where he stood and then fell flat on his face, stiff as a board. (*PHS*: 198)

In this case, Hermione is clearly attacking another wizard. This can undoubtedly be compared to the use of a paralyzing weapon in the Muggle world. Should this be punished? Despite the justifiable goal that Hermione has, as Neville is being a hindrance here, she is doing something wrong. She is acting only thinking about her aim without taking into account the true consequences of her acts. All witches and wizards, as we can see, are able to perform many violent spells inside Hogwarts with no resulting sanction from the authorities. Moreover, punishment seems to be arbitrary.

Another example of improper use of magic (in this case unconsciously and outside Hogwarts) is when Harry blows up Miss Marjorie Dursley at the beginning of *Prisoner of Azkaban*. In this case, the Ministry of Magic does not pay attention to Harry's disobedience of the magic laws and releases him from the corresponding punishment:

'You will be pleased to hear that we have dealt with unfortunate blowing-up of Miss Marjorie Dursley. Two members of the Accidental Magic Reversal Department were dispatched to Privet Drive a few hours ago.'  
(...)  
'Hang on,' blurted Harry, 'what about my punishment?'  
Fudge blinked.  
'Punishment?'  
'I broke the law!' Harry said. 'The Decree for the Restriction of Underage Wizardry!'  
'Oh, my dear boy, we're not going to punish you for a little thing like that!' (*PA*: 53)

On the other hand, in *Order of Phoenix* (2003) Harry is indeed punished for using consciously a protecting charm. In this case he does not blow up anyone, he protects his cousin and himself from a very real attack by Dementors. The Ministry decides to call him for a trial, when two years before he was absolved for “offences committed under the Decree for the Reasonable Restriction of Underage Sorcery and the International Statue of Secrecy (...)” (*OPH*: 127). This shows that Rowling is purposely failing to describe the real legislation of the Ministry in order to favour the plot twists.

As Eva Lara Alberola explains,

(...) hallamos el maleficio, propio de la hechicería y la brujería, como acto reprobable que Rowling denomina maldición. Algunas maldiciones están prohibidas por el Ministerio de Magia y sus consecuencias son tan graves que se usa para definir las el adjetivo ‘imperdonables’. (2010: website)

The ineffective Ministry of Magic only catalogues three curses as ‘unforgivable’: if any witch or wizard curses someone using *Imperio*, *Crucio*, or *Avada Kedavra* s/he will be condemned for life in Azkaban. That is to say, it is unforgivable to control, to inflict pain and to kill other people (either from the magic world or Muggles). However, there are many other charms, spells, curses and hexes in the books that should be condemned, since they attempt against other people’s free will. For example, the love potion *Amorentia* seems to be one of the daughters of the *Imperio* curse as it is a controlling potion. It makes the victim act against their wishes, as Professor Slughorn teaches: “Amorentia doesn’t really create love, of course. It is impossible to manufacture or imitate love. No, this will simply cause a powerful infatuation or obsession. It is probably the most dangerous and powerful potion in this room...” (*HBP*: 177, original ellipsis).

Lara Alberola (2010) reinforces Flanagan’s (2003) theory that the magic of *Harry Potter* does not come from a demonic source. She claims that Rowling is a great connoisseur of the magic tradition in literature and she dismisses all the evil influences from dark magic and Satanism:

Nuestra autora elimina cualquier exigencia negativa y maligna en las artes que refleja en sus novelas. No acepta que, de por sí, magia, hechicería y brujería deban estar conectadas con lo satánico ni con una finalidad siniestra. De ahí que se incline sobre todo por la alta magia, en la cual subyace todo un sistema filosófico. De la hechicería veíamos en el apartado anterior qué aspectos son los que más se reflejan en *Harry Potter* y cómo la escritora selecciona ciertas ramas en detrimento de otras, con el fin de dar estabilidad y orden a la dimensión fantástica que ha creado. (Lara Alberola, 2010: website)

In fact, the only 'demon' of *Harry Potter* is Lord Voldemort. He uses dark magic to kill people and gain power. Therefore, he does connect witchcraft with sinister objectives. In *Goblet of Fire*, his stuttering minion Wormtail performs a kind of a satanic ritual to bring Tom Riddle's soul back to his new body: "Bone of the father, unknowingly given, you will renew your son! (...) Flesh –of the servant– w-willingly given –you will– revive –your master. (...) B-blood of the enemy... forcibly taken... you will resurrect your foe." (*GF*: 695). We could argue that Harry, whose blood is used in this ritual, is actually fighting against a demonic force. Although the Devil is never mentioned, the tradition which inspires all of Voldemort's 'great' deeds come undeniably from dark magic.

Readers appreciate scenes in which fantastic and strange events take place. Rowling allows Hogwart's students to *harm* each other without breaking any magical law in order to contribute the development of the plot. As Robertson comments, "Readers experience uncanny effects when strangeness and familiarity are made to mingle in provocative tension. The effect is evoked in *Harry Potter* through scenes in which matter-of-fact or even scientific discourse is used to represent the most fantastic and unordinary events" (2002: 204). In short, Rowling's decision to depict a corrupt Ministry of Magic that does not care about legislating magic usage is made in favour of creating a comical effect in her novels. In my opinion J.K. Rowling is an excellent storyteller, she is aware of the problems of having a Ministry of Magic that has to control magic usage and this is why she decided to create an inefficient Ministry. This way witches and wizards can throw curses at each other without having trouble with the authorities and readers may have a good time by experiencing extraordinary events. However, conservative religious critics might find it unpleasant

to see how underage witches and wizards are able to control and cause pain to other people. Characters should not become role models if the way to achieve their purposes is attempting on other people's free will. But, of course, this would only be a real problem if magic really existed.

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### **Power Structures in the Ministry of Magic: Undemocratic Authority and the Subversive *Harry Potter* (Marvin Kolovitsch)**

ABSTRACT: Regarding a text as an ideologically and culturally shaped construction can illustrate the representation of the author's/narrator's stance towards the politics apparent in the socio-political environment portrayed in the text. Even though this portrayal may be fictional, it can still be regarded as a referential construction. Therefore, this paper seeks to examine the exercise of political power by the Ministry of Magic in J.K. Rowling's popular and influential series about *Harry Potter* as well as the protagonists' attitude towards this governmental authority. The paper concludes that the *Harry Potter* series generates and reinforces images of undemocratic, illegitimate political institutions which are critically questioned and resisted by the series' protagonists.

The theory defending that a text is an ideologically as well as culturally shaped construction which represents the author's or narrator's stance towards his/her socio-political environment is at the centre of many disciplines in the humanities. Nonetheless, due to the increasing academic interest in the developments of mass popular culture, this theory has had a special impact on the branch of Cultural Studies.

Its scholars particularly emphasized the notion that mass popular culture, while not the sole, is perhaps the most important and influential source concerning the construction and distribution of hegemonic, normative representations, foregrounding certain ideologies (Kidd, 2007: 75). Therefore, considering the social background of J.K. Rowling, the experiences she had with governmental institutions and the successful distribution of her *oeuvre*, it appears to be crucial to analyze the representation of the political power exercised by the Ministry of Magic. The aim of this paper about the *Harry Potter* series is to deduce the author's stance on, and contribution to, the formation of a political consciousness in children's literature.

At the beginning, it is imperative to focus on the concept of representation, the origin of which can be found in the theories of Plato (Nightingale, 2006: 37) on the use of "language to say something meaningful about or to represent the world meaningfully, to other people" (Hall, 1997: 15). This idea also influenced the work of Plato's disciple, Aristotle, and the theories of these two Greek philosophers on representation offer two major themes which continue to be debated in the disciplines of the humanities: representation and its truthfulness to reality, as well as the impact of representations on the audience. In the *Harry Potter Series*, J.K. Rowling has paid special attention regarding the former, as she stated in an interview when asked about the political message in her literary labour:

I wanted Harry to leave our world and find exactly the same problems in the Wizarding world. So you have the intent to impose a hierarchy, you have bigotry, and this notion of purity, which is this great fallacy, but it crops up all over the world. People like to think themselves superior and that if they can pride themselves in nothing else they can pride themselves on perceived purity. So yeah that follows a parallel. It wasn't really exclusively that. I think you can see in the Ministry even before it's taken over, there are parallels to regimes we all know and love. (...) You should question authority and you should not assume that the establishment or the press tells you all of the truth. (*The Leaky Cauldron*, 2007: website)

Nevertheless, every representation emphasizes and omits certain aspects. Its narrative offers the reader an exclusive "focalization" (Bal, 1997: website) and, thereby, foregrounds an ideology: a certain "systematic body of ideas, beliefs,



opinions, assumptions and value-systems, articulated by a particular group of people” (Storey, 2008: 2). This particular focalization towards an ideological representation is apparent when approaching the political power exercised by the Ministry of Magic.

Hence, the elaboration of the concept *power* seems to be crucial at this point as it exists in various modalities and does not always refer to physical force. Simpson and Mayr describe power as the consequence of “the privileged access to social resources such as education, knowledge and wealth” (2010: 2). This privilege enables the exercise of power over subordinate groups through *coercion* or through the manufacture of *consent* (Fairclough, 2001; Mayr, 2008; Simpson and Mayr, 2010). As the exercise of power through coercion clearly demonstrates limitations and may encounter resistance of the subordinate groups, the manufacture of consent grants ruling classes a more subtle exercise of power due to the persuasive representation of their ideologies.

This latter manner of exercising power has also been at the centre of Antonio Gramsci’s theories about ‘hegemony’ (see Walton, 2007: 193): institutions such as the church, the family, political parties, trade unions, media, etc., maintain their power by presenting their own particular interests as the general interests of society, incorporating subordinate groups’ resistance up to a certain degree and, thereby, these institutions sustain asymmetrical relations of power and inequalities (Mayr, 2008; Walton, 2007). However, even though a ruling class may exercise power by using language persuasively in order to impose and sustain their ideologies, this does not imply a less suppressive or violent practice of power –a phenomenon that has been described as “regimes of truth” by Michel Foucault (2002: 131) and which has been perfectly exemplified by John Storey in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*:

What Foucault calls ‘regimes of truth’ do not have to be ‘true’; they have only to be thought of as ‘true’ and acting on as if ‘true’. If ideas are believed, they establish and legitimate particular regimes of truth. For example, before it was discovered that the Earth is round, thinking the Earth was flat was to be in the regime of truth of contemporary of science and theology; saying it was round could get you tortured or killed. (2008: 130)

On the basis of the example provided by Storey and our contemporary conception of the world as spherical, it can be demonstrated that the social reality and its regimes of truth, constructed by the discourses which are coercively or persuasively imposed and sustained by the institutions in power, continuously encounter resistance –such as the Ministry of Magic from Harry Potter.

Whereas the Ministry of Magic remains rather in the background during the first two books of the series and gives the readers little reason to question its governmental power and morality, the rest of the series promotes a sceptical attitude towards political authorities and encourages resistance against political actions whenever they are unjust, undemocratic or illegitimate. Especially the third novel, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, marks a transition as the readers learn about the political institution's coercive power and its application through the prison at Azkaban. As Schulzke argues:

[T]he idealistic view of the forces that control the Wizarding world is upset. Harry learns that the prisoners at Azkaban are subjected to extremely cruel punishment that goes beyond the any kind of torture that exists in the Muggle world. If Muggles knew about this facility torturing its prisoners, it would be considered a violation of British law and of international agreements on human rights. (2012: 114)

In addition, the series' gaps and silences direct the readers to question the exercise of power –regardless of whether it is acted out by coercion or consent– by the Ministry of Magic. Sirius Black, for example, has been condemned and imprisoned unjustly for life without a fair trial: an evidence of institutional failure. The Ministry collaborates jointly with the Aurors as well as with the Dementors –the former can be described as part of a government's executive (or police), the latter are the executioners of the coercive, feudal system of the Wizarding world. In Harry Potter's disciplinary hearing in the novel *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, Cornelius Fudge acts as the legislature as well as the judiciary: this illustrates inarguably that there is no separation of powers regarding the political structures within the *Harry Potter Series*. Furthermore, this undemocratic, coercive aspect of the series becomes especially clear when the

Minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge, decides to execute Bartemius Crouch Jr. on the spot –without a legal trial– in the series' fourth novel *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*.

However, there are many other gaps and silences which lead the readers to doubt the Ministry's democratic character. We do not know, for example, whether there are free elections; whether there exists an equal, universal right to vote the people in power in the Ministry of Magic, or whether this democratic property is restricted to certain wizards, witches and other creatures. Furthermore, the Ministry appears to be a one-party government, as the existence of oppositional political parties is never mentioned throughout the series. Nevertheless, the most frightening and explicitly mentioned violation of democratic properties in the *Harry Potter Series* emphasizes the violation of the freedom of press, media and information: the Ministry of Magic manipulates the news in *The Daily Prophet*, the newspaper of the Wizarding world, in order to disguise Voldemort's return in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. This action is not primarily carried out to keep the public calm but rather to preserve the Ministry's power by persuading the Wizarding world of the regime of truth in favour of the political institution, namely, the implausibility of Harry Potter's and Dumbledore's announcements about the imminent threat and violence. The passage is long but worth quoting in its entirety:

'Deep down, Fudge knows Dumbledore's much cleverer than he is a much more powerful wizard, and in the early days of his Ministry he was forever asking Dumbledore for help and advice,' said Lupin. 'But it seems he's become fond of power, and much more confident. He loves being Minister for Magic and he's managed to convince himself that he's the clever one and Dumbledore's simply stirring up trouble for the sake of it.'

'How can he think that?' said Harry angrily. 'How can he think Dumbledore would just make it all up –that I'd make it all up?'

'Because accepting that Voldemort's back would mean trouble like the Ministry hasn't had to cope with for nearly fourteen years,' said Sirius bitterly. 'Fudge just can't bring himself to face it. It's so much more comfortable to convince himself Dumbledore's lying to destabilise him.'

'You see the problem,' said Lupin. 'While the Ministry insists there is nothing to fear from Voldemort it's hard to convince people he's back, especially as they really don't want to believe it in the first place. What's more, the Ministry's leaning heavily on the *Daily Prophet* not to report any of what they're calling

Dumbledore's rumour-mongering, so most of the Wizarding community are completely unaware any things happened, and that makes them easy targets for the Death Eaters if they're using Imperius Curse.' (OPH: 89)

This instance regarding the freedom of the press is one of the last ones carried out by Cornelius Fudge before the Ministry of Magic experiences what can be described as a *coup d'état* by Voldemort in the series' last novel *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. From this moment until the end of the series, the Ministry of Magic adapts an even more coercive and undemocratic governance: it turns into a dictatorship, representing fascist and racist ideologies due to Voldemort's usurpation of the government and his demands concerning the purity of blood.

Nevertheless, no matter whether it is Cornelius Fudge or Voldemort through Pius Thicknesse who is in charge of the Ministry of Magic, the political power of this authority is continuously questioned and resisted by the series' protagonists. The headmaster of Hogwarts, Albus Dumbledore, is particularly involved in the process of resisting the hegemonic power exercised by the Ministry Magic, as he forms the characters' political consciousness and offers counter-hegemonic strategies whenever needed. In Gramscian terms, he could be described as an "organic intellectual" (in Walton, 2007: 195). Due to the ideologies instilled by Dumbledore and the ones which are prevalent in Harry's social environment –consisting mainly of friends and family who do not take the Ministry's governance for granted– the series' protagonist develops a critical, resistive, already subversive conception of the government, which even leads him to organize a secret organization called Dumbledore's Army: "The club is a resistance organization dedicated to teaching fighting skills that the government does not want the students to learn. (...) The students propagate a forbidden ideology and learn spells that give them the power to fight against the Death Eaters in *The Half-blood Prince*" (Schulzke, 2012: 117). This counter-hegemonic form of political activism is regarded as subversive from the perspective of the ones in power such as Dolores Umbridge, and is punished with torture when discovered. At the end of the series, however, it becomes clear that the resistance organization's members are freedom fighters, advocating justice as well as democratic and egalitarian values.

In conclusion, the representation of political power exercised by the Ministry of Magic in the *Harry Potter* series generates and reinforces an undemocratic, suppressive and illegitimate image of governmental authorities. J.K. Rowling applied an ideological focalization that encourages the reader to form a sceptical attitude towards politics, to question the actions of those in positions of authority and power, and to resist as well as to counteract political regimes of truth whenever they are undemocratic, an infringement of freedom and human rights or when they do not correspond to reality. She demonstrates in her work that sometimes people who strive after justice, democratic and egalitarian values are portrayed negatively as political subversive activists, and sometimes positively as freedom fighters. It all depends on those in power.

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## Reading *Harry Potter* from a Gothic Studies Perspective (Auba Llompart Pons)

<sup>3</sup>The first time I read a Harry Potter book was in 2001 —I was fifteen years old then— when the whole ‘Pottermania’ was only starting in Spain. I remember enjoying the book and thinking ‘This is Enid Blyton with magic’. It was not, however, until I read the fifth novel, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (2003), that I got truly hooked on the series and began to feel the strong emotional connection that Rowling’s novels create with her readers. Since then, I have read other popular fantasy authors, other well-known books about young people setting off on adventures, and, although I have enjoyed them in their own right —I actually find some of them to be better written than Rowling’s books— I always end up thinking ‘But it’s not the same’.

What is it that makes *Harry Potter* so incredibly popular? Now that I am doing research on children’s fiction for my PhD dissertation, I have come across several academic articles that try to answer this question. One of the reasons that critics have pointed out has to do with Rowling’s treatment of genre; the fact that the *Harry Potter* books draw from many different popular genres, such as adventure stories, mystery novels, school stories, the orphan story, and the Gothic, among others (Nikolajeva, 2009; Alton, 2009). Here I will concentrate on what, for me, is one of the series’ most interesting features, the way it uses Gothic elements, blending them with other genres and with children’s literature conventions.

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<sup>3</sup>Editor’s Note: This paper differs from the rest as it corresponds to the contents of the class presentation that Auba Llompart, then a PhD candidate, offered to the students in the *Harry Potter* course. The final questions led to very lively discussion.

## The Gothic in Children's Fiction

Before I focus on the case of *Harry Potter*, I will provide an overview of some of my findings after studying the interplay of the Gothic genre with children's fiction. In *The Gothic in Children's Literature: Haunting the Borders* (2008), Jackson, Coats and McGillis claim that Gothic elements have always been part of children's literature. They are already found in old nursery rhymes and bedtime stories in which these elements were introduced to make the texts more appealing to children, as well as to scare them into good behaviour. In certain historical moments, though, Gothic elements were —and they still are— undermined by pedagogues, and certain ideas on political correctness and on what constitutes a good education (remember that there are still people nowadays who claim that children will become interested in witchcraft if they read *Harry Potter*). Yet, according to the authors of *Haunting the Borders*, nowadays the Gothic has become mainstream in children's fiction, and they account for it saying that “Recent children's Gothic (...) reflects our culture's changing attitude towards the innocence of children” (2008: 7). In other words, this new genre (or subgenre) reflects how we cannot think of children as mere innocent creatures anymore. We have witnessed how children are capable of abusing, and even murdering, other children, and therefore we can no longer ignore the fact that, although they certainly are victimized by adults, they can also be abusers themselves (think about Harry's cousin, Dudley). Thus, children's Gothic does away with pastoral and romanticized views of childhood portraying it as a time which can also be dark and Gothic.

It was precisely this quotation that led me to formulate my research question, for I felt that there was something missing in this discussion. The authors of *Haunting the Borders* claimed that children's Gothic complicates the victim/abuser status, i.e., it represents children not only as persecuted victims but also as potential abusers, a statement by which I was not fully convinced. Think of Harry, for instance. At one point, he seems to be becoming like Voldemort, but in the end, it turns out he was only being possessed; Voldemort ends up destroying himself; evil turns out to have been exterior to the child the whole time, and Harry's soul is finally clean. Thus, I felt

that this image of the child as inherently good was hardly ever transgressed or, at least, it was the image that predominated. And this led me to my research question: what conception(s) of childhood do we see reflected in children's Gothic? To what extent are Gothic themes and devices deployed to question idealized views of innocent childhood? After having read and analyzed several Gothic novels for children<sup>4</sup>, I formulated my thesis statement. I argue that whereas the child's environment has indeed become Gothicized, the figure of the child as inherently good and almost incorruptible still predominates, and this is only moderately subverted by Gothic elements. To support my thesis I had to look into, not only what children's literature and the Gothic have in common, but also the limitations that children's literature imposes. In other words, to what extent can a children's book be Gothic?

Children's literature and the Gothic definitely have many traits in common. They are both concerned with issues like identity, knowledge and desire, good and evil; they both tend to hide a rational and didactic discourse behind all the fantasy and supernatural elements, and both genres draw from fairy tales. However, they differ radically when it comes to the issue of boundaries. As Horner and Zlosnik affirm, "Despite some differences of opinion about what constitutes 'Gothic', most critics would probably agree that Gothic writing always concerns itself with boundaries and their instabilities (...)" (2012: 321). Whereas the Gothic often reflects this instability of boundaries in both form and content, in children's fiction there are certain boundaries which cannot be transgressed if a book is to be published and marketed as a children's book. As Nodelman puts it, children's literature is "a literature whose very nature seems tied up with the idea of exclusion, of existing in the first place exactly in order to leave things out" (2008: 110). Therefore, what I am interested in my dissertation is not only the fact that there *are* monsters in children's fiction, but also the fact that there can be monsters as long as they are *appropriate* monsters.

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<sup>4</sup> Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy (1995-2000), Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* (2002), Lemony Snicket's *A Series of Unfortunate Events* (1999- 2006), and the *Harry Potter* series, among others.



Another important element to consider when discussing children's fiction and the Gothic is narrative form. If you have read Gothic novels like *Frankenstein* or *Dracula*, you will probably know that the Gothic genre is quite experimental when it comes to narrative voice. Gothic novels often have multiple narrators and unreliable narrators, making stories fragmentary and misleading, and blurring the boundaries between fiction and reality. Although children's fiction borrows Gothic settings (castles, graveyards, big houses) and Gothic type characters (villains and persecuted victims), the narrative experimentation that characterizes Gothic fiction for adults is not to be found in children's fiction. This is not to say that children's fiction is not experimental in form—it certainly is, in many ways—but there are certain 'rules'. As Wall explains, a children's story can have Gothic elements and deal with terrifying events, but the voice that explains these things to the reader has to be an appropriate voice:

[L]oveliness and ugliness, sadness and delight, comedy, tragedy and horror are all part of life, and might all appropriately be part of fiction for children, provided that the voice of the narrator, the voice which presents these things to children, is a voice which speaks to them with love and respect. (1991: 273).

In other words, the narrator in children's fiction has to be an adult voice that knows how to speak respectfully to a child.

Moving back to the particular case of *Harry Potter*, there are many Gothic elements in the series (a castle, a terrifying villain, ghosts, monsters and persecuted innocents). However, Rowling's series is based on the conventions of children's literature, on the idea that a children's book can be Gothic up to a certain point, as long as it does not jeopardize acceptable conceptions of childhood and adulthood. I will concentrate on three main elements: narrative form, the setting (Hogwarts as a Gothic castle), and I will propose some questions to discuss the relationship between hero and villain.

## Gothic Elements in *Harry Potter*

### *\*Narrative Form*

When, in *Philosopher's Stone*, McGonagall exclaims that "there will be books written about Harry –every child in our world will know his name!" (15), this already establishes a relationship between these fictional books and the book the reader is holding. By extension, when, in *Chamber of Secrets*, Gilderoy Lockhart reveals himself as a sham and claims that "Books can be misleading" (220), this could also call the reliability of Rowling's own text into question. Rowling indeed plays with the idea that narratives are not to be trusted, and that narratives can be Gothic (remember Riddle's diary leading Harry and Ginny to mortal peril). However, does this apply to Rowling's own narrative?

As the opening lines of *Philosopher's Stone* suggest, the narrator's voice in *Harry Potter* is ironic, humorous and friendly: "Mr and Mrs Dursley, of number four, Privet Drive, were proud to say that they were perfectly normal, thank you very much. They were the last people you'd expect to be involved in anything strange or mysterious, because they just didn't hold with such nonsense" (7). Here we see how she ranges herself with Harry against stupid adults and nasty children in a way which is reminiscent of Roald Dahl's novels. On the other hand, Rowling's narrator is also capable of closely identifying with Harry, giving us access to his exact thoughts:

And what were Ron and Hermione busy with? Why wasn't he, Harry, busy? Hadn't he proved himself capable of handling much more than them? Had they all forgotten what he had done? Hadn't it been *he* who had entered that graveyard and watched Cedric being murdered, and been tied to that tombstone and nearly killed? (*OPH*: 13, original emphasis)

As these passages show, the narrator's tone is both comforting and friendly, reflecting a healthy relationship between the adult storyteller and the child addressee. She seems to be telling the reader, 'You —and Harry— are not alone'. Despite all the terrifying things that happen, the story is framed by this reassuring voice, complying thus with children's literature conventions.

*\*The Gothic Castle*

As for the setting, Hogwarts is described as a Gothic castle with secret passages, dark corridors and dungeons, and, of course —as in any good haunted castle— ghosts. In traditional Gothic romances, castles are places of protection but also of confinement (think of Jonathan Harker trapped in Dracula’s castle). In *Harry Potter*, by contrast, the castle is generally not meant to be scary and alienating. Hogwarts is a place where children are protected, but, at the same time, it allows them enough space and freedom to set off on adventures. This is because Hogwarts is not only a Gothic castle; it is also a boarding school. In fact, *Harry Potter* is very much influenced by the British school story.

Rowling herself has stated that she never attended boarding school and that she does not feel particularly attracted to real boarding-school culture. Thus, Hogwarts is not based on real boarding schools but on previous literary representations of boarding schools, such as Thomas Hughes’s pioneering Victorian novel *Tom Brown’s School Days* or Enid Blyton’s series of school stories like *The Naughtiest Girl* or *Malory Towers*. Rowling borrows the school-story formula: a young boy is sent to boarding school, where he makes friends and enemies, proves his worth in classes and competitions and learns social values like friendship, responsibility and self-reliance. And she also borrows all the school-story stock characters: the protagonist’s friends, the bullies, the benevolent headmaster, the strict teacher and the pranksters, among others.

As Rowling herself has stated, the boarding school setting was necessary for her story because it allows child characters to be together in one place and have adventures at night: “the school had to be a boarding school because most of the magic happens in the middle of the night, and if it was a day school you wouldn’t get the same sense of community” (Hattenstone, 2000: website). Another advantage of having her story take place in a boarding school was the fact that “The absence of parental authority allows the space that the fictive child needs for development and maturity, in order to test (and taste) his independence and to discover the world without adult protection” (Nikolajeva, 2009: 230). It could be argued that a school is

not devoid of authority figures either, for there are teachers and prefects. Yet, Rowling solves this problem by endowing child characters with ‘instruments’ to fool them, like the Invisibility Cloak and the Marauder’s Map. Of course, what is special about Hogwarts is that it is a school of magic, a setting that Rowling has not invented but which she has certainly popularized<sup>5</sup>. This blending of the everyday with the unexpected and the extraordinary is, according to critics, another feature which accounts for the series’ popularity; the fact that Rowling sticks to the predictability of the school-story formula, adding magical, Gothic and mystery elements to it.

Thus, the school story blends with the Gothic, turning the Gothic castle into a more interesting alternative to the conventional home represented by the Dursleys, which becomes the space that is alienating for Harry. This has actually become a popular trope in children’s fiction: traditional Gothic settings have become the places where the child feels at home. Other recent examples are movies like *Paranorman* (2012) or *Despicable Me* (2010), for instance. Probably due to their association with superstition and the imagination, Gothic settings seem to better reflect the way in which children see the world —or rather, the way in which adults *believe* that children see the world. This is what is called ‘comic Gothic’, that is, the use of Gothic imagery to achieve, not a terrifying effect, but a comic effect.

#### *\*The Hero and the Villain*

If Hogwarts is a Gothic castle that is not scary, there is another Gothic element that is terrifying: Voldemort and his Death Eaters. Voldemort has all the characteristics of a Gothic villain: his physical decay is an outward manifestation of his moral corruption, he is Harry’s other and he represents that which is most dangerous for the individual and society. What is more, some critics (Granger, 2009; Rothman, 2011)

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<sup>5</sup> There are other schools for witches and wizards in literature, such as in Ursula K. Le Guin’s *The Wizard of Earthsea* (1968), Jill Murphy’s *The Worst Witch* (1974-2013) and Diana Wynne Jones’s *Witch Week* (1982).

have compared him to Victor Frankenstein and Dr Jekyll, because, like them, Voldemort's main 'sin' is his attempt to violate the laws of nature.

Here are some questions for further discussion on the Gothic villain in *Harry Potter*:

- ❖ Ken Rothman states that children are not scared by Voldemort, that they like him. Voldemort is not a terrifying villain but a popular icon, like Darth Vader: "(Voldemort) lacks the capacity to haunt the nightmares of even young children" (Rothman, 2011: 213). Do you agree?
- ❖ Voldemort is the personification of evil in Rowling's universe, and no sympathy is ever attributed to him. Does this make Rowling's Wizarding world a 'black-and-white' moral universe?
- ❖ How is Voldemort an appropriate monster for a children's book? Why?
- ❖ In your opinion, what else accounts for the enormous appeal of the Harry Potter series, besides the interplay of genres and the presence of Gothic elements?

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## Ron and Hermione, Darcy and Elizabeth: The love–hate relationship in *Harry Potter* and *Pride and Prejudice* (Laura Luque)

ABSTRACT Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger become a couple in book Seven *Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallows*. The epilogue closing the series shows them as a happily married couple with two kids. Nevertheless, J.K. Rowling recently stated that Ron and Hermione face trouble in their marriage. They struggle throughout the series to accept each other’s flaws, turning their relationship into a love–hate one. Similarly, Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet (of *Pride and Prejudice*) manage to overcome their differences and become lovers. In both stories, the outcome of the love-hate relationship is marriage. However, each couple manages their relationships differently. While Darcy and Elizabeth seem to be perfect together, Ron and Hermione do not seem capable of being in a healthy romantic relationship.

The love-hate plot has been exploited for centuries in romance, both literature and film, particularly comedy. The premise is that two people who hate each other when they first meet eventually end up falling in love. Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy from *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) fit perfectly this kind of relationship and so do Hermione Granger and Ron Weasley, from the *Harry Potter Series*. However, Elizabeth and Darcy’s relationship seems more reliable and stable than Hermione and Ron’s. Since the outcome of the relationship in the two novels is marriage, it is implied that even a relationship in which hate –understood as displeasure– plays a major role can end in such a deep commitment as marriage.

Hermione and Ron’s relationship is marked by instability from the beginning of the series and it is not until the very end that we see them happily married. Nevertheless, being married does not guarantee a completely stable and dream-like relationship, especially when throughout the books we have seen how their relationship is built. Hermione and Ron meet on the Hogwarts Express in their first year at Hogwarts. Their first encounters are not pleasant at all. In fact, Ron dislikes her:

'It's no wonder no one can stand her,' he said to Harry as they pushed their way into the crowded corridor, "she's a nightmare, honestly'  
Someone knocked into Harry as they hurried past him. It was Hermione. Harry caught a glimpse of her face –and was startled to see that she was in tears. (PHS: 127)

In a love-hate relationship plot, both parties must start hating each other. Nevertheless, in Hermione and Ron's case all the dislike seems to come from Ron, especially at the beginning. Strict Hermione is hated because of her belief in rules and study. However, once they overcome their differences they start a more or less healthy relationship as friends. It is not until Harry and Ron rescue Hermione from a troll, a feat she keep secret from the Hogwarts authorities, that their triangular friendship starts – with no hint, however, of romance.

Cummins points out that this new relationship makes sense if we think about Hermione's growth into womanhood:

Hermione does not seem to care that her actions and interests bother them until she overhears Ron's insult. Later in the books, as Rowling develops a subtle sexual tension and attraction between Ron and Hermione, Hermione's unexpected response to Ron's comment makes sense in hindsight. She had cared what he thought because she was moving from childhood into 'sexualized' womanhood. (Cummins, 2008: 182)

Hermione and Ron do develop a good relationship as friends. Yet, their crucial transformation into a future couple comes during their fourth year at Hogwarts. In *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, Hermione meets the popular Quidditch teen star Viktor Krum and they start a romantic relationship (never fully developed in the plot). However, the reader deduces through Ron's jealousy that Viktor and Hermione like each other much which is why their relationship makes Ron uncomfortable and unhappy. Moreover, because of Hermione's new acquaintance, prolonged through letters, the reader gets to see a side of Ron which is not agreeable at all and which makes one wonder how good of a friend and possibly a partner can Ron be:

Ron gave her a withering look.  
'Viktor?' he said. 'Hasn't he asked you to call him Vicky yet?'

Hermione looked at him in surprise. 'What's up with you?' she said.  
'If you don't know,' said Ron scathingly, 'I'm not going to tell you.' Hermione stared at him, then at Harry, who shrugged.  
'Ron, what —?'  
'He's from Durmstrang!' spat Ron. 'He's competing against Harry! Against Hogwarts! You —you're—' Ron was obviously casting around for words strong enough to describe Hermione's crime, '*fraternizing with the enemy*, that's what you're doing!'  
Hermione's mouth fell open. (GF: 421, added emphasis)

From that point onwards it is very clear that Ron has some unresolved feelings towards Hermione, which he will not acknowledge. Ron's way of expressing his feelings is mostly hurtful and rough: as we see, he accuses her of 'fraternizing with the enemy' instead of considering rationally why Hermione is with Viktor (whom he actually admires as a player). Hermione herself points out what Ron's problem is and how he should have acted if he wanted to ask her to the Yule ball:

'Well, if you don't like it, you know what the solution is, don't you?' yelled Hermione (...)  
'Oh yeah?' Ron yelled back. 'What's that?'  
'Next time there's a ball, ask me before someone else does, and not as a last resort!' (GF: 472)

Ron's way of expressing his feelings towards Hermione is always through jealousy. In the love-hate relationship plot, jealousy, especially in Hermione and Ron's relationship, plays a major role. It is jealousy that makes both Ron and Hermione aware that they have feelings for each other. Nevertheless, jealousy is a feeling which must be channelled in order to be beneficial instead of harmful. The jealousy that Ron and Hermione feel when they see their love interest with other people in a romantic environment always creates tension between them and tears them apart. Moreover, their reconciliations are always for Harry's benefit instead of being for the good of their own relationship.

Be that as it may, we find out in the epilogue of *Deathly Hallows* that Ron and Hermione end up married with two children. Intentionally or not, their relationship grows steadily throughout the whole series with its ups and downs until they officially



admit their feelings and become a couple after the events. It is interesting how such different people could end up happily married, in the style of Darcy and Elizabeth. Moreover, it is not only their differences in character that makes them so unfit for each other but also their attitude towards those differences. It is in the attitude towards the main differences of character that both couples have in the relationship what makes it an interesting comparison as well as the outcome of said relationships: marriage.

On the one hand, Elizabeth and Darcy finally overcome their divergences and accept each other. They even apologize to their significant other for being too sensitive over these differences (Lizzie is too prejudiced, Darcy too proud). It is their acceptance of divergence that makes the happy outcome of their love-hate relationship, marriage, believable. However, in Darcy's and Elizabeth's case not only their mutual acceptance makes their marriage plausible but also the time in which the novel was set. In *Pride and Prejudice*, marriage is one of the important issues of the novel, if not the uppermost. It is understandable that a novel about love written at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century should end in marriage, no matter how unstable the relationship between the lovers was at the beginning. Marriage was thought to be the aim of a romantic relationship, as Anderson points out: "Elizabeth and Darcy's union is the goal of the plot" (1975: 369).

On the other hand, Ron and Hermione never fully accept that they are different and they will always be. Ron and Hermione rarely apologize to each other and they even find it hard to accept that their significant other is capable of something they never thought they would be. Moreover, the circumstances involving their engagement (Hermione kissing Ron because he thinks of the poor, abused house-elves she defends) are questionable. One wonders if Hermione kisses Ron out of love or because he finally shows concern about the elves (none else cares, but Harry). Hermione and Ron do marry and have children but, as Rowling hinted, the outcome of their love-hate relationship is not as satisfactory as in Darcy and Elizabeth's case.

Strangely for some, Rowling thought it necessary for a novel published in 2007 to have the three main characters end up married. The epilogue is, perhaps, her way of saying that if the characters end happily married everything would be fine. If in *Pride*

*and Prejudice* marriage as the final goal for a love-hate relationship makes sense, it is not so clear in *Harry Potter*. A woman in the 19<sup>th</sup> century did not have much choice but to get married. However, Ron and Hermione needn't have married to be together, specially having such a tumultuous relationship. Marriage is regarded as a very strong commitment and Ron and Hermione seem to be an on-and-off kind of couple.

Recently, seven years after the publication of *Deathly Hallows*, Rowling finally confessed that she may have made a mistake in pairing Hermione and Ron:

I think the attraction itself is plausible but the combative side of it ... I'm not sure you could have got over that in an adult relationship, there was too much fundamental incompatibility (...) Maybe she and Ron will be alright with a bit of counselling, you know. I wonder what happens at wizard marriage counselling? They'll probably be fine. He needs to work on his self-esteem issues and she needs to work on being a little less critical. (in Flood 2014)

Rowling's main issue in the couple's relationship is the jealousy they feel towards each other and their immaturity when having to accept their differences. Feelings that are built and acknowledged through jealousy (as Ron and Hermione's are) are not meant to last if the key factor, jealousy, disappears. In an adult and mature relationship there is no room for the kind of argument that Ron and Hermione have towards each other and the kind of jealousy they feel. Nevertheless, as Rowling argues, it is not impossible that their marriage could be fully successful, they just need to overcome his jealousy and her contempt.

Hermione and Ron's love-hate relationship as friends ends with their first kiss, transforming them into lovers, but this is when they have to really work on their issues if they want to have a successful and happy marriage. Elizabeth and Darcy also have a rough start; when they meet for the first at the ball they despise each other. Here are Darcy and his best friend Bingley comparing the Bennet sisters, Jane and Elizabeth:

'Oh! She is the most beautiful creature I ever beheld! But there is one of her sisters sitting down just behind you, who is very pretty, and I dare say very agreeable. Do let me ask my partner to introduce you.'

'Which do you mean?' and turning round he looked for a moment at Elizabeth, till catching her eye, he withdrew his own and coldly said: 'She is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me'. (8)

Nevertheless, Darcy and Elizabeth's relationship is not influenced by adolescent jealousy or immature feelings (as they're older): their love-hate relationship is fuelled by their pride and their prejudice. Contrarily to Ron and Hermione, who take years to confront their feelings, Darcy and Elizabeth grow into each other steadily and they finally acknowledge their feelings to each other, with Darcy taking the first step towards a possible romantic relationship.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, the lovers are adults and their love-hate relationship is not born of jealousy but of a profound dislike for each other faults. However, once Darcy and Elizabeth overcome and accept that they themselves are not perfect, they acknowledge their love and end up married. When Darcy and Elizabeth confess their love to each other they are also accepting the defects of the other person, thus making their relationship more stable than Ron and Hermione's. This passage shows what Ron and Hermione are not really capable of:

'The conduct of neither, if strictly examined, will be irreproachable; but since then, we have both, I hope, improved in civility.'  
'I cannot be so easily reconciled to myself. The recollection of what I then said, of my conduct, my manners, my expressions during the whole of it, is now, and has been many months, inexpressibly painful to me. Your reproof, so well applied, I shall never forget: 'had you behaved in a more gentlemanlike manner.' Those were your words. You know not, you can scarcely conceive, how they have tortured me;—though it was some time, I confess, before I was reasonable enough to allow their justice.' (213)

As it has argued, and in order to stress the main difference between the success of Darcy and Elizabeth's romantic relationship as more believable than Ron and Hermione's, it is necessary to understand that marriage is not the only way to fulfil a relationship in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As Brown points out: "In the absence of any enthusiastic endorsement of marriage as the woman's sacrosanct destiny, it appears that marriage in Jane Austen's fiction is primarily a literary convention which symbolizes the successful maturation of human relationships within each novel" (1973,

337). If we take Brown's point of view, marriage is the culmination of a healthy and mature relationship. Applied to Darcy and Elizabeth, this definition of marriage is quite accurate. However, when we think of Ron and Hermione's marriage, it is harder to picture their relationship as a mature one. Yet, we cannot be entirely sure if Ron and Hermione's love-hate relationship improves or not through time: the text does not offer enough insight in their relationship after the battle of Hogwarts.

In conclusion, we can find in both the novel and the series a love-hate relationship between two characters. Nevertheless, the premises for that kind of relationship are different for each work: Ron and Hermione love each other because they can find in the other what they are not and that fulfils them; Darcy and Elizabeth love each other because they respect the way of thinking of each other. Ron and Hermione hate each other on the basis of jealousy, Darcy and Elizabeth hate each other because they do not know each other well at the beginning. When trying to determine which couple succeeds in their relationship, one must conclude Hermione and Ron's differences are too heavy to be reconciled in marriage. On the other hand, Darcy and Elizabeth do manage to reconcile those differences and even accept them and apologize. However it might be, the outcome for both couples is marriage, successful or not. Surprising, as I said, for a novel published in 2007.

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## **Discrimination in *Harry Potter*: The Oppression of Giants and Other Magical Creatures (Andrew Mikkola)**

Throughout the *Harry Potter* series the amount of discrimination by a western, evolved society, makes the American south of the 1960s look like a social Utopia. Giants, centaurs, goblins, house-elves, and even non-human (sometimes Muggle-born wizards) are the subjects of extreme discrimination that leaves them second-class citizens with few rights. In a world where they are persecuted and denied liberties, it is no wonder that many magical species chose to side with Voldemort, who promised to free them from the chains of the Wizarding community. Giants have been oppressed and hunted to near extinction by wizards who have placed them on reservations, much like the policies the United States implemented with regards to Native Americans. The denial of liberties extends to all magical species in the series, and it is the Wizarding world's own fault that some species are siding with the enemy.

Of course that is not to say that Voldemort leads a righteous campaign, as he is guilty of murdering hundreds of innocent wizards, Muggles, and others he deemed inferior. However, as the adage goes 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend'. When a magical species has been repressed for so long, and in some cases nearly hunted to extinction, by the general Wizarding population, it is understandable that given the opportunity they would want to fight back. One of Voldemort's biggest supporting species share a similar story to a group of people persecuted across the ocean. For hundreds of years the Native American tribes in the United States were oppressed and placed on reservations, and are still fighting to gain back much of what they lost.

Before we start with the comparisons, it is important to understand the history of giants. Giants, as the name implies, are massive in size; in the *Harry Potter* series they grow to be between 20-25 feet (6-7.5m), which makes basketball star Shaquille O'Neal at 7 feet 1 inch (2.16m) look like a small house-elf (*OPH*: 426). Their size and resistance to magic make them a potentially dangerous enemy of the Wizarding world. Though they can be extremely violent at times (mostly toward each other), and are regarded as having a low intelligence, they are capable of speaking in both their native language and learning human languages.

As a species that not only can communicate in one but multiple languages (unlike most humans), it seems that giants may be more intelligent than the readers are lead to believe. In fact, giants outside Rowling's series have a very rich history, appearing in folklore and the mythology of people from across the world. In Norse mythology giants have a major role; though often the enemy of Thor and the other gods, their history goes much deeper. According to the *Edda* (the main book of Norse mythology), giants built the fortress of the gods, moved mountains, and are responsible for the construction of the world (Motz, 1982: 71). These giants weren't just large brutes with a tendency for warfare, they could be kind, compassionate, and even very wise. Both Thor and Odin had relationships with giant women, fathering many children who grew to accomplish many things (Motz, 1982: 77).

In Norse, Greek, Acadian, and other cultures, giants existed even before the gods. They were the creators and rulers of the Earth and universe before they went to war. Though many of these giants are humanoid, many however, exhibit characteristics of beasts. Some of Thor's half giant children had wings or tails and some giants even resembled dragons or monsters with multiple heads (Motz, 1982: 73). While these giants differ from the giants in *Harry Potter*, there are also many giants throughout all cultures that closely resemble those in the series.

*Harry Potter* stays concurrent with the folklore that giants live in caves or in hills; even in mythology they often built fortresses in the sides of mountains. Giants are known to work with stone as builders and have often been portrayed using stones as weapons. In fact, many issues between giants and other beings stem from building

contracts. Many folktales tell of giants being cheated out of the wages owed them for building structures for men or gods. This is even the case in the *Edda*, where Thor kills the giants constructing his fortress after they attempt to destroy it when realized they are being cheated (Motz, 1982: 72).

It seems from the stories and legends about giants throughout most cultures, that it is often people or other beings, not giants that start quarrels. The Wizarding world is old, but issues between species have existed since the dawn of time. In the *Harry Potter* series, giants once lived all throughout Europe and the world, but today are nearly extinct (*OPH: 426*). In fact there is only one known tribe of giants left during the fifth novel, and they have less than eighty members (*OPH: 426*). This tribe of giants is left to mostly govern itself, unless of course it interferes with any sort of Wizarding affair.

The system used by the wizards much resembles the treatment of Native Americans in the United States in the early nineteenth century (Saudefur, 1990). After a bloody war, the United States government signed a treaty with the Seminole Indians in Florida, restricting them to 16.000 square kilometres in the centre of the state (Grandage, 2013: website). They also provided a school and a blacksmith for 20 years and enough supplies for the Seminoles to make it through the year, until they could raise crops in their new home, something that the Wizarding community did not do. The giants in the series were abandoned into the mountains, expelled from all parts of Wizarding and human society.

Moving them to their reservation was a difficult process, as many Seminoles were reluctant to move. After a few years most of them had made the transition but were not thriving, also the United States was not living up to its promise of supplying them with food until they could grow crops. After seven years of hostility, the 1830 Indian Removal Act was signed by President Andrew Jackson, requiring that all tribes be moved west of the Mississippi (*Seminole Tribe of Florida*, n.d.: website). The war between the Seminoles and the United States lasted twelve years and hundreds of people were killed (*Seminole Tribe of Florida*, n.d.: website). Eventually though, most tribes in Florida were relocated to other states. While at the time, the majority of

people in the United States were in favour of this action, they look back on it now as a terrible atrocity. It is unthinkable that a modern nation would take a group of people and force them onto an unwanted piece of land. The giants in the *Harry Potter* series were in a similar predicament. They were thrown off of their lands by the government and placed on reservations in inhospitable areas (*OPH: 427*). Many people today side with the Native Americans looking back on whose cause was in the right. They were taken from their homes and sent off far from what they knew and where their ancestors had been. The Seminoles fought to protect their lands, which were taken from them multiple times as they were relocated all over the country. The Giants are in a position comparable to the Seminoles, and yet they are condemned for fighting those who have oppressed them.

It is true, however, that many giants were guilty of extreme acts of brutality during the Wizarding war. Likewise, some Native American tribes would collect the scalps of their enemies after battle as a war prize, which itself is a gruesome affair. But, the acts of torture on Muggles by giants resembles something out of a horror film. However, it seems unjust that the atrocities of a few members call for the entire removal and persecution of the whole group, especially when there is plenty of evidence in *Harry Potter* that giants aren't pure evil.

Hagrid, a half-giant, is introduced in the very first chapter of *Sorcerer's Stone* as he brings the baby Harry to Dumbledore on Sirius's motorcycle. Even at the beginning we are introduced to Hagrid as a tender character when he cries for Harry, knowing he will have a miserable childhood with the Dursleys (*PHS: 15*). Hagrid is an incredibly beloved character throughout the entire series, who acts as a friend and guardian to Harry. He always remains loyal to him when almost all others doubted. Hagrid shows an extreme compassion for all living creatures, especially the ones that wizards hate or don't understand. Perhaps he turned to caring for these creatures due to the prejudice he faced as a half-giant (his mother is a giant). He kept the fact hidden, but when Rita Skeeter released the truth most wizards looked down on him as a monster, when in reality, he was a far better person than all of them.



Hagrid is not the only example of a kind giant; Olympe Maxime, Headmistress at Beauxbatons is also a half giant. However, due to the treatment of giants and the prejudice by her colleagues, she hides that fact, claiming she is just “big boned”. While Hagrid and Olympe Maxime are both half giants, there are full giants who exhibit kindness and other characteristics not returned by the Wizarding community, such as Hagrid’s full giant, half brother, Grawp.

When Hagrid returns from trying to sway the giants to fight with the Government that took away their land and killed their people, he brings back Grawp. Their mother was a giant who abandoned both of them, as they were small for giant standards. As a child Grawp was still learning, and anyone who has been around children can see that when they throw fits, they can outburst until they physically cannot anymore. The difference between a giant and a human tantrum is that when a human five-year-old throws one and hits someone that person does not get physically hurt. Now if that child happened to weigh over 7,500 kilos and stand 5 meters tall that would be a different story (*OPH*: 691). However, as *Order of the Phoenix* continues, Grawp shows more signs of compassion and empathy. He protects Harry, Ron, and Hermione from hostile centaurs. In the following book he attends Dumbledore’s funeral and tries to console Hagrid by patting him on the head, and even participates in the battle of Hogwarts.

From these three characters it is clear that giants are more than mindless killing machines who need to be kept on reservations. They were once a species that thrived throughout the world, until they were persecuted to nearly extinction. It is the Wizarding community who drove giants to become the fearsome enemy that they are regarded as today. How can they be blamed then for siding with Lord Voldemort, when their long time enemy was the ministry of magic?

Giants aren’t the only species that the Wizarding community holds an extreme prejudice against. In fact, it seems most other species are looked down upon by the Wizarding community (Horne, 2010). Goblins are portrayed in folklore and mythology as much more evil creatures than giants, yet in the *Harry Potter* series they run the banking industry. Despite their aptitude for accounting and money, goblin history in

*Harry Potter* is quite similar to that of the giants. At one time they went to war against the Wizarding world and when they lost, received harsh consequences. The Ministry of Magic Decree of 1631 forbade all non-magical creatures from using wands and was a result of the Goblin Wars (Green, 2000: website).

As a species that is inherently magical, taking away their ability to use powerful magic was a devastating blow. They were removed of their power to rebel and were made second-class citizens by the Wizarding world. In 1928 another government changed its weapons regulations to allow some members of society to obtain them while others were forbidden (Halbrook, 2000: website). In 1928 the Nazi regime passed a law that made it easier for certain classes of people in Germany to obtain firearms, while Gypsies, Jewish people, and others determined undesirable were forbidden (Halbrook, 2000: website). Though it has worked out much better for the goblins than those under Nazi rule, it is a problem that they are viewed as inferior. By allowing only humans to possess wands but forbidding others, the Ministry of Magic is putting themselves in a position of dominance over all other species. The only way to balance the power is to either allow all species to possess wands, or remove them all together. Unlike the giants though, the goblins did not rush to Voldemort when he rose to power. This is because Voldemort also persecuted the goblins, killing several of them when he discovered the vault containing one of his Horcruxes had been broken into. The goblins chose to remain neutral in the war, distrustful of both sides for their violence and oppression.

Just like the giants mentioned before, the Wizarding community treats centaurs with similar disregard (Green, 2009). They are placed on reservations established by the ministry and are treated as a non-human class. Unlike the giants being hunted to nearly extinction, the centaurs were primarily left alone. They too live on reservations, but are a proud group, and reject the authority of Wizarding laws as much as they can. When the battle of Hogwarts occurs they rally to fight off Voldemort, understanding that his rise to power would be far worse than the Ministry of Magic had ever been.

Another oppressed group of creatures who do not join Voldemort are the house-elves. Forced into slavery since birth they are born to serve wizards in

whichever way their masters see fit until the day they die or are given clothing. They truly receive the worst treatment from the wizards because they are actual slaves. Not only are they slaves but when Hermione tries to build awareness about their plight she is openly scorned and mocked by all members of the Wizarding community, including her friends.

It is amazing that the Wizarding society is still in power while committing atrocities to most known species of intelligent magical creatures. If all the species of oppressed creatures banded together they might be able to fight for real change. The giants sided with Voldemort because they had been hunted to near extinction by the Government in power. They were presented with no other option because to continue under Ministry rule could mean the end of the giants. It appears the other races could see how evil he was, and for them it was a worse alternative to a horrible situation.

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## **Sleek, Powerful and Frequently Misunderstood: A Defence of the House of Slytherin (*Laura Montaña Tena*)**

ABSTRACT: “There’s not a single witch or wizard who went bad who wasn’t in Slytherin”. This quote by Rubeus Hagrid in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* sums up fairly well the way Slytherin House is seen by the other inhabitants of Hogwarts. The whole House System in the *Harry Potter* series is based on prejudices and stereotypes, a fact that has raised controversy both between readers and critics. In this paper I argue that there is an authorial intent for the misinterpretation of the Slytherin House’s traits which is used as a narrative strategy to further separate the protagonist’s ideas of good and bad and to help him create his identity.

“There’s not a single witch or wizard who went bad who wasn’t in Slytherin” (*PHS*: 60). This quote by Rubeus Hagrid in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* becomes the first glimpse of the attitude against the Slytherin House that we can see all through the *Harry Potter* Series. Every person that attends or has attended Hogwarts has a set of prejudices against the Gryffindor, Slytherin, Hufflepuff or Ravenclaw Houses, depending on which one they belong to. The Houses are highly stereotyped in every novel, especially in the first one.

In this paper, I argue that the author of these novels, J.K. Rowling, created the Hogwarts House System and especially, the dichotomy between Gryffindor and Slytherin and the misinterpretation of the latter, in order to help the protagonist differentiate between good and bad and to help him create his own identity. That is to say, the author stereotypes Slytherin House in order to make Harry believe in a systematic separation between good and bad people (depending on their house). This dichotomy is a basic part of the plot of the first books, in which Harry always thinks the Slytherin students or professors are the villains of the story –not always rightly.

In order to do this, I will analyze some of the characters that belong to the Slytherin House to see if all these prejudices against Slytherin that we perceive when reading the novels have a solid foundation or not. Furthermore, I will try to see if there are dark wizards in other houses, relating this to some quotes of the books and J.K.

Rowling's statements in interviews. The aim of this paper is to establish the purpose of the author in creating a House System based on personality attributes of individuals who are just young children .

The House System in the *Harry Potter* Series is based on the method used in public schools within the English educational system, particularly upper-class boarding schools. This separation of the students from a very young age can be beneficial or bad for the kids, depending on who you ask. As Ciaccio explains in his article "Harry Potter and Christian Theology":

To sort a schoolboy or a schoolgirl in a particular House is not merely an organizational matter: there is a deeply intense bond to the House, a strong identity that creates a high spirit of competition, together with, however, a high risk of divisiveness. Faithfulness to one's House identity becomes the main influence on students' behaviour. (Ciaccio, 2009: 36)

This divisiveness can be clearly seen in the story even before the school year begins in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. These differences are one of the most important and frequently raised topics in the novels. From Quidditch to academic matters, every part of Hogwarts is based on the competitiveness between the Houses. This arrangement is also useful to create an identity for the students. They become a family and they help each other in a place where there are not many parental figures.

J.K Rowling highlights from the beginning of the story which are the personality traits and characteristics that a student needs to have in order to belong to one of the four Hogwarts Houses. The clearest example of these typical features can be seen in the Sorting Hat's song in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, the first novel in the *Harry Potter* series:

You might belong in Gryffindor,  
Where dwell the brave at heart,  
Their daring, nerve, and chivalry  
Set Gryffindors apart; You might belong to Hufflepuff,  
Where they are just and loyal,  
Those Patient Hufflepuffs are true  
And unafraid of toil;  
Or yet in wise old Ravenclaw,

If you've a ready mind,  
Where those of wit and learning,  
Will always find their kind;  
Or perhaps in Slytherin  
You'll make your real friends,  
Those cunning folk use any means  
*To achieve their ends* (88, original italics).

These House traits are repeated all through the series, giving a background for each of the characters that appear in these novels, students and adults, depending on which House they belong to or belonged to during their stay at Hogwarts. This division elicits a series of prejudices from both Harry and the readers against some of the characters before we know their real personalities. As we can see in that passage, the Slytherin students are depicted as cunning, loyal to their friends, ambitious and capable of everything in order to achieve what they want. Any of these characteristics can be considered bad or wrong.

If we take into consideration the most important Slytherin characters, like the Malfoy family and their friends, or Severus Snape, we can clearly place these characteristics in their personalities from what we know about them. All these characters are cunning and ambitious but some of them are also brave, a trait considered mainly Gryffindor's. The same happens when we analyze some of the Gryffindor students. We can see how Hermione is both cunning and ambitious, as are Albus Dumbledore and Percy Weasley. This shows that these traits are not exclusive to each of the Houses and therefore, that there should not be a discrimination of the Slytherin House just for the traits that Salazar Slytherin wanted in the people studying in his House.

This can also be applied to the belief that all Death Eaters originate in Slytherin or that all Slytherins are Death Eaters. As J.K. Rowling commented in an interview,

You are seeing Slytherin house always from the perspective of Death Eaters' children. They are a small fraction of the total Slytherin population. I'm not saying all the other Slytherins are adorable, but they're certainly not Draco. (...) You will have people connected with Death Eaters in other houses, yeah, absolutely. (in Anelli and Spartz, 2005: website)

In this interview, J.K. Rowling claims that we cannot have a clear knowledge of the Slytherin House because we only see it from the perspective of some of the students, and most of those students are related to dark wizards. This statement creates a controversy that has been discussed by critics and fans since the beginning of the story. Why, if there are Death Eaters in all the houses and not every Slytherin is evil, are the readers only shown this side of the story? We should not forget that the story is told from Harry Potter's perspective. We know what he knows, and we believe in what he believes.

The first impressions that Harry has about the distinctions between the Houses are taken from what Hagrid tells him when they go to Diagon Alley, his encounter with Draco Malfoy in Madame Malkins, and the first time he meets the Weasleys on Platform Nine and Three Quarters. In all these encounters, we can see how the Gryffindor House begins to be more appealing to Harry than the Slytherin House. These first chapters of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* set up the tone for the entire series. It is important to understand that all the people who give their insight about the Houses to Harry have an impartial opinion about them. Hagrid himself was in Gryffindor when he was studying at Hogwarts; Draco is a spoiled 11-year-old-boy who parrots his father's beliefs and the Weasleys have a long history as Gryffindor students.

These encounters are the main reason why Harry asks the Sorting Hat not to place him in Slytherin, although according to the hat itself Harry could become powerful in that 'other' House. Harry does not have a real insight of what the House system consists of and therefore, he acts on the basis of the few experiences that he has had with the Wizarding World. As Shelton argues, Harry himself assumes at one point in the story that he may have belonged to the Slytherin House:

Harry wins his struggle with the Sorting Hat and finds his way to the Gryffindor House for his years at Hogwarts; yet, he wonders in his coming adventures if the Sorting Hat's first inclination was not the correct one. In the years that follow, Harry struggles to understand himself, wrestling with a doubt that he might be pragmatic and self-serving like many of the Slytherins. (2009: 51)

Until *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, Harry Potter believes that all Slytherins are evil and all Gryffindors are good. As the story goes on, he understands that not everything is black or white. He realizes that Snape was always a double agent and that Draco has reasons to do what he does yet does not enjoy being in Voldemort's ranks. He also becomes aware that what he has been led to believe all through his Hogwarts' stay might not be entirely true. As he grows older and more mature, he becomes his own self, with his own identity and his previous beliefs begin to fall apart.

Of all the Slytherin characters in the *Harry Potter* series, Severus Snape is, perhaps, the most important figure to make Harry wonder whether the distinctions between the houses are as important as he thought or not. When he sees Snape's memories about his childhood and his relationship with Lily and James Potter in both the sixth and seventh books, he realizes that Snape's actions in the seven years in which he has known him have been triggered by the love he felt towards Harry's mother, Lily. Whether his actions make him brave or not is an arguable point, but his acts are genuinely good. As Behr claims, the knowledge Harry gains about his father and godfather from Snape's memories of being bullied by them also helps to build his identity: "In Book Five, Harry is forced to re-evaluate his cherished ideas about his heroic father and godfather, and the readers must themselves doubt (or at least revise) their judgments, not just of James and Sirius, but also of the trustworthiness of the narrative" (2005: 116). Until that moment, all of Harry's experiences with bullies had been with Slytherins but when he sees Snape's memories, he realizes that his father treated Severus just like Draco treats him. In this moment, he realizes that he has idealized his father and his friends from what other people have told him. This moment is important not only because Harry becomes aware of the fact that his father was not as perfect as he thought he was but also because he sees that Gryffindors are not always as good as they think they are.

Draco Malfoy is another of those characters that make Harry wonder whether the Slytherin and Gryffindor division in which he believes is true. Draco is, from the very beginning, Harry's antagonist in the school and he could be considered a bully to Harry and his friends. He is probably the cause of most of Harry's prejudices against



the Slytherins. After Draco takes the Dark Mark and begins to carry out tasks for the Dark Lord, he changes and Harry can see it. After the incident in the bathroom where he finds Draco sobbing, and realizing that Draco cannot really kill Dumbledore, Harry realizes that Draco is not as bad as he thought he was, and that everyone's actions may depend on the circumstances in which they are living.

Narcissa Malfoy, Draco's mother and a Slytherin, turns out to be one of the most important people in the Battle of Hogwarts. If it was not for her love for her child, she would not have lied to Lord Voldemort when he asked her whether Harry had died in the battlefield. She is one of the most important pieces in Harry's victory. It is clear in the story that she lies for Draco once she knows he's alive at Hogwarts, and not because she believes in Harry but, in the end, her actions are brave and good. She could be compared, in that sense, to Lily Potter. Both of them would do anything for their children, even if that means dying. Harry understands in that moment that Narcissa does not care for Voldemort's actions, she just wants to save her family.

We should not forget that there have been evil characters and Death Eater from Houses that are not Slytherin. The most important one for Harry's story is perhaps Peter Pettigrew, a Gryffindor who sold his own friends to the Dark Lord and is, ultimately, the one that changes Harry's life. Another Death Eater from another house is Professor Quirrell, who was a Ravenclaw during his stay at Hogwarts as a student. These people also help to dismantle Hagrid's previously mentioned opinion since not all dark wizards were Slytherin. It is also important to note that one of the most famous and powerful, wizards in the Wizarding History, Merlin, was a Slytherin.

To conclude, the Slytherin House may not be as bad as we are led to believe by the author during the first novels. In the last two novels we can see a change in the attitude towards the Slytherins from the author and the protagonist. That change of attitude, added to the fact that we begin to understand the true purpose of some of the actions of the students from this house, helps the readers to understand why the House System is built as it is. As we can read in the welcoming message to the Slytherin House in one of the official websites of the *Harry Potter* franchise, *Pottermore*:

We're not bad people. We're like our emblem, the snake: sleek, powerful, and frequently misunderstood. (...) Because you know what Salazar Slytherin looked for in his chosen students? The seeds of greatness. You've been chosen by this house because you've got the potential to be great, in the true sense of the word (Rowling, n.d.: website).

This completely biased message shows what Slytherins think of themselves but it also shows that these attributes are not bad by definition. The author herself, though, manipulates them to suit her plot.

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### **Speciesism and the Centaurs in *Harry Potter*: Redefining Beast and Being (Alicia Moreno Milrado)**

**ABSTRACT:** Centaurs are different from any other magical creature in the *Harry Potter* series due to the fact that they are formed of both beast, with its animal instinct, and human, with its intellectual capacity. This intellect is what makes the centaurs believe themselves superior to the wizards, though they are still victims of speciesism from the humans because of the undeniable differences in their appearance. However, along the series, we can see how, despite their superior intelligence, the centaurs still let their animal side take control over them. Here, I want to defend the idea that only they have the right to choose how to be defined.

The universe of the *Harry Potter* series includes a long list of magical creatures which, depending on their physical appearance, intelligence and mental capacity, are

classified into different groups. These sub-categorizations are: beings, beasts, spirits and creatures whose status is unknown. Despite many creatures receiving a clear classification into one of the groups, the differences between these and the classification of the different creatures into them are problematic. It is complicated to define certain creatures with the label of beast when they have the characteristics of beings and vice versa. One of the most important and complicated cases are the centaurs. While their physical appearance is clearly that of a beast, their mental capacity is closer to that of beings; ultimately their actions and their will must place them into one category or the other.

The complexity in the classification of the centaur lies in the fact that they combine characteristics from both beings and beasts, as explained in *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*: “The centaurs’ habits are not humanlike; they live in the wild, refuse clothing, prefer to live apart from wizards and Muggles alike, and yet have intelligence equal to theirs” (Rowling, 2001: 14). There is no certain way to determine which of these groups would fit them better. There needs to be a clearer definition of both beast and being in order to see if the centaurs fulfil the requirements to belong to either one of them, both, or not one at all. The problem is, then, defining beast and being, which, according to the mentioned volume, has always been difficult to accomplish:

The definition of a ‘beast’ has caused controversy for centuries. (...) We now ask ourselves: which of these creatures is a ‘being’ –that is to say, a creature worthy of legal rights and a voice in the governance of the magical world– and which is a ‘beast’? Early attempts at deciding which magical creatures should be designated ‘beasts’ were extremely crude. (2011: 14)

In order to explain more clearly the problem of defining beasts, *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* uses three examples of creatures on the boundary between being and beast: the werewolves, the centaurs and the trolls. All three of them have partly a human-like appearance, which would classify them, in a first definition, as beings. Their mental capacity and intelligence, however, is what ultimately tilts the

balance on to beast, since a creature cannot be completely considered a being without a human conscience, as it will be seen later.

There are many definitions of what establishes a creature as a beast or as a being, depending on several elements. Again in *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, Rowling, under the name of several fictional characters of her invention, specialists in the field of magizoology, gives different definitions of beast. The first possible definition is given by Burdock Muldoon, who “decreed that any member of the magical community that walked on two legs would henceforth be granted the status of ‘being’, all others to remain ‘beasts’” (2001: 14). This definition lacks specificity and is not adequate. Due to Burdock’s failed attempt to introduce so-called ‘beings’ into the Wizarding Government (something a being would be interested in due to its human conscience), it was made clear that “the mere possession of two legs was no guarantee that a magical creature could or would take an interest in the affairs of wizard government” (2001: 15).

The next definition, though still not completely correct, is closer to an ideal distinction than its predecessor. In the words of Madame Elfrida Clagg, “‘Beings’ (...) were those who could speak the human tongue” (15). Following a path similar to Burdock’s, a meeting was held in order to unite all beings thus categorised, though this was also a failure, since this definition failed to recognize many creatures which were not even taken into consideration: “The centaurs, who under Muldoon had been classified as ‘beasts’ and were now under Madame Clagg defined as ‘beings’, refused to attend the Council in protest at the exclusion of the merpeople, who were unable to converse in anything except Mermish while above water” (16). Though the centaurs, and many other creatures, are accepted as beings according to this definition, it still leaves out many creatures which despite having a human conscience and intelligence, lack, unlike beings, a language intelligible to humans.

The definition that most of the magical community agreed on comes from Grogan Stump, who decreed that a ‘being’ was “any creature that has sufficient intelligence to understand the laws of the magical community and to bear part of the responsibility in shaping those laws” (2001: 16). By this definition, not only the

merpeople would be considered beings (by using a translator when needed), also the centaurs would be definitively classified as beings. This definition is the most adequate one, since it considers as a being every creature that rationalizes like a human, despite their physical appearance (though it still plays an important part in defining being and beast). However, the centaurs “refused ‘being’ status and requested to remain ‘beasts’” (Rowling, 2001: 17), which makes their case different from any other magical creature.

Once being and beast are more or less successfully defined, it is still necessary to see why the centaurs are first placed as beings, and what makes them decide that they would rather be considered beasts, as well as how their behaviour and their actions affect this decision. As Barratt explains, the labels of being and beast are themselves still quite ambiguous, which makes it hard to label all the centaurs under one. She compares them to the LGTB community, in which many members resist being labelled since they believe that the complexity of their identities and their differences (in this case, in their sexuality) cannot be fully comprised by a label. In the same way, the complexity of the duality of being and beast in the centaurs surpasses those labels: “The centaurs have reappropriated the ‘beast’ designation, in a manner similar to the reappropriation of ‘queer’ by some members of the LGBT community (...). So contingent are the ‘beast’ and ‘being’ labels that some individuals qualify at some times as beasts, and other times as being” (Barratt 2012, 77).

The centaur, as seen in the *Harry Potter* series, and as some of the other magical creatures such as the chimaera or the sirens, has its origins in Ancient Greece. The centaurs were originally described as “half man, and half horse. They have the body of a horse but, in place of the horse’s head they have the torso, head and arms of a man. Most are wild and savage, known for lustfulness and drunkenness” (*Greek Mythology*, n.d.: website). Keeping their mythical physical appearance, the centaurs in the series are creatures living in the wild (in the Forbidden Forest) apart from humans, following their instincts: “The ways of the centaur are shrouded in mystery. They are generally speaking as mistrustful of wizards as they are of Muggles and indeed seem to make little differentiation between us” (Rowling, 2001: 32). In *Harry Potter*, they rarely

interact with humans, since they do not trust them, even showing on occasion the savage side of mythical centaurs:

Centaurs like to keep themselves separated from wizards and they avoid them (...) at all costs. In *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* when Harry enters the forest and is almost attacked by Quirrell-Voldemort, the centaurs are furious with Firenze for saving Harry. (...) [The centaurs] feel that there is no reason why one of their kind should become a vehicle for a human or assist him in any way. (Brown, 2012: website)

This savage nature of the centaurs is mostly seen in the fifth book, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, when Firenze is appointed professor for Divination after Professor Trelawney is dismissed by Dolores Umbridge. Though Harry himself and some of the other students are not afraid of him, seeing beyond his beastly appearance, most of the students are alarmed and do not dare get close to him. Their first impression is that Firenze is a dangerous beast, a creature that belongs to the forest, rather than a highly intellectual creature: “[Harry] saw that [the class] were all looking at him with awe, apparently deeply impressed that he was on speaking terms with Firenze, whom they seemed to find intimidating” (*OPH*: 601).

It is also evident that the idea of Firenze, a centaur, being close to the humans, even if this proximity is only as a professor, is not well received by the rest of the centaurs, either. Though in the book this is not directly explained, there is evidence that the herd attacks Firenze when they find out about him becoming a professor: “Harry noticed that there was the shadow of a hoof-shaped bruise on Firenze’s chest” (*OPH*, 601). This shows, again, that however intelligent they may be, they are, in the end, beasts, and they are not above fighting one of them and rejecting him from the herd when he breaks one of their rules (human as this may sound). As Firenze explains to Harry:

Professor Dumbledore has kindly arranged this classroom for us (...) in imitation of my natural habitat. I would have preferred to teach you in the Forbidden Forest, which was —until Monday— my home ... but this is not possible. (...) It is not a question of your bravery but of my position. I can no longer return to the forest. My herd has banished me. (*OPH*, 601, original ellipsis included)

It is also important to notice that Firenze refers to the forest as his “natural habitat”, a term that would not be used by a human to refer to their home, but that is used to talk about the place or environment where an animal lives. Firenze is aware that he is, after all, a beast, and of his position as a centaur. He is aware that he should not be relating to humans at all and he himself tries to justify his herd’s actions by saying that “Centaurians are not the servants or playthings of humans. (...) [The other centaurs banished me] because I have agreed to work for Professor Dumbledore. (...) They see this as a betrayal of our kind” (*OPH*: 602). Another centaur, named Magorian, also describes later in the book Firenze’s actions as a betrayal: “Firenze has entered into servitude to humans (...) He is peddling our knowledge and secrets among humans, (...) there can be no return from such disgrace” (*OPH*: 698). However, as friendly with the humans as Firenze is, he still is a centaur and therefore he believes in their superiority over the humans: his predecessor “[Professor Trelawney] is a human, (...) and is therefore blinkered and fettered by the limitations of your kind” (*OPH*: 603).

Another important moment in the book, probably the most important one in the whole series in order to show the savage nature of the centaurs, takes place close to the end of book Five, when a desperate Hermione tricks the hateful Umbridge to take her, Firenze and Harry to the Forbidden Forest by telling her that they are going to show her Dumbledore’s weapon against the Ministry (which does not actually exist, though Umbridge does not believe so). There they encounter the herd of centaurs. Though they do not attack them directly at first, the centaurs still act warily around them and they actually shoot arrows close to them as a warning. This does not necessarily mean that they are savages, but rather cautious. Of all the creatures living in the wild, the centaurs are nonetheless one of the most civilized ones, and even though they may threaten Harry and Hermione, they still do not directly attack Umbridge until she insults them, calling them “filthy half-breeds! (...) Beasts! Uncontrolled animals!” (*OPH*: 755). Then the attack ensues, beginning with Firenze: “ropes flew out of midair like thick snakes, wrapping themselves tightly around the

centaur's torso and trapping his arms. He gave a cry of rage and reared onto his hind legs, attempting to free himself, while the other centaurs charged" (*OPH*: 755).

The centaurs finally kidnap Umbridge with great violence: "Harry saw Umbridge being borne away through the trees by Bane, still screaming nonstop; her voice grew fainter and fainter until they could no longer hear it over the trampling of hooves surrounding them" (*OPH*: 756). Presumably, and this one of the most controversial issues about this episode, they torture Umbridge. Many readers believe that she is actually raped by the centaurs, thus justifying this image of wilderness around them and their savage nature. This image of the wild centaurs attacking humans in their territory, is closest to the conception of the centaurs in the Greek myth as beasts:

Greek centaurs were imagined as, for the most part, a gang of wild, drunken, violent rapists, presented as the opposite of human civilization. Like Greek centaurs, they live in the wild forest, in opposition to human civilization (represented by Hogwarts) and whatever it is that they do to Umbridge is, thankfully, left undescribed. (Harrison, 2009: website)

However, the centaurs only attack Umbridge after she, a well-known speciesist, insults them, and even then, they leave Harry and Hermione unharmed. Who is the beast here: the one who attacks or the one who provokes the attack? Umbridge herself is partly responsible for what they do to her, since they have acted just as what she believes them to be. If she had behaved correctly around them and had respected them, they would not have attacked her. Their attacks are, then, justified; they do not attack just for the sake of it, and they have a moral code in relation to who and who not to attack: "They (Harry and Hermione) are young (...), we do not attack foals" (*OPH*: 756). At first, they do consider attacking them, since they do not like the idea of being used by humans as their tools or servants and they feel insulted by them, but, savage as they are, they still follow some rational rules and show human conscience. They are not a real danger if they do not feel threatened, which makes them creatures to be respected, not feared. As long as the humans respect them and do not interfere with them, they will not attack, since they do not have a reason to. They do not want to originate a war against humans; they actually try to stay as far from them as



possible. For this reason, even though they are rated by the Ministry of Magic with XXXX, which is the classification for dangerous creatures, this classification is given “not because (the centaur) is unduly aggressive, but because it should be treated with great respect” (Rowling, 2001: 32).

The centaurs are highly intellectual creatures, too, with a great knowledge of astronomy and awareness of their surroundings, and that is how they are first introduced. They are self-centred and they do not care much about anything other than their science, to the point where it can be irritating and complicated to talk to them: “Never (...) try an’ get a straight answer out of a centaur. Ruddy stargazers. Not interested in anythin’ closer’n the moon” (*PHS*: 254). They believe that they must not interfere with how things are; they simply observe the planets and the moon and let things happen as they are set to happen: “Remember, Firenze, we are sworn not to set ourselves against the heavens. Have we not read what is to come in the movements of the planets?” (*PHS*: 257). They do not really show interest in anything other than themselves: “The centaurs are the learned ones, more interested in studying the prediction of the starts than in interfering in events happening in the present” (Cockrell, 2004: 25), and live by following the proverb ‘live and let live’. They do not interact with humans simply because they believe them inferior.

Though they have human-like intellectual capacity and they actually value it highly, the centaurs themselves choose to be classified as beasts and not beings. The reason behind this choice is mostly egocentric. They do not want to be classified in the same category as other creatures they consider inferior and/or unworthy: “The centaurs objected to some of the creatures with whom they were asked to share ‘being’ status, such as hags and vampires, and declared that they would manage their own affairs separately from wizards” (Rowling, 2001: 17). They dislike so much the company of other creatures which are not at their intellectual level that they would rather be alone. Paradoxically, it is actually because of their human-like conscience and intellectual capacity (typical of beings), that centaurs decide to be considered beasts.

Being or beast, it is ultimately the centaurs’ decision to choose, just as it is Harry’s decision to choose being Gryffindor instead of Slytherin in *Harry Potter and the*

*Philosopher's Stone*. The *Harry Potter* defends self-will and freedom as it can be seen in many occasions. The centaurs are just another example. Their physical appearance is that of a beast and their intellect that of a being: they fit both and neither of these labels and, thus, they redefine them. They do not let others control them in any way, not even in their own classification, and they show that one creature cannot be labelled in terms of some features just because someone (especially not a human) has said so. They are the ones responsible for themselves and their own fate and, at the end, what does it matter if they are considered beasts or beings? Labels should not limit what one can or cannot be. Their words and actions show what they are or are not and, ultimately, there is no better way to classify a creature, especially the centaurs, than letting them define themselves.

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### Molly Weasley, a Patriarchal Character: Questionable Authorial Choices in *Harry Potter* (Laia Munné Torra)

ABSTRACT: Molly Weasley, right from her first appearance in the *Harry Potter* series, has been subject to criticism by feminists. Despite the attempts by J.K. Rowling to defend her authorial choices regarding Mrs. Weasley, many have questioned her role in the series. In this paper I argue that J.K. Rowling is using Molly's cosy and nurturing figure to transmit to young readers patriarchal values. From Mrs. Weasley's polemical use of household magic to her overprotection of

Harry, she is considered a conventional mother figure. Her caring appearance attracts children into believing that she is the perfect mother, therefore making them vulnerable to the patriarchal values.

J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series became a huge worldwide phenomenon. Her story reached thousands of people, many of whom were children when they began their journey to Hogwarts together with Harry, Ron and Hermione. Rowling found herself with the power to influence young people's minds through the magical world she had created, and because of this power she had upon the younger generation of that time, her works have been closely analyzed. In this paper I am going to focus on a particular highly polemical character: Molly Weasley, and J.K. Rowling's authorial choices regarding her characterization.

Molly, right from her first introduction in the books, is presented as a conventional mother whose only ambition is to "mother the whole world" (in DVD feature, 2011). She is portrayed from a very patriarchal point of view which, bearing in mind who the books were destined to, is highly controversial for the values attached. Molly can be seen as the personification of patriarchal values hidden under the appearance of a cosy, caring figure, very appealing for young children, especially for those who might not have as wonderful a family as the Weasleys. For this reason, Molly has been both criticized and defended by those against or in favour of patriarchy, creating debate on what Rowling intended by creating this character. All those opinions seem to agree that Mrs. Weasley is a patriarchal figure who spreads the values of a patriarchal society throughout the whole series.

Molly Weasley's first appearance in the *Harry Potter* series takes place in the first book, when Harry is looking for platform 9  $\frac{3}{4}$  in King's Cross station. He hears her voice and when he turns around and sees her for the first time, she is described as just a "plumb woman" (*PHS*: 69). The readers then see a bossy and somewhat messy mother who right from the beginning worries about Harry: "Poor *dear* –no wonder he was alone. I wondered. He was ever so polite when he asked how to get on to the platform" (*PHS*: 73, original emphasis). Molly's role in the first book consists of sending Harry a jumper and sweets as Christmas presents because Ron has told her that Harry

does not expect any presents at all. Right from the beginning we see how Molly tries to treat him as another of her own sons. But we see this more clearly at the beginning of the second book, *Chamber of Secrets*, when Harry visits the Burrow, the Weasleys' family home, for the first time. From that moment onwards Molly considers it her responsibility to take care of Harry, and sends him a Christmas present every year, just as if he were another of her own sons. As Weaver and McMahon-Coleman state in their article, and in reference to C.S. Lewis's classic Narnia tales, "Mrs. Weasley is the most obvious example of the Wardrobe, providing material and moral care to Harry as well as her own children, despite the Weasley's poverty" (2012: 156).

From that first time Harry visits the Burrow onwards, the adult reader cannot help but notice that Mrs. Weasley is a very conservative woman. She plays a very patriarchal role in her family –while Mr. Weasley is the one responsible of providing for the family, Mrs. Weasley is relegated to the home environment. Even her magic seems always to be home-related, as Harris observes:

Molly is more concerned with feeding up her family and welcoming their friends. Molly is the centre of the cosy domestic chaos that flourishes at chez Weasley, bustling about the kitchen with her wand always ready to perform a particularly type of magic (...). However innovative Molly's magical methods, her role as a wife and mother remains extremely conventional. (Harris, 2012: 14).

The fact that Molly does not have any employment or job outside her home besides taking care of her children says much about this character. Despite the fact that the Wizarding society seems to be much behind on modern Muggle technologies, Molly has no apparent reason to stay at home once the last of her children leaves to attend school. Nancy Chodorow explains in her book how mothering has changed throughout the last two centuries:

Over the last two centuries, fertility and infant mortality rates have declined, longevity has increased, and children spend much of their childhood years in school. (...) Household necessities, once produced by women in the home, became commodities mass-produced in factories. (...) Home and workplace, once the same, are now separate.(...) As women's mothering became less entwined

with their other ongoing work, it also became more isolated and exclusive.  
(Chodorow, 1978: 4)

In the Weasley family, however, there is a clear separation between the housework, in Molly's hands, and the outside job that Arthur Weasley has in the Ministry of Magic. The Weasley family is therefore highly patriarchal. Molly stays at home to take care of their children, but as Chodorow states for this type of mother "Her mothering, then, is informed by her relationship with her husband, her experience of financial dependence, her expectations of marital inequality, and her expectations about gender roles" (1978: 86). Once their six sons and one daughter start spending most part of the year at Hogwarts learning magic, Molly's household work and her function as a mother is hugely diminished, especially since she does not really have to do much around the house, besides feeding the chickens and taking care of de-gnoming the garden from time to time.

Rowling, together with some of the actresses who played female roles in the *Harry Potter* films, was interviewed and asked to talk about the female characters she had created. She talked about Molly Weasley, defending her authorial choices:

Very early on writing this series I remember a feminist journalist saying to me that "Mrs. Weasley well, she's just a mother", and I was absolutely incensed by that comment. I consider myself to be a feminist, but I always wanted to show that just because a woman has made a choice, a free choice, to say 'well I'm going to raise my family and that's going to be my choice, I might go back to a career, I might have a career part-time but that's my choice,' doesn't mean that that's all she can do, as we prove it on that battle. Molly Weasley comes to prove herself the equal warrior on that battlefield. (in DVD feature, 2011).

Rowling defends that any free choice is valid, and that is completely true, but there is no way of denying that Mrs. Weasley is a mother from the beginning of the first book to the very end of the last one. Molly might have chosen to be a mother and leave aside her career but, in the way she is portrayed, *Harry Potter* fans could perfectly imagine her getting red-faced and angry at the suggestion that she should find a job outside her home, and shouting to Mr. Weasley 'And who would raise your children?' if he ever dared mentioning this. It is a quite plausible scene in view of Molly's

personality. Mrs. Weasley is characterized not only as a caring and nurturing mother, but also as a woman who believes herself to be above all a mother.

Despite what Rowling states, Molly does not go into the fighting because she wants to, but to protect her family. However, many critics agree with Rowling's opinion:

Mrs. Weasley, initially a narrowly written, exclusively domestically minded, worrying mother, seems transformed in the final battle of *Deathly Hallows*. She sheds the apron and oven mitts for a fierce and aggressive tone as she engages Bellatrix Lestrange in a duel (...). Rowling most matriarchal character finally leaves 'The Burrow' and involves herself first-hand in violent conflict with the Death Eaters (Heilman and Donaldson, 2009: 143).

Even in her glory moment during the battle of Hogwarts, though, when defending Ginny and shouting "NOT MY DAUGHTER, YOU BITCH!" (*DH*: 589) at Bellatrix Lestrange before killing her, she is acting as a wounded mother who is trying to protect her children:

'You – will – never – touch – our – children – again!' screamed Mrs. Weasley. Bellatrix laughed, the same exhilarated laugh her cousin Sirius had given as he toppled through the veil, and suddenly Harry knew what was going to happen before it did. Molly's curse soared beneath Bellatrix's outstretched arm and hit her squarely in the chest, directly over the heart (*DH*: 590).

Mrs. Weasley's maternal feelings towards her children bring her to fighting Bellatrix, but also to argue with Sirius Black whenever Harry is concerned. As I have previously noted, right from the beginning when Molly meets Harry, she believes it is her obligation to care for and worry about Harry. She regards Harry as one of her own sons, as we learn when Sirius tells her "He's not your son" in the fifth book and she replies "He's as good as" (*OPH*: 85). Nevertheless, Harry never seems to feel the same towards her. Harry esteems Sirius as a father figure, not only because he is his Godfather but also because he was his father's best friend. He also considers Lupin a sort of father figure before meeting Sirius and learning who he is. However, Harry never looks for a mother figure in any of the adult women that are around him. Lily has

a place in his heart that cannot be replaced, and if he ever needs a mother figure he uses Professor Minerva McGonagall, the Head of Gryffindor. Therefore, no matter how much Molly cares and worries about Harry, he just sees her as the mother of his best friend Ron.

Molly, nonetheless, considers herself the guardian and protector of Harry, and for this reason her opinions clash with Sirius's quite often in the only book we see them together, *Order of the Phoenix*. Harry always sides with Sirius, and Molly has to unwillingly allow Sirius to play his role as Harry's Godfather. Mrs. Weasley is quite prejudiced against Sirius because of his past. Despite knowing that Sirius was innocent of the charges that locked him in Azkaban for life, she does not see him as a good influence for Harry; she believes him to be irresponsible and reckless, and does not believe him capable of taking proper care of Harry. She simply seems to believe that a single man can never be as good as a mother, or in that case, as herself. The fact that Rowling characterizes Molly in that way and uses her to express this opinion also tells much about her own opinion on the matter. Once again, her choices regarding Molly make her look highly patriarchal and conservative in her values.

Another reason that makes Mrs. Weasley look as a conventional woman are her prejudices against both Fleur and –in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*– Hermione. When Harry, and with him the reader as well, first learns about Bill's relationship with pretty Fleur, we also learn that Molly does not seem particularly happy about it. This dislike towards foreign Fleur increases considerably when handsome Bill brings her to live in the Burrow so that she can get to know his family better and also live closer to her new workplace. During the time Fleur spends with the Weasleys, Molly makes it very clear that she dislikes her, believing that she is not the right choice for her son. She barely tolerates her out of respect for Bill. Nevertheless, Molly finally accepts her future daughter-in-law when Fleur confronts her for suggesting that, after Bill's disfigurement by a werewolf, she would not want to marry him. Molly realizes then that Fleur really loves Bill and accepts their relationship, though still not fully liking her.

The other case in which Molly openly shows dislike for a woman close to her family is when Rita Skeeter starts publishing false information about Hermione's love affairs with Krum and Harry: "Miss Granger, a plain but ambitious girl seems to have a taste for famous wizards that Harry alone cannot satisfy. Since the arrival of Viktor Krum (...) Miss Granger has been toying with both boys' affections" (GF: 444). Mrs. Weasley believes Skeeter's gross lies and shows her open dislike regarding how Hermione is supposedly behaving towards Harry by treating the girl rather coldly. Once Harry tells her the stories are false, Molly, however, relents:

'Mrs. Weasley, you didn't believe that rubbish Rita Skeeter wrote in *Witch Weekly*, did you? Because Hermione isn't my girlfriend.'  
'Oh!' said Mrs. Weasley. 'No –of course I didn't!'  
But she became considerably warmer towards Hermione after that. (GF: 537).

In these two cases, Molly's overprotection of her sons and of Harry lead her to distrust and dislike any girl who might hurt them. In the first place, she not only dislikes Fleur, but believes that she would eventually leave Bill whereas in Hermione's case, although Mrs. Weasley likes her, she starts behaving coldly towards her when she thinks Hermione is playing with Harry's feelings. Molly's behaviour in these two circumstances portrays her not only as a caring and conservative mother, but also as an overprotecting one. She proves that she will prioritize her children's' safety and wellbeing over everything else.

This leads us back to a highly controversial moment in the series concerning Molly Weasley: the battle of Hogwarts. Right before the battle Mrs. Weasley wants Ginny to go home, although the whole family is there fighting: "You're under-age!' Mrs. Weasley shouted at her daughter as Harry approached. 'I won't permit it! The boys, yes, but you, you've got to go home!'" (DH: 486). However Molly finally ends up allowing her to stay at Hogwarts after Lupin and Mr. Weasley intercede for Ginny:

Ginny had been attempting, under cover of the reconciliation, to sneak upstairs too.



‘Molly, how about this’, said Lupin. ‘Why doesn’t Ginny stay here, then at least she’ll be on the scene and know what’s going on, but she won’t be in the middle of the fighting?’

‘I –’

‘That’s a good idea’, said Mr. Weasley firmly. ‘Ginny you stay in this room, you hear me?’ (DH: 488).

Molly’s wish to keep Ginny away from the fight can only be interpreted in two ways. The first one is that she is behaving as a worried mother who does not want her little under-age daughter mixed in a battle that she fears could end up by getting Ginny killed. And the second one is that because Ginny is a girl she should not get involved in a battle. However, disregarding her mother, Ginny does fight for her loved ones and against the Death Eaters that threaten her family and friends. And when her life is endangered by Bellatrix’s attack, Mrs. Weasley, as I have already observed, jumps into the battle to protect her, in a climactic display of her mothering and protective feelings towards her children.

In conclusion, Molly Weasley is a character that, despite being secondary in the books, is very well portrayed and rounded. She appears as a person whom you could easily find in real life, with her peaks and valleys. Through Molly, though, Rowling manages to sneak patriarchal values into the readers’ minds in an apparently innocent way: raising their sympathy for a caring mother and a happy family. Mrs. Weasley is a clear example of a mother in a patriarchal society who wears the patriarchal values as armour, a mother that will do anything for her children despite being also tough with them when needed. She not only takes care of her children but also of Harry, and of the whole Order of the Phoenix. Her caring and nurturing character appeals to the children reading the books but makes Molly’s characterization highly polemical. Mrs. Weasley is a mother figure that gives endless love to her family, and for this reason, children might identify her as the perfect mother, or identify the Weasley patriarchal family as the happiest and best type of family.

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### **Remus Lupin: Self-hatred Born of Discrimination (*Maria Pilar Munné Martínez*)**

**ABSTRACT:** Remus Lupin is an example of how discrimination is represented in the *Harry Potter* books. He is not only discriminated by the Ministry of Magic for his condition as a werewolf but he rejects himself as well for it. Lupin can be seen as a representation of the 'Other' in the whole series but as an 'Other' who is aware of this condition and does not accept it. The main reason why Lupin hates himself is because he thinks he deserves to be hated for being a werewolf.

Remus Lupin is first introduced in the third book of the *Harry Potter* series, *Prisoner of Azkaban* as the new Hogwarts teacher in 'Defence against the Dark Arts'. From the very beginning, he is seen as a character who feels alienated from the rest of the magical population. The main reason for it is that he is a werewolf. He hides this information from the rest of the people since he feels ashamed of his real nature. It is important to mention that many characters hide secrets but Lupin is the only one who feels ashamed of his own secret. He does not want to feel ashamed but the magical community in general has made him think that he deserves it for being a werewolf. During the period of transformation under the full Moon, a person affected by lycanthropy loses all the human consciousness and can even attack his best friend. For that reason, Lupin decides to be isolated from the rest, to avoid attacking someone he loves.

Lupin became a werewolf when he was just a little boy. His father, Lyall Lupin, was asked to join the Department for the Control and Regulation of Magical Creatures of the Ministry, as he knew much about this topic. In fact, his father's role in this Department caused the child Lupin to be bitten in revenge. Lupin Sr. was responsible for identifying werewolves. Since he was very strict, he caused Fenrir Greyback, a vicious werewolf, to vent his fury onto little Lupin, the one who ended damaged. Lupin was not aware that he had become a werewolf and that he could be dangerous for the rest of the people. Werewolves are believed by the magical community to be unstable, a prejudice based on their lack of knowledge regarding lycanthropy and werewolves in general. Werewolves tend to live in isolated communities and not in contact with people, and avoid being identified as such by the Department of the Control and Regulation of Magical Creatures. As a consequence, prejudice grows around them.

Lupin grew up controlled by his parents for his condition since as a child, Lupin was already a dangerous werewolf and as he became older, he grew even more so. His own family realised that the magical community was not prepared to accept a werewolf despite being a wizard. As a consequence, his own father concealed his son's condition and educated Remus at home until the age of 11, when he was sent to Hogwarts. It can be said that Lupin grew up in isolation and this marked his attitude towards people when he became an adult. This implies that the first step that caused Lupin's self-hate was his own family. They did not do anything to make him feel that he could be a normal child despite having been bitten by a werewolf.

Hogwarts changed his own conception of his nature since it was the first time Remus was allowed to have friends. While he was at Hogwarts, he became friends with James Potter, Sirius Black and Peter Pettigrew creating the Marauders gang of friends. The Marauders' era was the only time in his life when Lupin felt he could be accepted and loved. The main reason was that his best friends were with him in the periods when he transformed into a werewolf. They even became illegal animagi just for him. This is the first time he did not feel ashamed of his hidden condition.

When he first appears in the third book, Lupin is presented once more as an isolated character. However, as he enters into the role of the teacher, his personality

changes completely. When teaching 'Defence against the Dark Arts' his lack of confidence is left aside and he performs well in a class that allows him to show who he is in reality as a man. The fact that he focuses on teaching students how to defend themselves against magical creatures gives the reader a clue of what his real purpose is. He wants young wizards and witches to know what magical creatures really are like and how to act against them only in case of danger. In that way, Lupin realizes that if people were aware of what being bitten by a werewolf really implies, life for him would be much easier. He tries to put some knowledge in the future generations, especially the main characters Harry, Ron and Hermione, in order to prevent other people from suffering the same rejections he experiences. Stypczynski supports the idea of Lupin using knowledge to overcome rejection:

In Rowling's work, the primary werewolf —Lupin— serves to directly educate key characters, especially, Harry, Ron and Hermione, as their instructor in 'Defence Against the Dark Arts', while indirectly signalling to the audience lessons about a variety of subjects via his role as the first werewolf schoolteacher. On one level, the werewolf speaks to intolerance, prejudice and racism. (2009: 57)

At the end of *Prisoner of Azkaban* the main characters finally discover what Lupin hides (and what Hermione already knows). The night Sirius returns Lupin forgets to take the wolfsbane potion provided by Snape that keeps him human, allowing him to lead a normal life, and transforms. What is important in this moment is that Sirius tries to remind him of who he really is but the werewolf's nature is stronger than his human self. When Lupin transforms into a werewolf, he no longer hates himself since the animal part takes control, allowing him to be free from everything that overpowers him: "The werewolf form liberates Remus from the constraints of propriety and the passivity he usually displays out of others' discomfiture with his condition" (Green, 2008: 87).

The 'Others' in the magical world presented in *Harry Potter* are the magical creatures. In the case of Lupin, he is also an 'Other' but not because he wanted to. He grew up hiding his unwanted werewolf condition, feeling alienated from the world he belongs to. The fact that he is a wizard with a great talent does not give him a firmer

integration into the magical world since his hidden nature is more important than that. This is seen clearly at the end of *Prisoner of Azkaban* when he decides to leave his position as 'Defence against the Dark Arts' teacher despite being the best teacher that Harry has ever had. He leaves not because he wants to but because he thinks the students' parents would not want a werewolf to teach their children. He advances what is going to happen due to the many rejections he has already suffered, which are the source of his hate towards himself.

In *Order of the Phoenix*, the reader realizes why Lupin accepts jobs that are not suitable for his capacities. Working in unexceptional positions prevents people from paying attention to him; in that way, his condition as a werewolf can be hidden from the rest. However, he does not stay much long in one place because his monthly disappearances may elicit some suspicions about his real nature. This does not allow him to establish a home and to convince people he is not dangerous. His stay at Hogwarts as a teacher, the longest period he spends at a job seemingly, shows, however, how the belief that werewolves are uncontrolled and unstable is still too extended inside the magical community.

The fact that Lupin belongs to the Order of the Phoenix can be considered as a key factor in his development. The Order provides a kind of comfort for him as he is with people that do not consider him in terms of his affliction but in terms of being a human and a wizard as well. It seems that belonging to the Order of the Phoenix might stop his self-hatred for his condition as a werewolf but it does not. The fact that the Ministry still considers werewolves as creatures that should be avoided for their lack of control does not allow Lupin to overcome his own rejection. However, he feels useful by belonging to the Order since it allows him to protect Harry. In that way, he can return James Potter the favour for protecting his secret when they were at Hogwarts. Moreover, he can also help to defeat Voldemort and revenge James Potter's death. In that way, he will find some sort of comfort that consists on demonstrating that he can do something good despite being a werewolf.

Lupin's personality is strong enough to overcome the fear of rejection and to stop hating himself but it seems he is unable to. His strong personality gets diminished

by the fact that he pities himself for being what he is. As a consequence, the apparent strength that Lupin shows becomes a complete lie to the reader's eyes. His condition as a werewolf is his excuse for acting weakly. It seems that he thinks it is right to keep his feelings to himself and to constantly remind himself and others that he is not a 'normal' wizard. The lycanthropy has affected him so much that it has marked his behaviour and personality: "Remus Lupin's lycanthropy both express deep flaws in his personality and explains his existence as a pariah of the Wizarding world due to his affliction" (Green, 2008: 98).

His own *patronus* is another example of his lack of acceptance towards his condition. He is the one who teaches Harry how to cast this spell. Due to his great talent as a teacher in 'Defence against the Dark Arts', Harry manages to produce a *patronus* with the clear image of a stag. Lupin's own *patronus* is, of course, a wolf – a powerful animal. However, for Lupin this is just a curse and not something good. He does not consider that being a werewolf is part of him even though his being a werewolf allowed him to have happy memories since it allowed him to be part of the Marauders. Despite that, he prefers to keep believing that his miserable personal is due to his lycanthropy and not his own attitude towards being a werewolf.

In the sixth book, *Half-blood Prince*, Lupin seems to be clearly affected by the loss of his best friend, Sirius Black. The reader may be confused by this fact since he ignored Sirius while he was in Azkaban believing that he was guilty of James Potter's death. A new hope in his life appears just then: the Auror and Order member Nymphadora Tonks. She is interested in him and she knows that he feels the same but he is too afraid to admit it. He has never been in love before since he thought that nobody would love him back. As a consequence, he does not know what to do with Tonks' love when he sees that she is affected by his indecision towards her. He does not accept the relationship with Tonks until Dumbledore's death. However, he still has doubts because he claims that he deserves someone better, someone without his problem. Since Tonks claims that she loves him regardless of his condition, he finally allows himself to be happy.

However, Lupin doubts about having made the right choice by deciding to start a relationship with Tonks. All seems right and he eventually marries her. Later on, Lupin learns that his wife is pregnant. Instead of staying with her, though, his fear appears again and he leaves his wife and his future child with her parents with the excuse that he must help Harry. He actually decides to leave because he is afraid that lycanthropy can be inherited by his baby. He is also afraid that he could have sexually transmitted lycanthropy to his own wife. The main reason for that is that he relates being a werewolf with being ill. He finally goes back to them when Harry shames him into accepting that his duty as a father and as a husband must be stronger than his fears. He is thus finally able to create a family a short time before his death, which makes the reader think that he was happy, at least, for a while during his life.

Lupin's death presumably changes the way that magical creatures are seen within the magical world. The prejudice that werewolves can only be evil is broken by him. He dies fighting against the Death Eaters at Hogwarts, together with Tonks, to allow the rest of the magical world to live peacefully. When he fights trying to save the world, he is mostly thinking about his son Teddy, to provide him with the happy life he did not have. Lupin and Tonks' son ends the circle of Lupin's life and it is the evidence that he has left something good in this world. After his death, Lupin gets the Order of Merlin, First Class, the first werewolf to achieve this honour. This makes the reader think that the laws related to werewolves may have changed after everything Lupin did for the magical world. However, the last book does not manage to give the reader this information and only suppositions can be made, as Green notes: "Rowling avoids both resolution of the legislation against werewolves and Lupin's ability to eventually gain some measure of acceptance outside the Order of the Phoenix through his death in the final novel" (Green, 2009: 162).

In the epilogue of the last book, we see Teddy Lupin through Harry's perspective. The reader can imagine that he has had a happy life as his father wanted, raised by his Godfather Harry. The fears that Lupin expressed before his death are proved to be wrong. The main reason is that Teddy has not inherited his lycanthropy as his father was not a pure werewolf but just a wizard who has been bitten by a real

werewolf. This indicates that Lupin should have not been so worried about his condition. He could have lived happier years if he had not been so focused on being separated from the people that cared for him. It is true that this is not Lupin's fault but the Ministry's fault: Lupin could have enjoyed a happy life if he had not been told that he could be a danger for others.

In conclusion, Remus Lupin is a character that represents how someone who suffers from a disease may feel rejected by the society in general. In this case, a wizard is rejected by the magical world and the Ministry of Magic just for being affected by lycanthropy (reminding us of HIV carriers). Those many years of rejection and prejudices cause him to hate himself. Since he is told that he is dangerous and that he should be separated from the rest, he ends believing this lie causing him to live an unhappy life. His entrance into the Order of the Phoenix allows him to start valuing himself as he is doing something useful for the magical community: saving the Wizarding world from Voldemort. Moreover, the Order of the Phoenix convinces him that he is worth enjoying happiness in his life and he finds love, which surprises him. Despite his doubts and thinking that she does not deserve him, Lupin finally marries Tonks and has a child with her. Finally, Lupin's death can mean the end of the prejudice against werewolves since he receives posthumously the Order of Merlin. The fact that he leaves behind a son who is not affected by lycanthropy is evidence that the condition he had was not as dangerous as the magical community thought. Too late for Lupin, though.

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## Magical Science: Luna Lovegood's Beliefs, Discoveries and Truths (*Carmen Nadal*)

**ABSTRACT:** The magical world Rowling has created in her series is a world where magic acts like a science, with its unquestionable truths. In this paper, I argue that the character that suffers most this construction of magical reality is Luna, who is presented as an eccentric for believing in invalidated things, specially beasts. Nonetheless, she keeps her faith and is even the one noticing aspects of the world (or people) around them that others can't notice, nor accept, leading to her ultimate discoveries of species never before accepted as real. For that, Luna is not as 'Looney' as she first seems.

In J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, magic is shaped in a scientific way, meaning that reality is objective. The paranormal –and, therefore, magic– belongs by itself to a “blurry region of contested truths” (Dendell, 2011: 410) where knowledge needs to be contrasted with both the known and the unknown. However, it is possible to distinguish between truth and lie, because in Rowling's world consensus knowledge is *a priori* a valuable, true, scientific method. That is the reason why Chevalier states that “Magic at Hogwarts has become anatomized into a science, with specialty branches, theories, and technical training (...)”, paradoxically best described as “the rigid and exacting science of magic” (2005: 398, 404).

Certainly, there is a magical science in the *Harry Potter* series, with Hogwarts at its core: from Dumbledore's scientific experiments (like the discovery of the twelve uses of dragon's blood; Dendle: 415), to practical and pragmatic knowledge (such as Herbology), including the manipulation of natural phenomena (as in Transfiguration). In fact, there is even a natural Muggle science taught at Hogwarts: Astronomy. Rowling's work has been largely analyzed in relation to education due to her detailed descriptions of homework, coursework, free time and exams related to this subject (Larsen, 2013: 58): for instance, an exam question for OWLs on Jupiter's moons, or the practical test, where they had to complete an entirely blank star-chart (*OPH*: 632-633). Moreover, Rowling has also transformed a few traditional subjects into their magical

counterparts, such as Arithmancy (Mathematics), History of Magic (History) and Muggle Studies (Sociology) (Chevalier: 404). Magic is measurable and testable, as proven in OWLs and NEWTs. Therefore, it receives from Rowling the structure of applied sciences, where discipline and studying are the ways of learning (Chevalier: 404).

Given that “Rowling (...) is careful to represent [magic] as a natural, not supernatural, science”, Rowling is addressing contemporary concerns (Chevalier: 401). The existence of a single truth, even if there are conflicting opinions on it, reinforces authority, while highlighting “the limitations of empirical science and the constructed nature of academic consensus” (408), providing her world with tensions around knowledge. As knowledge is one of the central points in her series, these conflicts about authority and truth are crucial to Harry’s world, and ultimately, to our world, as they mirror some of our contemporary epistemological tensions.

The only subject at Hogwarts that is exempt from science is Divination, as noted by the lack of respect for this subject that the authority (Headmaster Dumbledore and Headmistress McGonagall) maintains. The theatrical Divination teacher, Professor Sybil Trelawney, is a sham and a fraud –or at least she seems to be so in Harry’s and the narrator’s opinion (Dendle, 410, 414-415). However, even when she is depicted in her worst state –as an alcoholic and ignored by the authority– one must wonder about her abilities. She has at that precise moment, practising her tarot (*HBP*: 507), an insight into the disaster to come a few hours before the Death Eaters enter Hogwarts and Dumbledore is killed (in the chapter “The Lightning-struck Tower” of *Half-blood Prince*, 541-556). And much is made of her prophecy about Voldemort’s enemy, which seems accurate enough, at least to Dumbledore. In spite of mocking Trelawney, then, and of the consensus on the unreliability of Divination, the prophecy still plays a major role in the series (Dendle: 415-416).

The major independent voices throughout the series, which not even the totalitarian regime is able to fully suppress, are the tabloid *The Quibbler*, his editor Xenophilius Lovegood and his daughter, Luna Lovegood. One of the main issues in their set of beliefs is the unconfirmed existence of certain creatures, which weakens their

authority in every other field. In our world, there is a pseudoscience called cryptozoology that, precisely, tries to confirm the existence of imagined species. In Luna's world, the authorities on magical creatures are Newt Scamander, an academic (and author of *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*), and Rubeus Hagrid, an experienced and empathetic teacher. Their counterpart is played by *The Quibbler*, which constantly reports on the sightings of chimaeras such as Crumple-Horned Snorkacks, despite lacking real proof of their existence, as shown repeatedly throughout the series. Rowling's own humorous commentaries on cryptozoology in *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* (2001) make her views on the subject obvious: the Yeti and Nessie cannot exist. Nor can Crumple-Horned Snorkacks in the Wizarding world.

Luna Lovegood, however, believes in their existence. She, like Hagrid, shows empathy for the animals used in his class but she "is also a dreamer, largely living in her own world, and believing in all manner of animals that do not actually exist" (Dendle: 418). Her beliefs come from other dreamers, especially her father, and make her "almost blissful in her self-contained state of denial" (419). She "rides the boundary where faith parts of scepticism" (Abuisba, 2007: 210), even though usually this is seen negatively by her mates, who harass and bully her:

'Well, I've lost most of my possessions,' said Luna serenely. 'People take them and hide them, you know. But as it's the last night, I really do need the back, so I've been putting up signs.'

She gestured towards the noticeboard, upon which, sure enough, she had pinned a list of all her missing books and clothes, with a plea for their return. (*OPH*: 760)

Luna is completely aware of her unpopularity, even telling Harry that "they think I'm a bit odd, you know. Some people call me 'Loony' Lovegood, actually" (*OPH*: 760). This shows a typical characteristic of Luna: she states truths plainly, even what others cannot say, either out of fear or inability (Abuisba: 210). This is shown largely through the series, as in this comment about Dumbledore's Army:

'I enjoyed the meetings, too,' said Luna serenely. 'It was like having friends.'

This was one of those uncomfortable things Luna often said and which made Harry feel a squirming mixture of pity and embarrassment. (*HBP*: 132)

As Abuisba states, Luna is a positive force (209) since her “knack for plainly stating her beliefs, whether provable or not, both astonishes and comforts Harry. Her trickster personality gives Harry a new and valuable perspective” (210). That is especially important when Harry is confronted with things he is not prepared for, or that not everyone can see or hear, like the Thestrals (*OPH*: 180) or the veil in the Department of Mysteries (*OPH*: 761), both associated with death. Thus, “she also clearly defines a boundary of truth” (Abuisba: 201) for him and us, readers.

Certainly, Luna’s unconventional beliefs help Harry in his adventures, not only in his emotions. Her help is recurrent, as when advising to use Thestrals to fly to London (*OPH*: 670-671), or when giving Harry the clue about the final unknown Horcrux, Ravenclaw’s diadem, which no one else believes in (*DH*: 470). She is even helpful in giving him some rest when everybody is cheering on him after the final battle:

‘I’d want some peace and quiet, if it were me,’ she said.

‘I’d love some,’ he (Harry) replied.

‘I’ll distract them all,’ she said. ‘Use your [Invisibility] Cloak.’ (*DH*: 597)

Even her father, Xenophilius, is helpful to the cause thanks to his personal beliefs. First of all, he never stops believing in Harry, even publishing an interview in *The Quibbler* contradicting the official lies about Voldemort’s return (in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*), the first step to give Harry back his credit for his truthful account of the events in the previous school year. Crucially, he is the one to tell Harry, Ron and Hermione about the Deathly Hallows, “which for most wizards is only a set of children’s stories” (Dendle: 420).

Given all this, Harry, Ron and Hermione start paying Luna some respect and giving her praise, as when Ron lauds her for a Quidditch match comment despite still distrusting her beliefs. As he tells Harry and Hermione “You know, she’s grown on me, Luna (...). I know she’s insane, but it’s in a good –[way]” (*HBP*: 397). Her beliefs are

seen, though, as “innocent mistakes” that must be “embraced as harmlessly endearing” (Dendle: 411), like her. Rowling, though, plays with the reader for, somehow, she “leaves room for ambiguous interpretation” (Dendle: 420) regarding Luna’s beliefs while firmly establishing that one must only believe in what is proven (Dendle: 419-420). Rowling’s Wizarding world, after all, does contain many mysteries, though many of them end up being validated by the authority (as the Thestrals by Hagrid, or the Deathly Hallows by Dumbledore). Interestingly, Rowling has publicly validated Luna, who in her imagination “became a very famous Wizarding naturalist who discovered and classified many new species of animals (though, alas, she never did find a Crumple-Horned Snorkack and had, finally, to accept that her father might have made that one up)” (*Accio Quote!*, 2007: website)<sup>6</sup>. Luna’s authority is underscored not only by her finding a prestige job but also by her marrying Rolf, the grandson of top magizoologist Newt Scamander.

To sum up, in Rowling’s world magic works as a science, with its accepted truths, its validated knowledge, its authorities and even its impossible creatures. However, her world is not a closed one: some mysteries remain, perhaps to become mainstream knowledge in the future. In this world, Luna Lovegood plays the role of showing the main character Harry that other forms of knowledge beyond the ‘official’ are possible, giving him unique tips and questioning authority, which, as she knows and Rowling teaches, is not always truthful.

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<sup>6</sup> It must be noted that on June 18 2014 Evanna Lynch posted on her Facebook page two photos of a Crumple-Horned Snorkack, from the Magical Menagerie in the Diagon Alley Expansion of the Wizarding World of *Harry Potter*. There hasn’t been any official comment from Rowling.

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## The Integrity of Luna Lovegood: How J.K. Rowling Subverts the ‘Manic Pixie Dream Girl’ Trope (*Kate Pasola*)

**ABSTRACT:** Luna Lovegood, a female secondary character in the *Harry Potter* series is initially characterised as whimsical and eccentric. Unique, invigorating and empathetic, she makes an ongoing contribution to Harry’s achievements in the plot. This, along with her fantastical qualities, and her failure of the Bechdel Test, place Luna’s character at risk of being critically referred to as a ‘Manic Pixie Dream Girl (MPDG)’ –a common trope in fiction. However, there is substantial evidence of Luna’s heroism, complexities and motivations aside from the facilitation of Harry’s development which demonstrate that her character may be defined beyond the constraints of the MPDG trope.

J.K Rowling’s success with the *Harry Potter* series is often attributed to her skill for creating complete and believable characters. More than collections of traits, the characters of *Harry Potter* are so complete (with all the necessary hypocrisies, flaws, fears, backstories and ambitions which make them almost human), that readers are enabled to make friends with –or even place themselves within– a given character in the series. That said, it could be argued that Luna Lovegood, a secondary female character in the books, is a somewhat stereotypical embodiment of unique, whimsical quirkiness. Because of these features, along with her failure of the Bechdel Test (to be defined later in this essay) and, furthermore, her integral role in the protection and guidance of lead male Harry Potter, Luna Lovegood is at risk of being categorised within a trope commonly cited in critical literature: the Manic Pixie Dream Girl (MPDG).

On the other hand, there is a wealth of evidence to suggest that Luna Lovegood’s integrity as a character is protected by other traits with which she is

endowed; and furthermore that her personal motivations and experiences protect her from the classification as a Manic Pixie Dream Girl. This essay will define the MPDG with attention paid to characteristics and performance within the Bechdel Test; I will demonstrate the phenomenon with examples and counter-examples from popular culture, and also the manner in which MPDG characters perpetuate misogynistic ideology in literature. Using this definition and point of comparison, I will explore the character of Luna Lovegood and demonstrate that the aspects of her character which subvert the trope hold far more weight under critical scrutiny than those classifying her as a MPDG. After demonstrating the integrity of Lovegood's character, I will finally explore Rowling's possible motivations for the creation of a character which superficially bows to stereotype, yet in reality is possibly one of the most complex and multifaceted female secondary characters in modern (children's) literature.

In order to determine to what extent Luna Lovegood aligns with the MPDG trope, we must first define what it is for a character to be deemed a Manic Pixie Dream Girl. The first definition, given by film critic Nathan Rabin, who coined the term on his blog *AVClub* (2014) defines the MPDG as the following:

That bubbly, shallow cinematic creature that exists solely in the fevered imaginations of sensitive writer-directors to teach broodingly soulful young men to embrace life and its infinite mysteries and adventures, the Manic Pixie Dream Girl is an all-or-nothing-proposition. Audiences either want to marry her instantly (...) or they want to commit grievous bodily harm against them...

The MPDG character is most typically defined by her quirkiness and perceived originality. She tends to exist in films and other fictions without mention of a family, friends, career or set of interests or goals. By teaching the desolate hero to 'loosen up' and share her fervour for life, her boundlessly spontaneous nature inspires the male hero's enlightenment, yet her own narrative is neglected. That is to say, the MPDG exists solely for the purpose of guiding a man towards his own unique understanding of life. She often selflessly endures emotional or physical hardships in the joint pursuit of the hero's personal journey, and the lack of acknowledgement of such pain is

accounted for by the assumed means to an end –the self-discovery of the brooding hero.

In her preoccupation with the spiritual guiding of the male, the MPDG often fails the Bechdel Test, another troubling aspect of this fictional phenomenon. The Bechdel Test (also known as Bechdel-Wallace Test) was popularised in the 1985 online comic strip *The Rule*, part of Alison Bechdel's series *Dykes to Watch Out For*. In it a female character claims she never watches a film unless it meets three criteria:

1. It has to have at least two women in it,
2. Who talk to each other,
3. About something other than a man. (Bechdel, 2005: website)

Interestingly, the general notion had been alluded to since much earlier in Literature. See for example the words of Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* (1929: 82):

I tried to remember any case in the course of my reading where two women are represented as friends. (...) But almost without exception they are shown in their relation to men. It was strange to think that all the great women of fiction were (...) seen only in relation to the other sex.

If a female character fails the test (i.e., if she fails to speak to another female regarding a topic other than a man), then this can be an indicator that the character does not exist independently of male presence, and may not be in pursuit of her own goals. In this sense, this dependence is usually a helpful measure for determining MPDG status in a given female character.

MPDG characters have become a point of heated debate in feminist discourse because it is clear that such an abundance of incomplete and distorted female characters –and the impoverished stock of independent, complex female characters – is likely to foster unhealthy attitudes in audiences towards women. The MPDG trope can be said to perpetuate the idea of women as caregivers and muses rather than entities whose existences are independent of the men around them. When the stories, goals, tribulations and successes of women are neglected and they are reduced from human beings to fantastical and unique 'pixies', this attitude may well continue to



manifest in the real world too. David Walton's *Introducing Cultural Studies* recounts various feminist voices (including Virginia Woolf, Gloria Anzaldúa and bell hooks (sic)) in his discussion of the importance of true representation of women in narratives:

Woolf's *Three Guineas* helps to teach us that representation is fundamental to how identity is understood. Men have represented women in certain dominant ways; Woolf challenges these representations and re-represents the women of her class in a different way. It could be said that she was involved in a counter-hegemonic struggle over representations and meaning (...) she opposed the view of women as intellectually inferior, and laughed at the idea that women were more obsessed by their physical appearance than men. (Walton, 2007: 253)

The original MPDG character who inspired the neologism itself was the character Claire Colburn (played by Kirsten Dunst) in  *Elizabethtown* (2005), though the pioneer character is possibly Holly Golightly (played by Audrey Hepburn) in the classic *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961). Another exemplification of the trope is Natalie Portman's earlier character Sam in the film *Garden State* (2004). Often cited as an example, and point of critical debate, is the character of Summer, played by Zooey Deschanel, in *500 Days of Summer* (2009). Some criticise Summer as lacking in depth and existing solely to guide her male counterpart, a classic typification of the MPDG. However, it is also argued that this girl, despite an outward or superficial admission to the category of the MPDG, actually subverts the stereotype rather clearly in the pursuit of her own goals. Those characteristics which define Summer as a MPDG are not the result of lazy screenwriting or misogynistic directing, rather an illustration of the lead male's fanciful impression of women as mythical creatures who exist solely for the purpose of guiding the male –an attitude borne of Britpop-style ballads and monochrome romance movies.

The fact that Summer deliberately represents the archetypal MPDG trope, yet subverts it within her own independent narrative is strikingly similar to the progression of Luna Lovegood in the *Harry Potter* series. Outwardly, Luna Lovegood embodies the classically non-conformist, mythical appearance of the MPDG. She has long flaxen hair, large silvery eyes, and chooses unique clothes and accessories, such as her butterbeer cork necklace, and dirigible plum earrings. She chooses not to wear shoes and keeps

her wand behind her ear –both decisions which set her aesthetically aside from the rest of her peers. The MPDG is usually described as uniquely and unexpectedly attractive, and it is true that Luna is described as ‘pretty’ on occasion.

However, it is easily argued that this uniqueness stems from her own personal choice and tastes, rather than contributing to her existence as a melange of perfectly quirky aesthetics to free the spirit of the brooding male. For example, she chooses not to wear shoes out of practicality because her peers steal them, and it is quite plausible that the wand resides behind her ear for similar reasons. The fantastical descriptions of her bright eyes and tumbling hair are arguably invalidated too as claims to MPDG characteristics due to the genre of the book –an element of aesthetic dreaminess, fantasy or oddness is to be expected of characters within a fantasy series. In a context of flaxen Malfoys, flame-haired Weasleys and characters like Nymphadora Tonks who can change her hair with the flick of a wand, Luna Lovegood is not unique in her striking appearance.

In terms of demeanour, once again Luna falls rather close to the classic description of a MPDG. She is described as having an “aura of dottiness” (*LeakyPedia*, n.d.: website): she is often caught gazing into space, remains unaffected by her environment when being gagged and tied up, is distracted by clouds when commentating on Quidditch matches. This dreaminess is even sometimes sexualised, as noted by Heilman and Donaldson: in the *Deathly Hallows* Luna Lovegood is “sucking on her finger in a dreamy fashion and looking Harry up and down” (2009: 154). Furthermore, she is somewhat othered by the society of Hogwarts, being nicknamed ‘Loony Lovegood’ by most of her peers, and is described as being content in her own company. Her brutal honesty, lack of self-consciousness and inclination to drift out of conversations she does not find interesting feel like a list of classic symptoms of the MPDG.

However, this superficial level is where the similarities end. Firstly, Lovegood is originally isolated from her peers, but the majority of the main characters grow rather fond of her throughout the series. And, although Lovegood could be suggested to be somewhat sexualised, her sexuality is not perceived through the eyes of a male

character, nor does she engage in a romantic relationship with any of the lead characters. If anything, Harry's request to attend Slughorn's Christmas Ball with her as friends is indicative enough that the relationship between Luna and the male hero is one of co-dependency, respect and platonic admiration. Furthermore, the reason she is often caught gazing into space and daydreaming is due to her ability to see Thestrals (a gift bestowed upon her after witnessing the death of her mother). She is often occupied by other figments of her imagination –or rather her augmented perception of reality– qualities all of which prove particularly useful throughout the series when she acts bravely and creatively.

Luna Lovegood's failure of the Bechdel Test might prove an empirically measured example of a quality contributing to her MPDG status. It is staggering to observe that throughout seven books, Lovegood does not once engage in a dialogue which might deliver her from a failure of the test. Of course, one cannot automatically categorise Lovegood as a MPDG by virtue of her failure of the Bechdel Test, however the result does speak volumes about female presence in the series. There are over 115 female student characters mentioned in the series, yet Lovegood does not converse with a single one about something other than a man (Harry). We cannot claim that this is evidence for MPDG status because even if she *were* to pass the Bechdel Test, other more indicative factors (her personal goals, the integrity of her personal narrative and backstory) must be observed in order to fairly classify her within the category. Furthermore, the Bechdel Test itself has been met with criticism for its failure to identify the merits of literature and film which feature female characters who are complex, independent and representative, yet happen to fail the test. Recent examples of these are *The Avengers* film (which features superhero women with their own narrative arcs), or *Gravity* (featuring a female astronaut who, despite her isolation from any other female characters, is the lead role of a challenging and complex narrative arc).

Furthermore, the boundaries of the Bechdel test are somewhat ill-defined, due to the fact that it originated as a somewhat flippant remark in a cartoon strip, and was subject to a co-construction of definition through debate in the critical academic

community. In her attempts to automate the test, Lawrence notes her difficulties quantifying exactly what constitutes a valid conversation according to the Bechdel criteria:

There is debate among those who apply the Bechdel-Wallace test as to how vigorously the rule should be applied. If a conversation has multiple topics, as a long exchange might well do, then does a reference to a man at any point within the conversation invalidate the entire exchange? Or can one section of the conversation be regarded as meeting the requirements and therefore validate the exchange even if the other parts do not satisfy the criteria? In the latter case, how do we define the start and end of a conversational exchange? (2011: 14)

Arguably, Luna fits comfortably into the categorisation of a character who follows her independent narrative arc through means other than dialogue with other females. It is unfortunate that Rowling's series lacks the female presence independent of males to elevate it to the status of a Bechdel-friendly narrative, but perhaps it is rescued by its heroines such as Luna, Hermione and Ginny who prove themselves by means other than an empirical (and arguably arbitrary) test.

A final quality of Luna Lovegood which might lead to her classification as a MPDG is the manner in which she tends to guide Harry towards his successes and development, whether it is consolation and empathy for the mourning of his parents, providing holes and access to thestrals when all seemed lost, providing moral and spiritual guidance, and demonstrating an unfaltering belief in him. The fact so much of her energy and attention is contributed to aiding Harry to succeed in his journey of self-discovery as a Wizard (and as an adolescent) is classic of the MPDG trope. However, this could be said for all of the protagonist characters in *Harry Potter*, even Hermione. Perhaps what is important is that the group of characters have united against an evil cause; each demonstrating courage, skill, wisdom and humility in their own right. Luna's existence is not dependent on Harry any more than Ron's, Draco's, or Dumbledore's. She has a backstory of tragedy, a home life with holidays to Sweden, interests, passions and beliefs aside from the cause of Harry's journey. After playing a vital role in leading Dumbledore's Army in the final battle, she goes forth into a career of magizoology.

Although more attention could have been paid to Lovegood's personal traumas of abduction and the loss of her mother, and it would be encouraging to read of her relationships with other female characters (aside from within the context of Harry's cause), Luna is demonstrably a complex, thorough and mindful character. Although outwardly she might be classified within the trope of the 'pixie' girl, a more careful observation of her characterisation which takes into account the plethora of detail and independent motivations is perhaps more helpful in determining whether Luna is more than simply a Manic Pixie Dream Girl.

Rowling has been quoted many times regarding her perspective on Luna Lovegood, and it seems clear that she regards the character as the anti-Hermione. This is supported, perhaps, by the tensions between the characters in the books, and Hermione's difficulty in accepting that Luna forms some of her beliefs without foundational logic, proof or calculation. It is somewhat spiriting to read of two heroines embarking on their journeys against evil in the magical world via entirely different routes. Such variation in approach provides a choice of role-models for younger female readers, aids in the elimination of the restrictive idea that women must conduct themselves in a single ascribed way to be successful, and presents strong and complex women in various forms to readers of all genders. Furthermore, we are exposed to two lead women, neither of which are paired-off romantically to Harry, which demonstrates even further to readers that women may be present in fiction aside from the facilitation and romanticisation of the male hero. The fact that Luna contributes to this attitude in the text surely provides further support for her protection from the category of MPDG.

In conclusion, Luna Lovegood is easily classified, on superficial grounds, as a MPDG. She is an outsider, whimsical, uniquely attractive, fails the Bechdel test, and consistently facilitates the development of Harry Potter as a wizard, and as a teenage boy. However, closer and mindful scrutiny of her motives, narrative arc, personal affectations, beliefs and pursuits provide a wide basis of evidence that Luna Lovegood exists as a complex, interesting and consistent character –mostly independently of Harry Potter and his own journey in the Wizarding world. Furthermore, when called

upon to comment on the character, J.K Rowling defined Luna in relation to Hermione, rather than according to her uses to Harry; meaning that we have evidence to assume Rowling's motive when developing the character was to create an independent, counter-Hermione role model for those who did not identify with Hermione –rather than a Manic Pixie Dream Girl whose essence for being is the guidance of a brooding male wizard.

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## The Role of Azkaban in the Wizarding World: The Misuse and Manipulation of Punishment by the Ministry of Magic (Montserrat Pons)

ABSTRACT: Azkaban is described in the books as a horrible place guarded by Dementors who work in the prison as keepers and torturers. Many innocent people are sent in there such as Sirius or Hagrid, showing that far from being a democratic Government, the Ministry of Magic reinforces the dangerous image of criminals in order to use punishment freely. J.K. Rowling re-examines the politics of imprisonment and the death penalty by using Azkaban and these fantastic monsters which constitute a new way of torture that goes beyond the physical. As happens with technology in real life, magic not only does not solve the problem of injustice in the series but complicates the experience by turning it into a more traumatic episode.

Retributive justice is the criminal legal process based on the punishment of offenders, who receive proportional penance according to the amount of harm that they have occasioned. Prisons and the death penalty are forms of punishment used in this approach to justice, which is not really aimed to rehabilitate the perpetrators of violence. The use of this judicial process is in particular controversial in democratic countries due to the fact that retributive procedures might violate human rights. In addition, it has been proved that crime rates raise and decline in societies despite the harshness of the punishment inflicted to criminals (Tonry, 2004: vii).

David Garland defends in his book *The Culture of Control* that even though retributive crime-policies have been often proved to be unsuccessful, they are still very popular in countries such as the USA or England among other Western countries. This is because retributive justice responds to the need for safety that the middle classes demand. On the other hand, governments seek to reinforce the fear of criminality in order to freely impose judicial procedures, which are in their essence antidemocratic. In the *Harry Potter* series, J.K. Rowling considers the social ideologies of justice and crime, as well as depicting the dangerous link between justice and government. Rowling constructs the Wizarding world's justice as a retributive justice system. She removes from the books restorative justice, which is an approach aimed at repairing the individual needs of victims and offenders by rehabilitation or compensation. Rowling portrays a world where punishments are inflicted in and outside the law. The radical use of retributive justice in *Harry Potter* highlights the weak points of the retributive approach, which many western societies still support nowadays.

As happens in democratic countries, criminal wizards and witches go through a process of trials that determine their guilt. However, the validity of this procedure in the *Harry Potter* series is undermined by the corruption of the Ministry of Magic. For example, Harry uses magic outside school in the third book to defend himself from a

Dementor. As a result, he is asked to face the Wizengamot<sup>7</sup>, who threaten to expel him from Hogwarts. Dumbledore protests that this resolution is disproportionate considering that Harry is only a teenager that tried to protect himself from a dangerous situation. The Headmaster hints that the real purpose of the audience is beyond Harry's supposed crime. In this way, Rowling establishes a first situation of mistrust towards what seems to be a democratic society.

The prison of Azkaban seems to be another element that questions Wizarding democracy. The name of the penitentiary and its location on an island in the middle of the sea (in this case the North Sea) are clear references to the real Californian prison of Alcatraz. The perception of the two of them is also horrid:

The atmosphere of both Alcatraz and Azkaban could be described with many different words but pleasant would certainly not be one of them. Alcatraz was known as a horrible place to be imprisoned, with cruel guards and a general feeling of seclusion, destitution, and loneliness. The description of Azkaban is similar, although certainly greater in degree. (*MNI Newsletter*, 2006: website)

It is symbolically relevant that Rowling connected these two prisons. Readers easily relate what happens in the magic penitentiary with the real Alcatraz. Thus, the horrors that occur in the fictional prison can be easily extrapolated to real world.

Azkaban is not a place of rehabilitation but of punishment and torture. Garland argues that prison works "not as a mechanism of reform or rehabilitation, but as means of incapacitation and punishment that satisfies popular political demands for public safety and harsh retribution" (2001: 14). In the *Harry Potter* series, the horrific magic creatures named Dementors are the prison inmates' guardians and inflictors of pain and the death penalty. These creatures are described as monsters that live off happy memories: "they drain peace, hope, and happiness out of the air around them"

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<sup>7</sup> Wizengamot is the name given to Wizarding Britain's high court of law in the *Harry Potter* series. It represents the judicial branch of the Ministry of Magic. For further information see: <http://harrypotter.wikia.com/wiki/Wizengamot>



(PA: 182). Lupin explains to Harry how prisoners suffer in Azkaban torture worse than death, particularly the Dementor's kiss:

You can exist without your soul, you know, as long as your brain and heart are still working. But you'll have no sense of self anymore, no memory, no... anything. *There's no chance of recovery.* You'll just exist. As an empty shell. And your soul is gone forever... lost. (PA: 182, added emphasis, original ellipses)

The symptoms produced by the Dementor's kiss are similar to post-traumatic stress symptoms that prisoners display after having been tortured for long periods of time (Roth, 2005: 85). To deliberately inflict physical or psychological pain is currently accepted in the USA as means of access to terrorist information. Even though it is a clear violation of human rights, the USA defends the use of torture by saying that it is worth to hurt an individual if it can save hundreds of lives. However, psychiatrists and psychologists believe that the resulting state of mind of a tortured person is so devastating that torture should not be allowed in any case. The use of magic creatures such as Dementors, who provoke similar psychical results, highlights the immorality of these methods, which still generate harsh controversy in today's society.

The imprisonment of Sirius Black also questions the culture of punishment in the Wizarding world. Sirius, condemned for an anti-Muggle terrorist attack he did not commit at the time of Voldemort's first attack, spends twelve years of his life in prison, where he is daily tortured by Dementors. His belief in his own innocence and his commitment to saving Harry from his betrayer Peter Pettigrew lead him to break out from Azkaban, where he is bound to be for life. However, the reader soon realises that Sirius' freedom is marred. Sirius establishes an obsessive relationship with Harry, which reminds him of his old friendship with Harry's father James. In the effort to regain his identity previous to imprisonment, Sirius may be unconsciously making a grave mistake, as Molly Weasley warns him:

'He's not a child!' said Sirius impatiently.  
'He's not an adult either!' said Mrs Weasley, the colour rising in her cheeks. 'He's not James, Sirius!' (...) 'Sometimes, the way you talk about him, it's as though you think you've got your best friend back!' (OPH: 83)

In addition, Sirius cannot live as a free man since he is once more unjustly persecuted by the Department of Magical Law Enforcement after Harry and Hermione help him to escape in book Three. His acts are again directly punished without an opportunity to explain himself and prove the truth. One of the reasons why Sirius is thus persecuted is Minister Cornelius Fudge's commitment to capturing him as a way to restore his own public image:

Those entrusted with judging guilt and innocence are incapable of rethinking their verdict or even giving Black a fair trial before he is sentenced to Azkaban. The decision shows that Fudge and his Dementors are more interested in preserving their reputation and silencing dissent than in actually pursuing justice. (Schultzke, 2012: 115)

In other words, Fudge intends to offer a reliable image of the Government by scapegoating and capturing Sirius. As he tells the Muggle PM: "This whole Black affair has been highly embarrassing. I can't tell you how much I'm looking forward to inform the *Daily Prophet* that we've got him at last..." (PA: 304, original emphasis).

Harry, Dumbledore and Lupin face alone a battle against the injustice committed in Sirius's person. The Ministry of Magic with the help of the Wizarding media sponsors a campaign against Sirius, which shows him as a very scary criminal. Wizarding society soon grows fearful and scared of Sirius Black. Manipulated by the Ministry and, later, by Voldemort's evil Death Eaters, Wizarding society condemns and punishes innocent wizards and witches such as Sirius and Hagrid, and accepts undemocratic penances such as Azkaban and its guardians:

This is a how might a government constrained by limits on power tempt its citizens to remove such limits? Fear of crime and of criminals is one obvious technique, and this creates strong motive for governments that desire additional power to exaggerate the danger of crime and criminals. The political task is to convince citizens that criminality is a greater threat to them than government excess. (Tonry, 2004: 161)

In other words, certain criminal figures, like Sirius, are sensationalized by the Government in order to exert control freely. Without resistance from the Wizarding society, the Ministry of Magic can commit injustices in the name of public safety.

This becomes even more evident with the return of Voldemort. The Prime Minister Cornelius Fudge does not acknowledge Voldemort's resurrection and interprets Dumbledore's warnings and advice as a threat to his power and position. The abuse of power with which the Ministry of Magic mishandles justice is then exerted against Dumbledore and Harry, who are representatives of the engagement against Voldemort's cause. Harry is publicly ashamed and disauthorised, and Dumbledore is dismissed from the Wizengamot, after accusing Fudge:

'In your admirable haste to ensure that the law is upheld, you appear, inadvertently I am sure, to have overlooked a few laws yourself.'  
'Laws can be changed,' said Fudge savagely" (*OPH*: 137).

Later on, the Ministry widens its control to include education at Hogwarts School by replacing Dumbledore with its agent, Dolores Umbridge. Again, the Government's commitment to students' welfare in school is given as justification of its abuse of power. Cornelius Fudge, the public are told, "is now responding to concerns voiced by anxious parents, who feel the school may be moving in a direction they do not approve of" (*OPH*: 275).

Nevertheless, Rowling also highlights that retributive justice can be dangerous when an individual makes a bad use of it. Some of the characters of the *Harry Potter* series interpret justice as a personal matter and decide to kill or hurt other people in vengeance. For example, this kind of justice has severe consequences in Dumbledore's family. Dumbledore's little sister Ariana is harassed by a group of Muggles, who discover her doing magic; Ariana is traumatised and mentally ill for life. She is unable to use magic properly again as a result of this experience, and so her father decides to attack the group of Muggles abusers as a form of vengeance. Consequently, Ariana's father is locked in Azkaban. This event causes in the long run the death of Ariana's mother and subsequently Ariana's own death.

Another example is Sirius' decision to execute Peter Pettigrew. Even though he has suffered because of the Wizarding culture of punishment, he is ready to inflict the same penance on Pettigrew, who betrayed Lily and James to Voldemort and blamed Sirius for their murders. Sirius does not want to listen to Pettigrew's explanations and intends to kill him straight away. He does not give an opportunity for rehabilitation to his old friend since he is fully determined to eliminate him. Lupin supports Sirius' thirst for revenge and gets ready to kill his old friend too:

'Shall we kill him together?'  
'Yes, I think so,' said Lupin grimly" (PA: 273).

Harry, however, stops the execution. In this sense, Harry's sense of justice is not as radical as Sirius' or Lupin's. Harry listens to Sirius' explanation and decides to spare Pettigrew's life, wanting him to be judged. This decision, however, has later terrible consequences, for if Harry had not saved his betrayer, who escapes, Voldemort would have not regained his lost body. Rowling's depiction of retributive justice is, then, only partly negative. There is no evidence, either, that Rowling proposes in the series an alternative form of justice: Voldemort pays for his crimes with his death; his followers, the Death Eaters, either die or are sent to Azkaban, not necessarily after a fair trial.

Nevertheless, the strong belief in retributive justice of the Wizarding society stresses many of the flaws in this system. Sirius' conviction in Azkaban reminds us that some innocent people still suffer punishment that they do not deserve. In addition, the corrupt relationship between the Ministry of Magic and justice shows that cruel punishment might not be as necessary as it is believed. Finally, Rowling does not seem to consider individual revenge as an alternative justice system. As evidenced by the tragedy of Dumbledore's family vengeance can become a very dangerous tool. In conclusion, Rowling does not intend to give a solution to modern justice problems. However, by pointing out the existence of their equivalent in the magical world she reminds us that we overlook too easily the moral conflicts that prisons, torture and the death penalty bring up.

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## Encouraging Difference at Hogwarts: Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff as 'the Other Ones' (Mónica Reina)

ABSTRACT: Hogwarts boarding school in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series offers its students a family-like community, thanks to its House system. Yet, at the same time it condemns them to a perpetual state of competition and rivalry between the four houses, encouraging differences among students and dividing them. However, in this paper I do not aim to criticize the House system but to highlight its asymmetric attitude towards the different houses. While Gryffindor and Slytherin obtain all the attention throughout the series, Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff are often left aside and even underestimated.

J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series follows the British tradition of the school novel by setting most of the plot in a boarding school: Hogwarts School of Wizardry and Witchcraft. In this kind of school, students reside there during each school year along with teachers and members of the staff, and are usually assigned into different groups or houses according to a House system. At Hogwarts, houses compete with one another in several ways such as through grades, sports and good behaviour:

dormitories and common rooms, where students spend much time, are separated into houses. Many aspects of the students' daily life are therefore affected by the segregation of the houses, overall, the House system plays a noteworthy role in Hogwarts students' identities.

The House system at Hogwarts is composed of four houses named after their founders: Gryffindor, Ravenclaw, Hufflepuff and Slytherin. Each values certain traits. Gryffindor is for the brave and daring, Ravenclaw values wit and intelligence, Hufflepuff encourages hard work and fair play and Slytherin values ambition. As a yearly ritual, the new students are welcomed and selected into a house at the Great Hall before the welcoming feast, on the evening before the school term starts. As students have little contact with their actual families during the school year, each house takes the parental role that is missing in a boarding school. In the very first book *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, Professor Minerva McGonagall announces to the new comers that they will be sorted into a house and remarks its importance: "The Sorting is a very important ceremony because, while you are here, your house will be something like your family within Hogwarts". (85)

Normally, boarding school students are assigned randomly into one house or another; however, that is not the case at Hogwarts. 11-year-olds have to sit on a stool in front of everyone as the Sorting Hat is placed upon their heads. This hat can read the minds of each student and then decides, or may let the students decide, into which house they will be sorted. Since the Sorting Hat considers students' abilities, personalities and even preferences, belonging to a house becomes greatly important at personal levels, for the house reflects the student's identity. As Steege observes, "By using the devise of the Sorting Hat, Rowling makes House affiliation even more integral (...) for the hat never places students arbitrarily into one house or another, but picks carefully, based on its own reading of its students' inmost character" (2002: 146). For instance, Harry's profound wish of not being in Slytherin is respected by the Sorting Hat who finally sorts him into Gryffindor. Then each house offers students both a family and an identity, which is different depending on the house you are sorted into. Consequently, students are separated by the Sorting Hat not only physically, into

different house tables and common rooms, but also psychologically. Students will feel closer to the ones who belong to their house than to the ones who belong to a different house, which are often seen as rivals or even enemies (for example, Gryffindor and Slytherin clearly see each other in that way). As Lavoie argues:

As each nervous new student first scampers to his or her house table, the process reminds returning students of where they themselves belong and why. This feast of initiation and homecoming reinforces two types of loyalties –that which each individual owes to the school, and that which is owing to one’s house. The Sorting Hat thus brings the students together and simultaneously sets them apart. (2003: 35)

Despite also serving as motivation to perform good deeds in order to get points and win the House cup, the House system encourages students to compete against each other. This leads to a strong rivalry and even sometimes to verbal and physical violence as often happens in Quidditch matches. The Sorting Hat is conscious of this division, since a sense of loyalty to one’s own house is often stronger than the loyalty to the school; the Hat expresses this in its welcoming song in the fifth year when the return of Voldemort will start to challenge students’ unity. As Fouque observes, “Although the hat is bound to do that for which it was created, it perceives the problems that could arise from its duty, which include lifelong rivalries due to the house system” (2012: 75). In this same book, *Order of the Phoenix*, students from different houses join Dumbledore’s Army in order to express their disagreement with Umbridge and the Ministry’s repressive policies; later on, the return of Voldemort and the Death Eaters become a rallying point for students to leave their differences apart and join together to fight for what is right.

Each house and its members are also affected by prejudice and generalization, and not all are seen equally. In the very first book of the Harry Potter series *Harry Potter and the Philosophers’ Stone*, the four school houses are presented through different characters’ opinions. The first point of view that Harry hears about the Houses comes from Draco Malfoy: “I know I’ll be in Slytherin, all our family have been –imagine being in Hufflepuff, I think I’d leave, wouldn’t you?” (60). The next opinion

comes from Hagrid: “Everyone says Hufflepuff are lot o’ duffers, but –(...) Better Hufflepuff than Slytherin, (...) There’s not a single witch or wizard who went bad who wasn’t in Slytherin. You-Know-Who was one.”(62). Slytherin represents the persons Harry does not want to be like: Voldemort and Malfoy. In contrast, all that Harry first hears about Gryffindor is associated with people he likes: Hagrid and Ron’s family belong to Gryffindor, thus he wants to belong there too. Hermione also shows preference for this house: “I hope I’m in Gryffindor, it sounds by far the best, I hear Dumbledore himself was one, but I suppose Ravenclaw wouldn’t be too bad...” (79)

Gryffindor, then, the main characters’ house, represents the good side and Slytherin, the antagonists’ house, the bad side. This antagonism prevails in the plot, overshadowing and often setting Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw aside; both houses are just occasionally mentioned as background to secondary characters often members of the Quidditch teams. As noted, the first known about Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw is that they are “better” than Slytherin and “not too bad” in comparison to Gryffindor. Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw are not presented alone but, rather, used to prove that Gryffindor is better and Slytherin is worse; this already foretells who are going to take all the attention throughout the series. Hufflepuff house seems to get the worst part since they are considered ‘duffers’, as Hagrid hints. Apparently no one seems to remember what McGonagall tells the first year students “Each house has its own noble history and each has produced outstanding witches and wizards” (*PHS*: 85) If they are all equally gifted and honourable in their own manner, the need to promote these prejudices and generalizations responds merely to the wish to justify the superiority of one’s house, as Lavoie points out: “To know that one’s house is the best is to believe that the others are inferior”(2003: 37).

These prejudices lead to stereotyped roles which students might feel they have to fulfil according to their house’s values. This can cause pressure and anxiety as in Neville’s case: “There’s no need to tell me I’m not brave enough to be in Gryffindor, Malfoy’s already done that” (*PHS*: 160). Not only students participate in promoting these stereotypes. Teachers, some as housemasters, consciously or not also intensify this state through favouritisms; they give and take points as they like and sometimes



without having fair reasons to do so. As Beers and Apple observe, “At Hogwarts, however, students and staff alike seem to have difficulty suppressing the stereotypes about the different Houses, and they have little motivation to do so” (2013: 37).

From the fourth book onwards, as the plot expands internationally with the Quidditch World Cup, it also extends its attention to the Houses of Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff as the Triwizard Tournament approaches. Characters such as Cedric Diggory, captain and seeker in the Hufflepuff Quidditch team and prefect, and Cho Chang, the Ravenclaw seeker, are more present in the plot. At this point of the series, there are reasons to dismantle any prejudice before mentioned in the books about Hufflepuffs and their supposed incompetence. The reason why Hufflepuff is the house presented and considered as the less valued of all the Hogwarts houses might be because most people usually underestimate their main traits when actually these should be more recognized and appreciated in the magical world and everywhere else. J.K Rowling herself confesses her admiration for this house, especially, at the time when students have to choose between leaving or staying and fighting during the Battle of Hogwarts in the seventh book *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*:

In many ways, Hufflepuff is my favourite house. (...)The Hufflepuffs stayed for a different reason, they weren't trying to show off, they weren't being reckless. That is the essence of Hufflepuff House. (...) My daughter Jessica said something very profound to me (...): *I think we should all want to be Hufflepuffs.* (YouTube: 2012, added emphasis)

In fact, the student chosen by the Goblet of Fire to best represent Hogwarts in the Triwizard Tournament is after all a Hufflepuff, Cedric Diggory, who represents his house's values of loyalty, hard work and fair play from his first appearance in the third book, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. When Harry falls from his broomstick because of the Dementors in the Quidditch match Gryffindor versus Hufflepuff, Hufflepuff wins because Cedric gets to catch the snitch just at the same time Harry falls. Cedric, once aware of what happened, asks for a re-match even though his house had already won. In the fourth book, Harry's selection to represent Hogwarts at the Triwizard Tournament takes prominence over Cedric's original choice:

It was plain that the Hufflepuffs felt that Harry had stolen their champion's glory; a feeling exacerbated, perhaps, by the fact that Hufflepuff house very rarely got any glory, and that Cedric was one of the few who had ever given them any, having beaten Gryffindor once at Quidditch. (*GOF*: 321)

Nevertheless, Cedric and Harry are willing to help each other in all the tasks of the tournament and their corresponding houses finally support each other. Diggory gives voice for the first time to Hufflepuff house and crosses the boundaries of the stereotypes. After being murdered by Voldemort, he is not only remembered by the qualities that distinguish a Hufflepuff but also by his bravery when stepping into Voldemort's path.

In the fifth book, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, two new characters, more eccentric than the exemplary and popular Cedric and Cho, appear to become eventually some of the most important in the series despite not belonging to Gryffindor and Slytherin. Nymphadora Tonks, a former Hufflepuff known for her ability to constantly change the colour of her hair, is a metamorphmagus, an Auror and a member of the Order of the Phoenix; she eventually becomes Remus Lupin's wife. The other new character is Luna Lovegood, from Ravenclaw. Though mostly known as 'Loony Lovegood' and described as dotty, she turns out to be very intelligent and brave, and instrumental in Harry's victory.

All these are relevant characters for the course of the narrative and fill with strength and personality the void that Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw houses suffer from in the first books. Also, they are a proof that the House system and the Sorting Hat do not determine fixed traits and values because no one's personality is made of a fixed pattern. As Lavoie observes, "The annual sorting ritual, then, is not deterministic but merely reflective. People are not one-dimensional, nor are the decisions with which they are faced" (2003: 41).

In conclusion, the House system at Hogwarts gives its students a house which is a family-like place to belong to and also an identity, not merely as students but as persons. For this reason it also divides them and creates differences between them

through rivalry and stereotypes as ones believe to be better than others. This situation, along with the fact that Gryffindor and Slytherin are respectively the protagonists and the antagonists' houses, leaves Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw aside. However, as the story advances and the unity of all the houses is encouraged, characters from Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw are more present and turn out to be essential in the plot. In that way, their unbalanced situation in the first books is compensated and hopefully these houses are finally appreciated.

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### Magic is Might: Social Control, Hierarchy, and the Wizarding Economy in *Harry Potter* (Kyle Ritchie)

ABSTRACT: J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series can easily be read as a moral tract against issues of racism and hierarchy. Though the series is most easily read as a liberal plea for tolerance against openly fascist and racist movements such as Voldemort's Death Eaters, it deserves a deeper examination as to the root causes of magical hierarchy and exclusion in the world of *Harry Potter*, which Rowling does not delve into. This essay will argue that the reason for the subordination of magical creatures such as goblins and house-elves by wizards is their function as an integral component of the magical economy. Drawing on Marxist and Foucauldian influences, it will attempt to analyse how the magical system of hierarchy and dominance functions and why nominally 'good' characters in the series attempt to justify it.

Wizarding society, though containing progressive elements such as many of the main characters and Order of the Phoenix members, should be primarily seen as a reactionary society, having been so open to wizard-supremacist elements that there are three fascist coups within decades of each other (those of Grindelwald and Voldemort's two regimes). This reactionary society is built on the idea of wizard and pure-blood supremacy, though it is not ideological in origin, but as I will argue, economical.

Wizarding society can be seen as similar to the antebellum society of the American south. Indeed, despite the stereotype of Southern slavery in the popular image, the vast majority of white Southerners were not slave-owners. Slave-owners were a minority aristocratic class, who used the doctrine of white supremacy that benefited their economic interests to keep the white lower-class farmers and yeomen allied with them against northern "free labour" (Genovese, 1975: 331).

Similarly, there should be little to no agreement between the lower-class Weasley family and the upper-class Malfoys. Indeed, as 'blood traitors', the Weasleys are about as close as a pure-blood family can come to rejecting wizard-supremacist ideology. However, despite the lack of common class interest between the families, the Weasleys do not completely reject wizard-supremacy. Perhaps they recognise the attendant privileges and benefits that accrue to even the poorest wizard family in a society that keeps goblins and house-elves under societal and governmental control (regardless of the fact that only the aristocracy of the Wizarding world, such as the Malfoys and Blacks, can afford a house-elf). Despite the fact that there is an Office for House-Elf Relocation to ensure freed elves are never fully outside of wizard society, Ron Weasley recognises that as a poor family they could never afford one. This brings to mind Russian society in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the Tsar tried to increasingly restrict the ownership of serfs to the nobility (Wirtschaftler, 1998: 564).

That the Malfoys do not need to work, and earn all their income as parasitic aristocrats, does not inspire any sort of movement among the 'working-class' magical families for democratic reform. The Ministry of Magic, as evidenced on multiple

occasions, is in thrall to the upper-class of Wizarding society, yet there is no discussion or rhetoric among the Order of the Phoenix for a democratic system or a more egalitarian distribution of power, nor of liberty and power to the 'lower-order' magical creatures of Wizarding society (that is to say, the house-elves, goblins, centaurs, and merpeople, who are monitored and controlled by the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures in accordance with their importance to the wizard economy). This is because despite the differences in wealth between working-class families like the Weasleys and Diggorys and the aristocracy of the Blacks and Malfoys, the working-class wizards still retain privileges over the other magical creatures in the hierarchy. They may have little, but they have the knowledge and comfort that their liberties and rights will be largely defended and protected by a Government where human supremacy is the key ideology. In Marxist terminology, the Weasleys would not be the oppressed proletariat, but rather the 'labour aristocracy', comfortable in the minute privileges granted them by the exploiting class.

The centaurs and merpeople eke out subsistence lives in marginal spaces on the periphery of the Wizarding world. They have not been banished, hunted down or exiled like the giants, as their mere existence poses less of a challenge to Wizarding hegemony and the disruption of Wizarding society. Though they are resistant to wizard control, they do not occupy vital land or spaces by the standards of wizards, and are not so disruptive of wizard power that they must be hunted or warred against.

Though easily read as an analogy for indigenous peoples, placed on reserves and ignored as irrelevant to the central economy, the centaurs and merpeople can also be seen as the peasants of the Wizarding world, particularly as peasants of the new globalised world, no longer controlled by their feudal lords, but struggling to maintain their rights to a subsistence life in a connected economy such as James C. Scott describes in *Burma* (2005: 397). Though potentially dangerous if incited to riot like peasants, the merpeople and centaurs are considered essentially "irrelevant" to the economy and as such "may be monitored for potential signs of unrest, but they are not the objects of any positive projects of social engineering" (Scott, 2005: 400).

On the other hand, house-elves are tightly regulated and controlled by the Wizarding society, having been integrated as essential to the economy. Exploited for free labour, the house-elves appear to have developed a false consciousness in the Marxist sense or at least show outward obeisance to wizard ideology and pose little threat. However, wizards, while certainly using this ideological submission to their own ends, do not rely on it. They have ensured through the “economic weapons and punitive political power” that there are no opportunities for resistance by house-elves, as Brown describes of the native and coloured population of South Africa in the 1940s (1940: 410). Any house-elves freed by their masters are not truly ‘free’. They are still subject to the power and regulation of the state, who ‘relocate’ them through the Office of House Elf Relocation, ensuring the elvish class remain under the control and surveillance of the state. Elves are kept wandless despite possessing powerful magic, and the majority of wizard characters throughout the books, with the exception of some such as Hermione, either defend the status of house elves as slaves, or do nothing to combat this hierarchy.

Unlike elves, the Wizarding state does not rely on false consciousness or ideology to control the goblins, centaurs and merpeople. For the goblins, integrated into the wizard economy through banking, strict wand legislation and state regulation are in place to ensure compliance. This is necessary for the wizard state, as though they have full economic domination over goblins, they have not achieved any kind of psychological or ideological control. Goblin resistance to the wizard state has been historically overt, manifesting through frequent rebellions against wizard hegemony. During the events of *Harry Potter*, goblin resistance is less overt, though clearly tension has not abated. Goblins show little hesitation at decrying their status in Wizarding society, even to wizards themselves. And the events of the Wizarding War clearly show that the readiness and attitude of the goblin species towards wizards is unchanged, using the chaos and opportunity present during the war to ‘retake’ items they believe to be their own by their values of property, such as the actions of Griphook in regards to the sword of Gryffindor. This is due to the fact that goblins do not share similar values of property as wizards, seeing anything forged by goblin hands as belonging to

them and only rented to the wizards who buy it. This difference in values is a source of great tension between the two communities, as well as wizard control of the goblin population through wand legislation. The mere fact that wizards do not 'allow' goblins wands is evidence of hierarchy at work, they are subsumed under the Department of Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures with the Goblin Liaison Office. Unlike centaurs and merpeople, the goblins like house-elves have been tightly integrated into the wizard economy, having obscure knowledge of and control over Gringotts. This knowledge gives them some amount of power over the wizards who rule them, yet also ensures they are denied the type of 'freedom' or nominal self-rule granted to merpeople and centaurs. Goblins can never be allowed wands or full liberties by wizards, as their stranglehold on the banking system makes them too vital to the economy. And thus, the cycle of rebellion and repression seems inevitable to continue.

Though the series of *Harry Potter* ends happily with *Deathly Hallows*, culminating in a candy-sweet epilogue, there is little evidence that the fundamental injustices of the Wizarding world have been righted. In the end, Voldemort has been vanquished and the reactionary fascist elements that support him defeated, but these elements are not borne of individual prejudice. As this paper has attempted to show, they are created from economic injustice and hierarchy, and without true liberty and equality for the magical creatures of the *Harry Potter's* world, it is likely that He Who Shall Not be Named will not be the last wizard to rally the banners of wizard-supremacist and hierarchal supremacy.

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## **Flying Away from Death: An Analysis of Tom Riddle and his Transformation into Lord Voldemort (*Francesc Albert Ruiz Galera*)**

ABSTRACT: Lord Voldemort has always been shown as someone to be completely terrified of, but he has never been thought of as someone who once had a human side. Pictured both to the reader and the rest of characters as the incarnation of evil throughout the series, however, the past of the Dark Lord remains largely unknown to most people in the Wizarding World. In this paper I offer a detailed analysis of Lord Voldemort, covering his growth from young Tom Riddle into the figure of the Dark Lord, his quest for power and his later portrayal as a villain. Also, the analysis will cover Voldemort's relation with the phenomenon of death, something that is not only constant through his development as He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, but also both in his birth and later re-birth.

There have been very few villains in history that have been foreseen as such from a very young age. In most cases, they are normal children until a breaking event shakes their life to make them follow the wrong path. In other cases, they have been predestined to become servants of evil, no matter what the consequences are. In J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series we find the character of Lord Voldemort, acknowledged to be one of the best examples of an evil tyrant not only by the characters in the series, but by most readers. Voldemort meets many requirements to become the perfect villain, beginning by his own conception of what the feared and famous Dark Lord should be like. As Mike Alsford argues in his essay *Heroes and Villains*:

True villainy has to do with the desire to dominate, to subsume the other within the individual self and that without compunction. The villain would appear to lack empathy, the ability to feel for others, to see themselves as part of a larger whole. The villain uses the world and the people in it from a distance, as pure resource. (2006: 120)

If this is compared to Lord Voldemort's career, we find it works for him almost step by step. Adult Lord Voldemort is known to have spread fear mercilessly through the



whole Wizarding world, and by no means does he think beyond his own good or personal delight.

However, only very few wizards and witches who suffer in agony during his reign try to focus on the wizard to find out the reasons why he acts so cruelly. The main exception to this rule is Albus Dumbledore, his former teacher. Rowling uses him as the voice to narrate Tom Riddle's evolution into Voldemort, as a weapon for Harry to use in his search for his destruction. Dumbledore teaches Harry that "very few people know that Lord Voldemort was once called Tom Riddle" (CS: 242). In fact, as we are told along the series, not much is known about Lord Voldemort. People just know about his lack of mercy and his cruelty, but very few know about his life or his origins. This is to a great extent Voldemort's own doing, since he made sure to erase all the tracks that linked him to his Muggle background. He bestowed on himself a new identity, abandoning his previous one, which was nothing to him but a proof of shame and weakness.

Nevertheless, it is because of this identity that Voldemort himself became what he most desired. As the reader learns from both Dumbledore's and Voldemort's own accounts, Tom Riddle despised and loathed everything that was related to his past (more precisely to his Muggle father), and this hatred is embodied in the character and personality of his creation, Lord Voldemort. In order to understand Voldemort, then, Harry must take a close, accurate look at his origins, and particularly at the circumstances of his birth and his family backstory. This is the reason why Dumbledore spends so many hours teaching him in his office, as, crucially, the odds for Harry to defeat Voldemort can only grow if he learns about his archenemy's past.

First, the circumstances previous to his birth. Her mother, born Merope Gaunt, was one of the last three descendants of the powerful wizard Salazar Slytherin. This was something that immensely honoured them despite their poverty, and that should have placed them in a position of superiority and privilege, as her father Marvolo is proud to tell anyone that crosses his path. Nevertheless, young Merope lives utterly oppressed by this legacy while his father and brother enjoy it. In the only moment she is shown in the series, she appears as someone not only physically ugly, but also

almost completely useless as a witch, unable to fix a simple pot. Her limited magic is something that covers her in shame, as well as her family, and it is possibly the cause for the constant bullying from her father and brother Morfin –the last Slytherin witch cannot, surely, be such a failure. It is unknown whether her condition is inborn, but as Dumbledore explains later to Harry, Merope regains her powers all of a sudden once Morfin and Marvolo disappear from her life. This suggests that their contempt, if not abuse, kept her powers locked in.

Tom Riddle senior, a Muggle, is presented as a much simpler character. He comes from a very rich and important family, as we can deduce from the description of their mansion: “a fine-looking manor, and easily the largest and grandest building for miles around (...)” (*GF*: 7). He has fine physical features; Merope finds him handsome and very attractive. However, his background and family status make of him a totally snobbish man: he despises the house of Gaunt (Marvolo’s own) and automatically all the people living in it simply because of its façade and the gossip people in the village tell about it. This sense of superiority is a feature that Tom inherits, turning it as Voldemort against the Muggle-borns and the half-bloods.

The union between Tom Riddle senior and Merope Gaunt is, as we learn, a product of magical deception, and no real feeling from Voldemort’s father is involved: he is literally bewitched by Merope in a useless attempt to be loved by him. As soon as she naively stops using the potion or spell that chains Riddle to her, thinking he would love her anyway, he abandons her (perhaps ignoring she is pregnant) as mercilessly as his son eventually kills him. Baby Tom Riddle is, hence, fruit of a loveless relationship, based on wrong magic and romantic obsession (on Merope’s part). Even before Tom Riddle is born, he has been already condemned by his mother’s acts not to know nor understand love, which conditions his fatal destiny.

Tom Riddle is born in an orphanage, as his mother dies, thankful that he looks like his father. He stays there, where he soon becomes a dark, tall, handsome boy – also a bully. Only his appearance saves him from being rejected by the rest of the children. As Dumbledore learns from a conversation with Mrs. Cole, the orphanage director, and with the boy himself, little Tom Riddle is not only aware but also, above

all, proud of his powers: he exhibits them in a macabre way, inflicting pain on those he dislikes and who dare face him. He shows his passion for power and domination through fear from a very early age. What is more, far from regretting it, he collects trophies as prizes or reminders of his misdeeds to other children.

Surprisingly, 11-year-old Tom Riddle is not really concerned about his origins, just about his powers. Actually, he speaks about the issue of his parenthood as something rather trivial, and only shows a little interest in the possibility of his father having attended Hogwarts. His focus is always on himself, on his evil acts and his status as an individual. He is proud of his 'difference', and he shows "contempt for anything that ties him to other people" (*HBP*: 328), which in his view means commonness. He is also self-confident enough to reject Dumbledore's offer to accompany him to Diagon Alley, showing his early liking for operating alone.

Once he moves to Hogwarts, young Tom Riddle suddenly changes his attitude: he is never again a bully, nor does he try to subjugate people surrounding him by coercion or fear. On the contrary, he shows no signs of aggression or arrogance, only very good manners that fit his handsome appearance pretty well. This way, he gains everyone's sympathy (except Dumbledore's, who decides from the very beginning to constantly keep an eye on him). He changes very conveniently his methods: placed in an alien environment, where he starts from below, he cannot use fear in his favour anymore but has to adapt by using other resources, such as his charming personality or his flattery. This is what eventually allows him to obtain certain things that for others would be just impossible to obtain. It is also the reason why he soon gathers without much difficulty a gang of friends. These, as Dumbledore explains to Harry, never become actual friends, since "Riddle undoubtedly felt no affection for any of them" (*HBP*: 428); they were rather "a motley collection; a mixture of the weak seeking protection, the ambitious seeking some shared glory, and the thuggish, gravitating towards a leader that could show them more refined forms of cruelty" (*HBP*: 429).

Another trait to be pointed out is what Dumbledore calls Riddle's "thirst for knowledge" (*HBP*: 427), initially just an attitude he adopted to remain unsuspected by

his teachers, later on a genuine trait as he grows eager to learn about the brand new world that has suddenly opened up to him. He wants to make himself comfortable in this world, to make it his own territory, and only knowledge can help him achieve his end. As the years pass, this quest for knowledge, though, becomes more twisted, and leads him even to find out how to split his own soul.

Soon enough young Tom Riddle suffers a radical inner transformation marked mainly by the discovery of his origins, both maternal and paternal. He eventually finds out two contradictory truths: that his father never attended Hogwarts, and that his mother descended from Salazar Slytherin himself. Both stories collide strongly against each other in his head: on the one hand, he descends from Muggles who, as he will discover later, loath the magic they cannot perform at all; on the other hand, his veins contain blood from the greatest defender of Muggle repudiation ever in history, Slytherin. As Tess Stockslager states, Riddle “(...) is uncomfortable with the disunity – the halfness– of his ancestry. This discomfort is normal, but instead of learning to live with the inevitable contradiction in his identity, he tries to get rid of it” (2012: 131).

Effectively, like the adult Lord Voldemort, young Tom Riddle is a man of absolutes. Loving power from a very early age, Riddle feels utterly proud of descending from Slytherin; on the contrary, the fact that his father is a snobbish, magic-loathing Muggle and himself a half-blood is a huge stain for him, a shame. The solution he finds is erasing any trace of that stain: he kills the remaining Riddles, including his own father, and implants a false memory in his uncle Morfin’s mind, blaming him for the crimes. This violence acts as a catharsis for Riddle himself, who never mentions his Muggle father again and who embraces a new, false pure-blood identity (without vindicating his mother at all). He never reveals again (except to Harry in *Goblet of Fire*) his half-blood origins. Furthermore, he marks Muggles, magic Muggle-borns (like Hermione) and half-bloods as the main target of his future massacres.

After his stay at Hogwarts, adult Tom Riddle gets a job in Borgin and Burkes, persuading rich people to sell Dark and rare objects, thanks to his charming personality. In his episode with old, rich Hepzibah Smith, the reader may realise how handsome Riddle has become the perfect predator: he attracts and tricks his victim to

obtain something from them, and kills them afterwards. He then suddenly vanishes to reappear ten years later at Hogwarts asking to teach 'Defence against the Dark Arts', already physically transformed by his Dark Magic deeds into something less human and more evil. As Rowling stated in an interview:

He was killing and doing some pretty evil things. In the chapter "Lord Voldemort's Request", when he comes back to request that teaching post in book six, you get a real sense that he's already gone quite a long way into the dark arts. By that time a lot of people would be choosing not to use his name. During that time his name was never used except by Dumbledore and people who were above the superstition. (in Anelli and Spartz, 2005: website)

As he once did with Hepzibah Smith, Professor Slughorn or many others, he tries to charm Dumbledore with his words, but again, the old Headmaster is solidly protected against his apparently innocent attempts to win him over. This is an important moment in the story of Tom Riddle, since Dumbledore is the first person who openly opposes him. The Headmaster refuses to hire him and Riddle, no longer seen after this interview, completes then his transition onto his new identity, Lord Voldemort (seemingly, French for 'flight from the death'). This connects not only with his training in the Dark Arts, but also with the main purpose of his lonely existence: escaping the claws of death.

Death is, certainly, the epicentre of Voldemort's universe: not only does it become his most ignominious fear and his target in Dark Magic, but it is also what creates Voldemort himself. Dumbledore speculates that Tom Riddle sees his mother Merope Riddle as the woman "who succumbed to the shameful human weakness of death" (*HBP*: 339). There are two things Voldemort hates and despises above all others: shame (brought on by his Muggle father) and human weakness (brought on by his witch mother), both symbolized by death. The word "succumbed" suggests that Voldemort thinks death can be overcome: he is most anxious to gain power in order to rise above it, at any cost. This anxiety for conquering death may derive from the sorrow (or anger) at not having been raised by his own mother. Voldemort sees death as a weakness because internally, perhaps even consciously, he believes Merope made

a choice: instead of fighting for her own child, she saw death as the easiest way to escape from her agony. She chose death instead of little Tom, and he desperately searches for a way to escape death as a rejection of his mother's choice, both blaming her and regretting her departure. As Rowling stated in an interview "everything would have changed if Merope had survived and raised him herself and loved him" (in Wolosky, 2010: 117).

His need to get rid of the tormenting pressure of death, to leave it behind and become its master, added to his shameful paternal origins, is the main cause why Tom Riddle never evolves into a grown-up adult himself, becoming instead his own 'son': the pure-blood Lord Voldemort. Sarah Winters supports this theory:

The text insists that the child cannot grow into an adult unless the child (...) accepts the possibilities of death. (...) Voldemort flies from death (this is not casual, as Voldemort is the French from 'flight from the death'), so Tom Riddle never grows up and is destroyed. (2011: 220)

The transformation from Tom Riddle into Lord Voldemort is not complete, however. Later on we see how the adult Lord Voldemort preserves some features from his childhood and boyhood self, but only uses them in his moments of weakness: he shows a great capacity for persuasion (since he manages to convince Quirrell to become his servant and to lend him his body), and he never loses his collector's spirit (the Horcruxes are always guarded in objects of great power or related to very important figures in Hogwarts, which is the only place where Voldemort has ever felt like home).

All this also takes a toll on his physical appearance: handsome Tom Riddle turns into the monster Voldemort whose face is "chalk white with glaring red eyes and slits for nostrils, like a snake" (*PHS*: 315). This appearance has an obvious intimidating value, but further from this, it expresses his wish to deny the resemblance with his dead father and everything it implies (his Muggle ascendance). The monstrous Voldemort seems to have lost as well Riddle's charisma; he gathers his followers and flunkies by bribing or intimidating them, none is charmed by him. The power he

accumulates over the years turns him into someone conceited and arrogant, someone who underestimates the power he does not acknowledge (such as love, which finally defeats him). In the end, therefore, Lord Voldemort, who fought more than anybody else to literally 'fly from the death', ends up dying proud but defeated, as mercilessly as he acted alive, by the power of love he never had the chance to know.

The reader may wonder whether the monster Voldemort would have existed if Merope Gaunt had been more attractive to his father Tom Riddle, or if she had found the will to stay alive for her own son. Yet, her destiny was marked from a very early age, and so was her son's.

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### **Soul and Humanity: Defying the Validity of Horcruxes (Begoña Sánchez Zaballos)**

ABSTRACT: Death is a central topic in the *Harry Potter* series. It can even be considered an enemy by many of the characters, particularly Voldemort. As in all stories ways to defeat the enemy must be sought. In the *Harry Potter* novels death's nemesis gets the form of the Horcruxes. However, these objects created

to overcome death are self-contradictory, since when using them one is giving up what it is craved for, life. Furthermore, some aspects of the human condition taken for granted throughout the novel, for instance the existence of a soul, challenge as well the value of these magical devices and present a paradox regarding life and death. The aim of this paper is to explain that Voldemort's inability to see the paradox inside these devices and the consequences of using them, along with his incapacity to understand life is what made him fail at his conquest of death.

“There is nothing worse than death!”, snarled Voldemort” (*OPH*: 718). These are Voldemort's words to Dumbledore during the battle at the Ministry of Magic. Note that Rowling decided to have the villain *snarl* like a vicious animal. This particular verb shows to what extent death concerns (and degrades) the villain of this series. In fact, rather than Harry Potter, death is Voldemort's major fear and enemy. The protagonist gets into Voldemort's spotlight because he is the only one who can destroy him and, therefore, threaten his chance of becoming the master of death. This wrong belief, that death is the most terrible thing that can happen to a human being, is Voldemort's main motivation and what makes him seek ways to reach immortality and conquer death. He finds out how to achieve his purpose, though not through the most ethical manner. The key to the path of immortality is locked inside the Horcruxes.

The foundation of the use of the Horcruxes resides in the splitting of one's soul, and in order to do so one must commit a horrible act, murder. “How do you split your soul?”, an inquisitive young Tom Riddle asks Professor Slughorn and he reluctantly explains: “By an act of evil, the supreme act of evil. By committing murder. Killing rips the soul apart” (*HBP*: 465). His answer tells us several things about how life and the human condition are perceived in the magical world of J.K Rowling. When claiming that the soul can be split, two things are being granted. First, that human beings actually have souls and secondly that souls can be separated from the body by committing completely immoral acts. In addition, if in order to reach immortality one has to commit murder and split their soul, Horcruxes contain a huge paradox regarding life and death that Voldemort does not seem to perceive. To put it in another way, to what extent the craving to reach immortality at any cost affects one's life? Or, quoting



the Bible: “For what will profit a man if he gain the whole world and forfeits his soul?” (Mathew 16:26)

Thus, in this paper my aim is to explore the two main contradictions Horcruxes present for life and its appreciation. First, approaching the first premise given, that bodies have souls, from the point of view of dualism; more concretely from the main basic ideas regarding the soul and its role in life which philosophers such as Plato or Socrates developed. Second, considering Horcruxes, taking as a basis for their assessment the function and usefulness of these magical objects regarding death and the soul. If having a soul is a condition for being human, then Horcruxes, which keep fragments of the soul trapped in objects, deny life and humanity. Their use implies, thus, an utter contradiction of what it is actually expected of them.

If in J. K Rowling’s world human beings are formed of a body and a soul, then the dualist thoughts related to this subject can be applied to these two constituents of the human life to see what would really happen to Voldemort for making use of the Horcruxes. The philosophical studies of Plato and Socrates hold that the body and the soul are two individual things. They also perceive death as the separation of body and soul (Bostock, 1999: 404). Therefore, according to this current of thinking, the moment Voldemort splits his soul and separates it from his body he is actually killing himself in absolute contradiction of his own aim of mastering death.

Leaving aside this perspective, which completely invalidates the utility of Horcruxes, Plato and Socrates also defended that the soul is immortal. According to this theory the whole idea of Horcruxes gets questioned again. If part of our human condition implies having a soul, and this soul is going to remain immortal even if our body perishes, why search for immortality? The first mistake of Voldemort is, then, failing to accept his human condition, since being human implies an awareness of a certain death. Here remains the core of his need to use his magical power to overcome his major fear, his rejection of death (Klein, 2012: 33).

Following this dualist line, some thinkers defend that the soul can exist separately from the body; others that its capacity for consciousness depends on its access to a functional brain (McMahan, 2002: 9). Taking any of these two premises into

account the goal of the Horcruxes and its usefulness for Voldemort are clearly affected. Even though parts of his soul are locked in different magical objects, when we first hear about Voldemort we are told he has been reduced to mere vapour. Therefore, these pieces of protected soul only serve him to remain in this unstable state, since he is in need of another person's body in order to be able to perform the more basic activities of a human being. His soul is still existing separated from his body and he remains alive. However, not under a very appealing living condition, given that he can only feed himself with unicorn's blood and that he is constantly dependent on others, like Quirrell and later Pettigrew. The fact that he reaches this awful situation shows to what extent he is so obsessed with overcoming death, that he does not see the paradox he is trapped in. He could have defeated death eventually but would have never lived. On the other hand, according to the second belief, if souls need a body in order to remain alive, the moment Voldemort separates his soul from the body, this piece of soul should be dead and no longer able as a last resource to hang on to life, invalidating Horcruxes.

These are the main and basic ideas attached to entities suppose to contain a soul, ideas J.K. Rowling seems not to take into account in her story. In addition, having a soul not only implies a dualist of the vision of life. The Oxford Dictionary defines life as, "The condition that distinguishes animals and plants from inorganic matter, including the capacity for growth, reproduction, functional activity, and continual change preceding death".<sup>8</sup> In other words, life is the prelude to death and it is part of it to understand that death is just the next step, as Dumbledore wisely tells Harry in *Philosopher's Stone*, for "to the well organized mind, death is but the next great adventure" (Spilsbury, 2006: website). However, Horcruxes suggest to those who want to make use of them that death can be escaped. Voldemort fails to see death as a certain, natural fact and starts a path towards immortality that, at the same time that it seems to bring him closer to his aim, makes him abandon his life and humanity for different reasons.

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<sup>8</sup> See: [http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american\\_english/life](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/life) (Accessed May 2014).

Like death, life is, evidently, another requisite of the human condition. When fracturing the soul life is lost, since somehow Voldemort is destroying himself. Besides, he has to commit murder in order to rip his soul apart and, as Daniel Mitchell states, “murder produces death in the murderer” (2007: website). In other words, every time Voldemort kills someone for the mere purpose of satisfying his desire to survive death, this misdeed is at the same time affecting his own life –and soul.

This harm inflicted in his own person can be perceived in the transformation the villain undergoes and how little by little he sheds his human appearance to adopt a more monstrous look. The description given by Harry while he contemplates with terror Voldemort’s rebirth shows in what state his pursuit of immortality has left him: “The dark outline of a man, tall and skeletally thin, rising slowly from inside the cauldron. (...) Whither than a skull, with wide, livid scarlet eye and a nose that was flat as a snakes with slits for nostrils” (*GF*: 692). It is also known that during a period of his life, as I have noted, he was reduced to mere vapour after failing to kill one-year-old Harry. While in this state, he was not able to feed himself with anything else but unicorn’s blood. He maintained a kind of symbiotic existence with Professor Quirrell, since the absence of a physical body made him dependent on another person. This state of being alive because one remains conscious, but being unable to actually live ordinary life as it is understood because one lacks a body, recalls other characters of the *Harry Potter* series who sought to escape death and eventually found themselves not living at all: the ghosts at Hogwarts. They wanted to hang on to life and eventually found themselves alive but unable to enjoy the pleasures of bodily life. There is also Peter Pettigrew, who in order to run away from death decided to transform himself into a rat; he spends twelve years of his life in this form, not enjoying human life either (Mitchell, 2007: website). These stories show that the conquest of death involves many paradoxes and that death cannot be escaped.

In addition, the capacity to kill of some human beings implies their lack of certain qualities related to the human condition such as sympathy or empathy. Voldemort as a villain lacks these traits and shows others related to his criminal condition such as the use of other people as a pure resource for his aim (Alsford, 2006:

120). So, in his transformation from Tom Riddle into the Dark Lord he forsakes basic human qualities. He also disregards the importance of love in one's life. In the case that he had reached immortality he would have lived a completely hollow and lonesome existence. He has no family and no friends. He has followers, the Death Eaters, but they only stay by his side for fear, not for love (with Bellatrix LeStrange's odd exception). As Shawn Klein very well suggested, "the tragic paradox of Voldemort is that he sacrifices his life for immortality. He gives up his humanity including his capacity to love, for a chance at an empty everlasting existence" (2012: 36).

Finally, the most obvious failure these magic devices conceal is that they can be found. Their owner has to give up many things including the traits that make him human in order to make use of them and yet they can be destroyed. If the fear of death can let someone exceed the moral limitations for their own benefit in such a way, the fact that these mechanisms can be located and destroyed will be an agony that will pursue the owner during his whole existence; which means that it will actually be death that conquers him and not the other way round (Mitchell, 2007: website). As Daniel Mitchell stresses, Horcruxes "(...) are never foolproof. The one who seeks to conquer death by this means can never be free to live. He must be on guard, must seek ever greater power and ultimately has not conquered death at all" (2007: website)

In conclusion, if J.K. Rowling grants the characters of her magical world a soul, then this dual conception of life must accept the approach from a dualist perspective. However, when this interpretation is applied with all its consequences, we see that the way these magical devices work and their usage present many weaknesses; especially regarding the concepts of soul, life and death and how they relate to the use of Horcruxes. The presence of a soul implies as well the presence of a human condition. Therefore, if these magical devices are analyzed from the perspective of the most basic values that constitute life, death and humanity, they present as well a great paradox that completely contradicts their function. A paradox which Voldemort's obsession with immortality prevents him from seeing and to understanding. As Dumbledore replies, in answer to Voldemort's statement that there is nothing worse than death,

“Indeed your failure to understand that there are things much worse than death has always been your greatest weakness” (*OPH*: 718).

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### Growing up with the *Harry Potter* Series: Appropriate for Children? (*Mireia Sánchez Orriols*)

**ABSTRACT:** With the huge success of the *Harry Potter Series*, especially among the younger ones in the families, also a huge concern has been originated. These books have always been found in the children or young adult sections of bookshops and libraries, but does this really mean that they are appropriate for children? In this paper I discuss whether the concern of the families is well grounded and show that the series was created to be read as the reader grows up, from the age of 6 until the age of 12 (approximately); this makes the young reader able to cope with the progressively darker scenarios and situations. I also discuss how beneficial it is for children to read books that deal with these dark topics, besides reviewing and the concern expressed by many Christian families that the series is inadequate because of the magic.

Since the launch of the first book of the series, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, on 30 June 1997, Rowling’s novels have gained a tremendous

popularity and commercial success all around the world. We can see that the series can be fitted into many genres: Gothic, fantasy, *bildungsroman* and adventure. Since the first moment, however, the books were conceived and classified primarily as children's literature, though throughout the years we have seen that the books have been enjoyed by both children and adults. The adventures of the young wizard Harry Potter and his friends at Hogwarts seem to have something really addictive, taking into account the huge success that they have among all ages.

The problem is whether just because these books appear in the children's section of the book stores and libraries this means that they are appropriate for children. Are not they too dark for them? Can the topic of magic be dangerous? Many families around the world have expressed their concern regarding the *Harry Potter* series, some of them doubt that they are adequate for children, part of them because of the darkness of certain moments of the story and others because of the magical elements that do not fit their religious beliefs.

The movies of *The Harry Potter Series* are all rated as PG, this means that parental guidance is suggested, in some of the later movies because of scenes of suspense or short scenes of violence and terror. Regarding the books, we can see that from the fourth one (*Goblet of Fire*) onwards they do become darker: they get a little scarier, there are more deaths, and more eerie locations and creatures appear. Of course, in order to know which books and movies are suitable for the youngest ones of the family we can find many resources on the internet; it is also advisable that parents read the books and consider if they are fine for their children or if they should wait a bit more.

If we check webpages or blogs focused on the relation between age and media such as, for instance, the blog *Common Sense Media*, and we look up *Harry Potter* we can find a good guide for parents on how to administer these books and films to children. According to Caroline Knorr (2011), writing in this blog, the first book and movie are appropriate for 6 to 7-year-old children, with parental supervision (in the first book Harry is 10 to 11 years old). Knorr claims that by the age of 7 or 8 children can even start reading the second book, *Chamber of Secrets*, on their own. The blog *Is*

*this movie suitable?* also gives information regarding the movies which contributors review, pointing out whether they are suitable for children or not through a rating system. The posts also analyze factors such as violence, vocabulary, emotional distress and similar, awarding marks for each of these points to help parents value particular movies as suitable for their own children or not. For instance, regarding *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows – Part 2* it gives these recommendations:

However, we advise some caution due to the fact several established characters do die in this movie. Due to the violence and action we would suggest that *Deathly Hallows – Part 2* is not appropriate for children under 8 years old and ages 8-10 will likely require some supervision. Violence: 3/5, Emotional Distress: 5/5 (...) (Record, 2011: website)

The first generation of readers of *The Harry Potter Series* literally grew up with Harry, as he is 10, as I have noted, in the first book and 17 in the last one. Many started reading the books at ages 6 or 7 (as *Common Sense Media* advises) and then they had to wait sometimes for years for the next instalment: it took ten years for the whole saga to be available (fourteen if we take the films into account). This worked as a regulator for, as I have observed, the books' atmosphere got darker as they progressed. For that reason when book Seven was launched in 2007 the original readers of the series, by then teenagers, were ready for it. *Common Sense Media* claims that from the age of 12 children can read all the books and watch all the movies without any problem. The question is that now when the whole series is published the parents have to act as regulators and know how and when they have to let their children read each book and watch each movie.

For that reason blogs such as *Common Sense Media* can come in handy for families with scant knowledge of the series. We can see that the team behind this blog consider that *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* is more intense and scarier than the first film, therefore it is recommended for 8 to 9 years old; regarding *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* and *Half-Blood Prince* parents are warned that beloved characters die and for that reason it is recommended for 10 to 11 years old. The contributors also suggests that parents might have their children wait until they are 12

to watch all movies safely, as they are all somewhat scary. As we can see, it is obviously important to use your own common sense. However, as it is suggested, the ideal procedure is to supply the movies and the books to children according to their age, imitating the original situation in which child readers had to wait for the books to come out, since growing up with the main character is the ideal situation. It is true that this is not the easiest solution but it is probably the most appropriate (alternatively, parents may wait until their child is ready for all the books and films in the series).

Regarding the death of beloved characters in the series, this is also an issue that concerns many parents. It is true that reading, for instance, about the cruel death of Cedric Diggory in *Goblet of Fire* is possibly too much for a 6-year-old, even for an 8-year-old; for that reason, it is important to wait for the adequate age for each book (around 10 or 11 in this case). Actually, at the right age, death in works of fiction like novels or movies can even help children and adolescents to cope with the death of their loved ones. Kathryn and Marc Markell's volume *The Children Who Lived* (2008) is, precisely, a self-help book that explains how to use the death of fictional characters such as those in Rowling's series to help children and teenagers deal with their own losses in real life.

The frightening storylines and characters, and even the moral issues that are presented in the series, may even be beneficial for young readers. These events are not going to traumatize the children as many parents seem to think. In Courtney B. Strimel's words:

More beneficial than detrimental to children, these criticized areas of Rowling's novels are precisely what enable the series to confront terror issues. Instead of making the series immoral, the magic, frightening storylines, and character ambiguity all operate together to explore a vast array of morality issues. Further, these aforementioned components allow readers to tackle terror-related issues safely. (2004: 36)

The appearance of these scary moments and immoral actions in the series, in the controlled and safe environment of a fictional story in a book, can help child readers to understand issues of concern better. It is obvious that despite being something



positive for children, we still need to take into account the recommendations regarding age and also know very well the personality of the prospective child reader to decide whether s/he is prepared for the book. Sometimes parents want to protect excessively their children from topics like, for instance, death but the problem is that children also need to understand these parts of life and, possibly, books like the *Harry Potter* series help them with that. Precisely, in “Bubble-Wrapped Children and Safe Books for Boys: The Politics of Parenting in *Harry Potter*” Sarah Fiona Winters writes that “The text insists that the child cannot grow into an adult unless the child (and the culture which constructs the subject’s maturation from child to adult) accepts the possibilities of death” (2011: 220). On the other hand, many readers have protested that not all deaths that happen in the series are equally necessary and some of them, particularly Sirius Black’s death, are not really justified. Despite this controversy, with a little bit of care the books need not be too scary nor upsetting for children.

As I have stated before, the *Harry Potter* series is also a *bildungsroman*, an example of the literary genre that focuses on growth (psychological and moral) since the protagonist’s childhood until adulthood. For that reason, it is also ideal that children accompany the protagonist Harry as he grows up, because they are also growing up and they can relate to the changes that the protagonist is undergoing. It is also important to consider that, nowadays, children are far more independent than in the past and it is getting much more difficult for parents to administer what they read or view. For that reason, it is important to be interested and show concern about what they read and view, and to keep open a channel of communication with children in order to be able to help them with advice and guidance. Also, obviously, regarding their own growing up.

On the other hand, there are also many families who worry not so much about the scary content of Rowling’s series but about her use of magic. These are extremely religious families that consider books on magic inappropriate because they can lead children to occultism or demon worship. *The Harry Potter* series has even been considered satanic and families in the USA have asked schools to ban the books.

Conservative Christian websites, like *Christian Answers* (a website that claims to give biblical answers to contemporary questions), have argued that:

With the growing popularity of youth-oriented TV shows on witchcraft —*Sabrina, the Teenage Witch, Charmed, Buffy the Vampire Slayer*— a generation of children is becoming desensitized to the occult. But with Hollywood’s help, *Harry Potter* will likely surpass all these influences, potentially reaping some grave spiritual consequences. (James, 2010: website)

Moreover, Ken James adds: “The problem is, witchcraft is not fantasy; it is a sinful reality in our world” (2010: website); not only Christian parents, he warns, but any parent should be worried about the *Harry Potter* books. Extremely conservative parents agree, warning that the line between good and evil is not clear in the series since both the good and the bad guys practice magic. According to the Bible, this is an abomination as both ‘good magic’ and the Dark Arts come from the same evil source.

Emily Griesinger, discussing this “firestorm of controversy among Christian parents and educators”, explains that “Fear, confusion, and self-righteous anger have characterized that debate, and it is understandable that Christians in academe shy away from the unpleasantness and downright silliness of some of what is going on” (2002: 456). Basically, she considers the fundamentalist religious claims about the books ridiculous (although they are obviously not so for authors like James), suggesting that not all religious people agree with the radical believers. Besides, my own personal experience shows that reading *Harry Potter* has nothing to do with believing in magic; if you attach much importance to not allowing young children to read a book about magic, then they are going to grow interested, even think that it is real. Concerned parents should simply explain to their children that the magic in Rowling’s books is just fantasy. Moreover, the line between good and evil is perfectly delimited in the series: a child can perfectly see how correctly the good guys behave and how wrongly the bad ones act. We can all agree that the values taught in the *Harry Potter* series, such as loyalty, friendship, compassion, and so on, are really good values for a child to embrace.

To conclude, although *the Harry Potter Series* is targeted for children it is important to take into account that as the story progresses it keeps getting darker and for that reason it is essential that the child readers grow up with the books. The optimal solution is that the parents supply the books and movies to their kids as they grow up, imitating the experience of the original readers, starting more or less when they are 6 or 7 years old and finishing when they are about 12.

The scary situations and characters and the immoral actions that appear in the books can help the child readers to understand similar issues in real life; moreover, the deaths of some characters can also help children and teenagers to deal with their own grief in real-life situations. On the other hand, we need to disregard radical religious people's opinion that *Harry Potter* is not appropriate for children because the series deals with magic that can lead child readers to Satanism and occultism. Obviously that is not the case, and other religious parents and educators have stated that in that sense the *Harry Potter* books are harmless for children. Reading about fictional children in a witchcraft school is not going to put real children in contact with the Devil, as some parents seem to think.

Therefore, as long as parents are careful and wait until their children are ready for each of the books and movies, and are involved, the *Harry Potter* series can be really beneficial for children. For that reason we conclude that *Harry Potter* is certainly appropriate for children though taking into account the recommended age for each book and movie.

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**The Questionable Journalistic Integrity of *The Daily Prophet*:  
Corruption and Political Bias in Times of Conflict (Lottie  
Seymour)**

News sources are essential to communities during times of political and social upheaval to share updates that will shape their lives forever. We are instantly aware that *The Daily Prophet* is the most popular daily, evening and Sunday newspaper that keeps the Wizarding world up to date with its influential power and varying writing styles. I wish to focus primarily in this paper on the third, fourth, fifth and seventh books, as I feel they best portray the politically-inclined approach to journalism that the publication adopts, and how the opinions of the Ministry of Magic controls almost every article within its pages. Although at times there are glimmers of hope and rebellion within *The Daily Prophet*, I wish to analyse the paper's varying levels of corruption, and to what extent J.K. Rowling intended for readers to disregard *The Daily Prophet* as a legitimate, reliable news source. I will also contemplate how the series would differ if the publishing house truly held onto their integrity and supported the readers' right for non-predisposed news.

My aim is to prove that the *Daily Prophet* does not represent the needs of the community, they reflect the motives of the Government and facilitate their desires over the general public's. We see the publication as class-dominant and in favour of the political elites' ideologies, including their inclinations during the Second Wizarding

War. We can apply Anup Shah's (2014: website, original emphasis) top three items in the list of common tactics in propaganda:

- Using **selective stories** that come over as wide-covering and objective.
- **Partial facts**, or historical context
- **Reinforcing reasons and motivations** to act due to threats on the security of the individual.

We become aware that *The Daily Prophet* is in fact being used as war propaganda in a way harmful to society. If the press is, as Karl Marx wrote in *On Freedom of the Press*, "the spiritual mirror in which a people can see itself" (1842: 6), *The Daily Prophet* reflects the rather sinister and corrupt behaviour of the Ministry of Magic and, consequentially, the community suffers.

#### Libellous Representations of Sirius Black and other Central, 'Good' Characters

*The Daily Prophet* helps perpetuate the Ministry's views, as we see in the third book, *Prisoner of Azkaban*, when we are presented with depictions of Sirius Black: the most deadly villain, capable of mass genocide and on the run from the wizard prison, Azkaban. *The Daily Prophet* describes how the magical community "lives in fear of a massacre like that of twelve years ago, when Black murdered thirteen people with a single curse" (PA: 31). The portrayal is true to the Government's concerns and creates widespread panic, with posters of Sirius plastering every shop window in popular Wizarding areas. This fear-mongering tactic is typical of governments and the media: by covering breaking news the newspaper guarantees sales through disaster. Although the article does also condemn Minister Cornelius Fudge in a sense, it is mainly sympathetic to the Ministry's struggles and puts extreme emphasis on all the security precautions being put in place.

This smear campaign is not questioned. As the reader learns of Sirius's innocence, we are upset and feel cheated that after his death there is no statement of apology or retraction of their unlaboured defamation of character within the press.

The Wizarding community at large will forever think of Sirius as a maniacal, seriously disturbed serial killer –not the caring godfather the reader learns he is over the series.

Also there are negative articles concerning Arthur Weasley, Hagrid, Dumbledore and Harry himself. When contrasting these with the “glittering generality” (Shah, 2014: website) that the ‘evil’ characters such as Dolores Umbridge and Lucius Malfoy receive, we begin to see the motives of *The Daily Prophet* taking shape. Harry is the only character that receives redemption in the form of reverse in media portrayal after the ‘Undesirable Number One’ campaign adopted in the final instalment, when the Death Eaters take over the Ministry of Magic and consequently, the newspaper.

By exercising its loose ethics within its pages, *The Daily Prophet* loses a small portion of their readership that know people who suffer at the hands of their slanderous claims. Nonetheless, as seen in the reaction of Seamus Finnigan and fellow Hogwarts students, the influence of the publication is unrivalled, although redemption is procured in the final instalment. As Zauner-De-Ville reflects in her paper:

The Ministry of Magic, through *The Daily Prophet*, uses deviantisation in an effort to control the public. To some extent, this method works, as many people allow their perspective to sway with the ideologies of the paper. However, there are those who are not convinced by the discourses published. An alternative newspaper introduces new information, and sows the seeds of resistance to the dominant ideologies of the Ministry of Magic-led *Daily Prophet*. This accords with conceptualisations of audience control by the media (...); there are always some who are resistant to the ideologies of the dominant media. (2010: website)

Similar to modern press, *The Daily Prophet* is highly important in shaping public opinion, particularly as it has no competitor in the Wizarding world. Without a variety of sources, as seen in the majority of countries’ press, there cannot be many other ways to digest Wizarding news. *The Quibbler*, the liberalist ‘kooky’ magazine of the Lovegood family, is the only other news publications mentioned in the series, and it is generally not taken seriously at all, with the exception of Harry’s exclusive interview in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (OPH: 49). Zauner De-Ville further supports this claim by stating that: “The Wizarding public are subject to the ideologies of *The Daily Prophet* simply through an insufficiency of other meaningful information

avenues, and are subject to the ideologies of the Ministry of Magic once the Ministry gained control of *The Daily Prophet*" (2010: website).

#### Questionable Journalist Integrity: Rita Skeeter and Bugging Scandals

"A lie can spread around the world before the truth had got its boots on".

J.K Rowling during the Leveson Inquiry  
(in Holiday and O'Carroll, 2011: website).

The persistence of reporters is notorious throughout the world of media, with real-life stories reflecting the journalist's questionable tactics, most notably the illegal use of bugging devices revealed near the end of *Harry Potter and The Goblet of Fire*. A similar scandal happened recently in the UK press, when highly sensitive and famous figures had their phones and emails hacked in order to procure front-page exclusives. J.K. Rowling was a victim herself and gave evidence during the Leveson Inquiry. She was quoted as saying that the occurrence was a "sad reflection of current affairs" (in Holiday and O'Carroll, 2011: website) and the British media in general. The invasion of her privacy following the *Harry Potter* series' sudden popularity affected her and her children's lives in an extreme way. Radical methods of procuring stories is commonplace and insinuates the cut-throat, insensitivity of the press, as seen in Rowling's creation, Rita Skeeter.

Skeeter describes herself as having a "savage quill [which] has punctured many an inflated reputation" (*OPH*: 226), yet she often attacks those who are innocent and essentially harmless –never the Ministry and their political affiliates. We are introduced to Rita Skeeter in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, where she is portrayed as immediately untrustworthy and unrelenting in her willingness to do anything necessary for a story. We must try to understand her motives to fill a much sought-after role. Her persistence could be considered as forceful or unpleasant, or just the mentality of a strong, career-driven woman in a patriarchal industry. Some may describe her writing style as 'imaginative', as she conjures ideas from thin air, as if

by magic! However, the fact that Skeeter divulges personal details without remorse is amoral and verging on sociopathic.

In *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, we learn of Skeeter's 'reveal-all' book, *The Life and Lies of Albus Dumbledore*, completed a mere four weeks after the Headmaster's death. This new publication continues to depict the writer as unashamedly insensitive and driven by fame and money. By drawing upon unreliable sources and sensationalised retellings of personal tragedy, we can see how remorseless Skeeter truly is, and how the Ministry could use her to their advantage in portraying events and people. The fact that the extensive interview about the book follows the short, humble 'In Memoriam', a heartfelt and fitting obituary by Elphias Doge, only tempts the reader more towards distrusting the publication and Skeeter as a contributor.

It seems the main and possibly only concern for the staff of *The Daily Prophet* is selling the paper (*OPH*: 501). This is expected in modern media, however it should not come at the cost of altering opinions, scaremongering and using tragedy to increase sales. Unfortunately, the modern press works in a similar fashion. We share a morbid fascination with the gruesome and terrifying, the sales of a paper are considerably higher when it is reporting war, death or other upsetting events.

### The Ministry's Influence: Fudge and Scrimgeour

"We live in a dirty and dangerous world. There are some things the general public does not need to know about and shouldn't. I believe democracy flourishes when the government can take legitimate steps to keep its secrets and when the press can decide whether to print what it knows".

Katherine Graham, *Washington Post* owner (in McGowan, 2000: 109).

The affiliations and loyalties of the newspaper truly come to light in the latter half of the series as the Wizarding world is plunged into chaos after the return of Voldemort. Several of the most insightful opinions come from Rita Skeeter (whilst Lovegood is planning Harry's interview for *The Quibbler*). Skeeter scathingly declares that "Fudge is leaning on the *Prophet*" (*OPH*: 211), and he controls all that is published.



The Ministry needs *The Daily Prophet* to directly relay information as they see fit for public consumption. They will not publish Harry's exposé on the rise of the Dark Lord and the identity of several Ministry-involved Death Eaters, as it is "against public mood" (*OPH*: 211). By encouraging the public to see Harry and Dumbledore as untrustworthy, the Ministry can keep readers in the dark and create the illusion that the Ministry are in control. Although Minister Fudge's intentions may be well-meaning, we see the deceitful nature of politics colliding with the media. *The Daily Prophet* almost certainly relies on Ministry approval to continue publishing, therefore to go against Fudge is to plunge the newspaper into realms of uncertainty and possible closure.

In *Harry Potter and Half-Blood Prince* (2005), we meet the new head of the Ministry of Magic, Rufus Scrimgeour. Scrimgeour turns up unexpectedly at the Weasleys on Christmas Day and begins questioning Harry about his allegiance with Dumbledore and his entitlement to being 'The Chosen One'. Scrimgeour acknowledges that it is not important whether Harry is or isn't 'The Chosen One', but that the main concern is popular opinion and giving the illusion of tranquillity and control: "it's all perception, isn't it? It's what people believe that's important" (*HBP*: 436). He is flattering and describes Harry as "a symbol of hope", expecting to use him to the Ministry's advantage. Scrimgeour is depicted as underhanded and scheming, and his polite façade fades as he sees he is fighting a losing battle. Scrimgeour eventually threatens Harry and declares that it is "almost a duty, to stand alongside the Ministry, and give everyone a boost" (*HBP*: 437).

He also offers another sly tactic in the form of bribery, tempting Harry with the offer of meeting with Scrimgeour's replacement at the Head of the Auror Office, Gawain Robards. His knowledge of Harry's interest in this job area angers the boy and settles his opinion on the new Ministry head. As the exchange deteriorates, Scrimgeour becomes desperate. He appeals to Harry's 'heroic' nature, insisting that he gives people hope (*HBP*: 437) and even claiming it is his obligation to be used by the Ministry (*HBP*: 439). By allowing the reader to witness this, Rowling is highlighting the failings within the Wizarding government and how corrupt the Minister is willing to

become in order to trick the public into thinking they are in control. Harry states at the end of the exchange: “You don’t care whether I live or die, but you do care that I help you convince everyone you’re winning the war against Voldemort” (*HBP*: 439). Logically, Harry refuses to help.

The lack of concern for Harry embodies the drive of the Government and their willingness to do anything necessary to maintain the public’s docility. We see several of the same tactics of the Ministry mirrored in those of *The Daily Prophet*. Both the politicians and the journalists are eloquent and willing to be flexible with their morals.

### Conclusion

When we take into consideration *The Daily Prophet*’s biased stance, it is clear that Rowling had a predisposed dislike of the mass media. The defamation of character enhances Harry’s struggle as a hero when we see the world he has come to love turn against him. By using *The Daily Prophet* as war propaganda and an institution of lies, J.K. Rowling has planted the seed of distrust within a generation for whom the media are more powerful than ever. The biased slant is apparent in almost all spreadsheet newspapers in the UK, and it is particularly relevant when we learn of Rowling’s troubles with the press. If Fudge and in turn, *The Daily Prophet* had supported Harry’s claims in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, there would have initially been extreme panic but the public had a right to know about the situation and not be sheltered by the Ministry. By treating the community as weak and not worthy of the truth, the Ministry gave Voldemort the upper-hand and let his Death Eaters continue to infiltrate their system. The main aim of *The Daily Prophet* is to sell itself, as Skeeter states in *Order of the Phoenix* (49) and without following Ministry demands they would essentially be jeopardising their reputation as the leading publication. There are moments when the newspaper opposes the Ministry and their regime, yet as the series progresses we see it wholeheartedly taking the side of the government. Rowling is aware of the corruption within this industry, and I think it is a powerful message that she is conveying to her readers and impressionable millennials: just because something is written in a popular publication it does not make it the absolute truth.

Public opinion will always correlate enormously with that of the highest-earning news outlet and by awakening a generation to its abusive power, Rowling has attempted to falter the impenetrable force of the media.

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### Voldemort's Guide on How Not to Be a Doppelgänger (*Teodora Toma*)

ABSTRACT: The aim of this paper is to analyse the relationship between Harry Potter, the protagonist of the eponymous saga, and his archenemy, Lord Voldemort. Although the two opponents are distinguished by the narrator, it has been suggested by some critics that Voldemort is Harry's dark doppelgänger. This paper will argue that neither is a doppelgänger, although the author explores this condition especially in the fifth volume of the saga, though mainly to depict Harry's complexity as a human being, as a teenager and also to emphasize the importance of personal choice.

Doppelgänger is a German term meaning 'double walker' which refers to someone –usually a ghost or a shadow– who looks like, or is the double of, a living person. This is a recurring motif in literature, where it can take different forms. According to Gry Faurholt, the doppelgänger comprises two parts:

(1) the alter ego or identical double of a protagonist who seems to be either a victim of an identity theft perpetrated by a mimicking supernatural presence or subject to a paranoid hallucination; (2) the split personality or dark half of the protagonist, an unleashed monster that acts as a physical manifestation of a dissociated part of the self. (2009: 1)

The doppelgänger motif has been used by writers throughout history to depict complex characters or deep inner conflicts, as in most of the cases the double is an extension of the self. The doppelgänger as a narrative motif and technique is important as it helps the author to build an elaborate character or to create kaleidoscopic realities. The literature revolving around doppelgängers includes R.L. Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*, Edgar Allan Poe's "William Wilson" or Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Double*, among many others.

Authors such as John Granger have identified the doppelgänger motif in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* saga with no hesitation. In Granger's opinion (based on the prophecy linking them, their similar background and the bond which unites them from their first confrontation), Harry and Voldemort are "a classic doppelgänger pairing" (2008: 46), "one in nature, two in essence" (116). The aim of this paper is to contradict Granger, pointing out the fact that many of the resemblances between Harry and Voldemort are pure coincidences or incidental.

When Harry finds out about his identity as a wizard and about his fate –to fight against Evil– Lord Voldemort is defined as his antagonist. Harry and Voldemort do share many things, such as their background and their Wizarding skills, as well as a strong bond created when Voldemort fails to kill baby Harry. Harry is even led to think that inherently he and Voldemort are the same; that he is of a fallen nature and given the chance, he will give in to the dark forces which all Muggles and wizards hide in their soul. Yet, in his heroic quest Harry proves to himself and the readers that he is not a mere extension of Lord Voldemort. Although even 'the Chosen One' can succumb to the Dark Lord's powerful spells, Harry is not interested in power or immortality. Moreover, he reasserts himself through his choice not to follow the dark path, but to fight against and eventually destroy it. Harry proves that essentially and

empirically he and Voldemort are two different entities who interact, but by no means identify with each other.

In the seven volumes which comprise the saga there are many references to Harry and Voldemort's shared nature which may point to their being the mirror image of the other. One is the 'Lost Prophecy' which warns about the arrival of the one capable of vanquishing the Dark Lord, whom Voldemort interprets and identifies as Harry Potter. Even if Voldemort is, literally, a dark shadow and the two share some traits and moments of angst, Voldemort is not Harry's doppelgänger. Their lives are undoubtedly related by fate and personal choice yet Harry does not become Voldemort's opponent until the latter considers him the enemy mentioned by the prophecy. Their close link is not established until Voldemort decides to attack the Potters and their son Harry. From Harry's point of view, Voldemort is his opposite not because he fears that the Dark Lord will destroy him, but because he represents all that Harry loathes: evil, pain, a relentless desire for power at all costs.

As early as book Two, *Chamber of Secrets*, Harry discovers that he shares more than he would like with the boy Voldemort once was, Tom Riddle. To begin with, Tom Riddle had a similar physical appearance: he was thin and pale, not very tall, quite attractive. He also had Harry's messy dark hair. They both showed good skills when performing certain defence spells, and proved to be good wizards. Coincidentally, Voldemort is the Heir of Slytherin whereas Harry is the Heir of Gryffindor. Tom/Voldemort highlights these similarities when trying to lure Harry, making him believe they are actually relevant: "There are strange likenesses between us, Harry Potter. Even you must have noticed. Both half-bloods, orphans, raised by Muggles. Probably the only two Parselmouths to come to Hogwarts since the great Slytherin himself. We even look something alike" (CS: 233). Harry is captivated by Tom's story. At this stage Tom could be indeed a dark doppelgänger, an evil shadow, merely a voice which summons Harry (and Ginny) through the mysterious diary. Nevertheless, Tom is not a split part of Harry's personality; he is just the old Dark Lord doing his dirty deeds. Unlike him, Harry does not want to achieve power or immortality. Quite on the contrary, he is not interested in harming anyone in the quest for power, as he declares

to Voldemort when he proceeds to save Ginny. This is the first confrontation between him and his opponent, a confrontation of which Harry is aware and conscious. This is an important episode as it marks a primary difference between Harry and Voldemort: their personal choice regarding the pursuit of power. In the words of Mary Pharr, Voldemort will likely never acknowledge “(...) the strength Harry receives from his conscious decision not to become another heir of Slytherin. Like Tolkien’s Sauron and Lucas’s Emperor, Voldemort cannot conceive of strength derived from the refusal to dominate by power” (Pharr, 2004: 64).

Another element cited by Granger as an indicator of the double’s presence in the text is the link between Harry and Voldemort brought on by the *Avada Kedavra* curse which Harry deflects and its implications. As a baby Harry survives his first battle with Voldemort, but he gets a scar which burns and prickles as a warning about Voldemort’s moods. He is also capable of seeing Voldemort’s actions in his dreams, and gains the ability to understand and speak Parseltongue. Rather than being an inherent attribute, this connection seems a mere accident, which Voldemort does not foresee but to which both Harry and Dumbledore give much importance. It becomes eventually important to Voldemort, though. As Professor Snape points out, it is a mutual bond:

‘The important point is that the Dark Lord is now aware that you are gaining access to his thoughts and feelings. He has also deduced that the process is likely to work in reverse; that is to say, he has realised that he might be able to access your thoughts and feelings in return.’ (OPH: 471)

A crucial instance of Voldemort’s attempt to lure Harry by controlling his mind is the dream Harry has about Sirius being tortured by the Dark Lord in the Department of Mysteries at the Ministry of Magic. At this point Harry knows he sees things the Dark Lord allows him to see, but he cannot be sure to what extent he can rely on the visions he has. It is Hermione who suggests that Voldemort is fully aware of their connection and that Harry’s dreams are not only unreal, but also a trick:

'I'm trying to say –Voldemort knows you, Harry! He took Ginny down into the Chamber of Secrets to lure you there, it's the kind of thing he does, he knows you're the –the sort of person who'd go to Sirius's aid! What if he's just trying to get you into the Department of Mysteries?' (OPH: 647)

Harry's ensuing reckless behaviour can be read as a proof of Voldemort's influence on his mind. All of a sudden, Harry starts feeling emotions and impulses he does not recognize as entirely his. For instance, Harry grows increasingly more inclined to arguing with his friends Ron and Hermione; against his will, he even feels pleased at the prospect of pain and chaos, which is the kind of reaction only Voldemort would have. He later even admits having felt the urge to provoke pain and attack Dumbledore.

Harry's tendencies to malice are read by Granger as yet another piece of evidence of the double motif, of Harry's "fallen nature" (2008: 51), also pointing to "the duality in every human being" (46). Rowling, he claims, alludes to the doppelgänger in the latter volumes of the saga, when the characters and the plot become more complex. Yet, although much of Harry's existence revolves around Voldemort, he is from the start a character of his own with his own traits.

In the first two books we see a very young Harry, an innocent child who enjoys playing tricks on his mean cousin Dudley. He feels lonely and longs for friends, which he finds in Ron and Hermione. His actions seem to be motivated by sheer, simple emotions, looking for immediate relief or reward. Examples of Harry's early unruly behaviour include the scene of the family dinner with the insufferable Marjorie Dursley, who ends up floating in the air when she insults Harry, or Harry's vivid dreams of revenge against nasty professor Snape. However, starting with book Three Harry is depicted as a more complex, maturing character. He begins to understand what is really happening in the world around him, and becomes aware of the fact that adults hide the truth from him. By the fifth volume, *Order of the Phoenix*, Harry is a rebellious fifteen-year-old, afflicted by teenage angst and feeling alienated –one of the reasons he bonds with Sirius, another tormented character. This volume reveals Harry's mounting anger at his friends for not informing him about the Order:

But before he knew it, Harry was shouting:  
'SO YOU HAVEN'T BEEN IN THE MEETINGS, BIG DEAL! BUT YOU'VE STILL BEEN  
HERE, HAVEN'T YOU? YOU'VE STILL BEEN TOGETHER! ME, I'VE BEEN STUCK AT  
THE DURSLEYS' FOR A MONTH! AND I'VE HANDLED OR THAN YOU TWO'VE EVER  
MANAGED (...)'(OPH: 63)

These examples highlight the dual nature of human beings, and Harry is, after all, half-blood (Lily was a Muggle-born witch). All humans have a dual nature, a darker side with darker thoughts, and Harry's as a character is but a realistic representation. No need to invoke the doppelgänger motif to justify this.

On a narrative level, these changes in Harry's behaviour mark his evolution both as a person and as a wizard and his entrance in the adult world as a next step in the preparation for the final battle. As Saxena points out, "the prime concern of the narrative is the progress towards the world of the symbolic, the movement from the margins to the centre of the magical society and the adult world" (2012: 42). Harry becomes a teenager, with the typical rebelliousness and a tendency to disobey those who try to advise him, like Dumbledore and Sirius: "Thus, the quest of the adolescent hero (...) is a move towards independent subjectivity"(Saxena, 2012: 41)

Through Harry, J.K. Rowling depicts the monomyth of the hero. Like all heroes, he must go through a journey and overcome obstacles and enemies to assert himself in the quest for the victory of good against evil. An important part of this quest is the hero's identity, the way this identity is revealed and assimilated by him. In many cases and as a test, the hero's identity is questioned or challenged and he must again reassert himself by reasserting this identity, that is, the values he represents. When Voldemort tries to control Harry's mind, Harry is puzzled and starts doubting who he really is and whether he really is that different from his opponent. In a conversation with his godfather, Harry confesses his worries:

'Sirius, I... I think I'm going mad. Back in Dumbledore's office, just before we took the portkey... for a couple of seconds there I thought I was a snake, I *felt* like one – my scar really hurt when I was looking at Dumbledore – Sirius, I wanted to attack him!' (OPH: 425, original emphasis and ellipses)



In his journey, Harry constantly encounters Voldemort's traces. As Vladimir Propp observes, "Subject, selfhood and identity are constructed and deconstructed through interactions between the self and the other" (in Saxena, 2012: 47). Thus Harry builds himself and his values with the aim of never resembling Voldemort in any possible way. As Professor Dumbledore reveals, his choices make him different from Voldemort:

'Listen to me, Harry. You happen to have many qualities Salazar Slytherin prized in his hand-picked students. His own very rare gift, Parseltongue... resourcefulness... determination... a certain disregard for the rules', he added, his moustache quivering again. 'Yet (...) it is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities.' (CS: 245, original ellipsis)

Last but not least, Harry's ability to understand and feel love is what mainly distinguishes him from Voldemort. Harry misses his parents to the point that he sees them surrounding him in the Mirror of Erised. It is precisely his mother's love and sacrifice which saves and protects him, a kind of love Voldemort admits not to understand: "'It was love. You see, when dear, sweet Lily Potter gave her life for her only son, she provided the ultimate protection. I could not touch him. It was old magic. Something I should have foreseen'" (GF: 556).

Harry even falls in love with Cho Chang and later with Ginny Weasley. As any human being capable of feeling love and empathy Harry worries for the two girls when they are in trouble. He is even willing to give up his feelings in order to ease Cho's sorrow after Cedric Diggory's death in *Goblet of Fire* or to give up his life so as to save Ginny in *Chamber of Secrets*. Voldemort cannot conceive love or sacrifice of this type.

In conclusion, although both Harry and Voldemort are led to believe they share the same fallen nature, neither is the mirror image of the other. A strong link created in their first confrontation as well as the prophecy and many coincidences are the only elements which might sustain the theory of a doppelgänger pairing. Essentially, Harry and Voldemort are two different entities who interact, but by no means identify with each other: Harry has no interest in power or immortality, whereas Voldemort is

unable to benefit from the strength derived from love, because he basically cannot understand this feeling. Moreover, Harry reasserts himself through his choice not to follow the same dark path Voldemort took, struggling to eventually defeat his supposed 'double'.

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### **Omnia Vincit Amor: Lily Potter's Love as an Invincible Power** *(Sandra Tubau Suárez)*

ABSTRACT: Lily Potter was a brilliant student, kind and loved by all, but mostly remembered for being the mother who sacrificed her life for her child, Harry. Her importance in the story is significant, not only because of her influence on people around her, or the fact that her sacrifice provided her son with the strength to face Lord Voldemort and the chance to destroy him. This power that comes from Lily's sacrifice is essential to the development of the series and is both a weapon and a spiritual force that makes love become the greatest power in the Wizarding world.

Lily Evans Potter, as well as her husband James Potter, died to protect her infant son from Lord Voldemort. Her death in particular provided Harry with a very special protection against Voldemort's wand, and becomes crucial to the development of the story. That magic shielding is not the only protection she gave Harry, as her influence on other characters made great allies and friends, who see Lily's good nature

in Harry, for the boy. Thus, Lily's presence in the novels becomes the epitome of motherhood (Weaver and McMahon-Coleman, 2012: 151), as her love for her son aids him and guides him constantly in the course of the story. Love becomes both a shield and a weapon, as it is what protects and saves Harry and also what destroys the villain.

The absence of the parents in children's literature is fairly common and in Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, the protagonist, Harry, suffers the loss of both his parents at an early age, both killed by the villain, Lord Voldemort, on his way to kill baby Harry. Once James is murdered, Lily Potter tries to protect her son with her own life, resulting in the sacrifice that starts the story. This removal of the parents can be explained as a resource for the development of the protagonist: "the perfect mother of one's infancy must be left behind in order for the child to achieve independence and selfhood, for she is the most important person in the child's life. Thus, symbolically, the dead or absent mother allows the child to grow" (Grimes, 2002: 95). Even though Lily's and James' absence is what allows Harry to be more independent than other children, their memory is constantly present in the books and acts as a guide for Harry.

Lily, just like James, never really leaves Harry, and returns to him when he needs her most (Grimes: 96) as not even in death does Lily stop protecting and aiding her son. Not only they are often in Harry's mind, but there are a few special occasions in which he actually sees them. The first time that Harry sees his parents is in *Philosopher's Stone*, when Harry accidentally finds the Mirror of Erised and sees his parents (as well as other family members and ancestors) next to him as a representation of his greatest and deepest desire: "The Potters smiled and waved at Harry and he stared hungrily back at them, his hands pressed flat against the glass as though he was hoping to fall right through it and reach them. He had a powerful kind of ache inside him, half joy, half terrible sadness" (CS: 209). After this first encounter with his parents Harry becomes obsessed with the mirror, as the absence of his parents in his childhood left a sad hole which the Dursleys certainly made bigger. Later, in *Prisoner of Azkaban*, Harry hears Lily's voice every time the Dementors are close by. Harry finally sees her as a spirit and is able to talk to her at the end of both *Goblet of Fire* and *Deathly Hallows*. In the former, Lily, together with James and Voldemort's

latest victims, emerges from the connected wands of Harry and Voldemort, guiding Harry on what to do to go back to Hogwarts safely and shielding him from Voldemort as he escapes. In *Deathly Hallows*, the shades of his parents, and of Sirius and Lupin (also dead by then) come out of the Resurrection Stone, with Harry being as mesmerized by his mother's presence as the first time he saw her in the Mirror of Erised:

Lily's smile was widest of all. (...) and her green eyes, so like his, searched his face hungrily, as though she would never be able to look at him enough. 'You've been so brave.' He could not speak. His eyes feasted on her, and he thought he would like to stand and look at her forever, and that would be enough. (DH: 699)

The presence of his loved ones gives the Harry courage to continue and face Voldemort, especially the presence of his mother, to whom he asks to stand close to him. This is proof of Harry's strong belief in the power of love, as he is able to gather the courage he needs from the simple sight of their parents and their friends, his loved ones.

Along the series, Harry's memory of Lily strengthens as he gathers more information about her from other characters, characters who knew her and who were influenced by her as she was well liked by people around her. Those characters aid Harry in several points of the story, so it can be said that Lily's great influence on others is what leads them to help Harry. The clearest example of this is Severus Snape. Snape's love for Lily makes him turn against Voldemort in an attempt to save her life. When Voldemort kills her anyway, Snape turns his trust and loyalty towards Dumbledore. He, in his turn, gives Snape a second chance by making him aid and protect Harry. Snape's love for Lily even overpowers his hatred for James, reinforcing the idea that love is the greatest power.

Other characters influenced by Lily in that way are Remus Lupin and Horace Slughorn. Lupin was one of the Marauders, thus one of James Potter's closest friends, and eventually Lily's friend as well, as she was one of the few to be kind to him despite of his werewolf condition. Lupin appears in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*

as a new professor, at a time when he becomes close to Harry as a mentor, teaching him how to protect himself from Dementors. Lily Evans was one of Slughorn's favourite students, as he tells Harry: "You shouldn't have favourites as a teacher, of course, but she was one of mine. (...) Lily Evans. One of the brightest I ever taught. Vivacious, you know. Charming girl!" (HBP: 69-70). For a whole year Harry receives somehow Slughorn's attention, thinking he has his mother's talents for Potions; he is even invited into the Slug Club for his favourite students. Harry also takes advantage of Slughorn's fondness for Lily and his grief over her death in order to retrieve the memory of Tom Riddle that Dumbledore requires. So, in a way, the magic protection is not the only help Harry gets from Lily, as her memory in these characters' minds leads them to guide Harry and help him in some way or another, not only because of how much they loved her but also because they see something of her in Harry, particularly in his eyes, so much like hers.

As explained, Lily's presence and influence on Harry's life is very important in the course of the story, but the key element of the story is how Lily's sacrifice protected Harry from Voldemort's killing curse, backfiring and putting an end to his reign of fear. This sacrifice provided Harry with the greatest protection in the Wizarding world as well as the ability to fight and eventually destroy Voldemort. As Dumbledore explains when Harry survives Voldemort's second direct attack:

'Your mother died to save you. If there is one thing Voldemort cannot understand, it is love. He didn't realize that love as powerful as your mother's for you leaves its own mark. Not a scar, no visible sign... to have been loved so deeply, even though the person who loved us is gone, will give us some protection forever. It is in your very skin. Quirrell, full of hatred, greed and ambition, sharing his soul with Voldemort, could not touch you for this reason. It was agony to touch a person marked by something so good.' (CS: 299)

It is not until the end of the first book that we learn how Harry's parents really died –first from Voldemort himself and later from Dumbledore–, sacrificing themselves to save Harry. Lily's sacrifice gave Harry a protection from the moment she died, making Voldemort lose his body when he attempted to kill Harry. From the moment

she died, Voldemort, being the one who killed her, could not touch the boy. In Voldemort's own words:

'His mother died in the attempt to save him –and unwittingly provided him with a protection I admit I had not foreseen... I could not touch the boy. (...) His mother left upon him the traces of her sacrifice... This is old magic, I should have remembered it, I was foolish to overlook it...' (GF: 652)

In this fragment, Voldemort states that the protection Lily gave Harry was “old magic”, old as it is the human emotion of love. Lily sacrificed herself willingly, out of the love she felt for her son, the purest love. Voldemort, underestimating the power of love which he does not understand, ignored the threat, causing his downfall. As Dumbledore explains in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*:

'You would be protected by an ancient magic of which he knows, which he despises, and which he has always, therefore, underestimated –to his cost. I am speaking, of course, of the fact that your mother died to save you. She gave you a lingering protection he never expected, a protection that flows in your very veins to this day.' (OPH: 835)

That is, Voldemort, having been conceived under the effects of a love potion, is unable to love and therefore unable to understand love. His ignorance of love makes his killing curse fail, losing his body as consequence and making Lily's sacrifice to give Harry a protection he will not be able to surpass on his own.

Not only that, Lily's sacrifice also provides Harry with a safe haven, a place where he will not be harmed by Voldemort: the Dursleys' home. Through the veins of Lily's sister, Petunia Dursley, runs the same blood that Harry has, so when she accepts Harry into her home, she seals their blood bond and provides Harry with a place where no one could hurt him –except, of course, the Dursleys' negligent care of their nephew. Thus, Lily provided her son with the greatest protection against his enemy, a protection based on a human emotion, love. At the end of the story, Harry, having inherited his mother's good nature and her great ability to love, willingly offers his life to protect and save his loved ones, unconsciously imitating his mother's sacrifice.

Grossman exposed in his well-known article the absence of religion or a divine figure in Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. The force that could replace the figure of God is Love. As Grossman explains, "In the new millennium magic comes not from God, or nature, or anything grander or more mystical than a mere human emotion" (2007: website). This, however, is not 'mere' at all, as Harry learns:

'There is a room in the Department of Mysteries,' interrupted Dumbledore, 'that is kept locked at all times. It contains a force that is at once more wonderful and more terrible than death, than human intelligence, than the forces of nature. It is also, perhaps, the most mysterious of the many subjects for study that reside there. It is the power held within that room that you possess in such quantities and which Voldemort has not at all.' (OPH: 743)

This passage reflects the magnitude of the power of love, represented as a powerful and mysterious force, and shows the quality of that force. Guanio-Uluru explains this description of love "as something more than human intelligence emphasizing the spiritual dimension of love" (2012: 89). This representations of love in the series, "more wonderful and more terrible than death", gives love an omnipotent power.

In the end, not only Lily is the representation of love as the greatest power in the Wizarding world, but Harry as well. By imitating his mother's sacrifice, Harry willingly offers his life to protect those he loves: "Harry as a character demonstrates a profound belief in the power of love. He does so first through his own personal bonds and relationships, and ultimately through the sacrificial act he commits when he surrenders to Voldemort" (Guanio-Uluru, 2012: 90). Lily's sacrifice is what makes Harry believe in the power of love and to take love not only as his shield but as his weapon as well, opposite Voldemort, who is unable to understand such a mysterious and powerful force.

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### Narcissa Malfoy, from Evil to Good: The Power of Motherhood in *Harry Potter* (María Alicia Vázquez Sánchez)

ABSTRACT: Narcissa Malfoy, married to one of Lord Voldemort's closest Death Eaters, Lucius, and a mudblood-hater herself, sees her identity as an evil character challenged by the end of the series. Her predisposition to sacrifice herself in order to save her son Draco seems to be a key factor for her redemption. In this paper I argue how, according to the *Harry Potter* series, the love of a mother is seen as the most powerful manifestation of love itself, and how this is the one that suits a woman best. I also question the author's self-identification as a feminist precisely because of her emphasis on motherhood.

Motherhood is one of the main motifs in Joanne Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. The whole story revolves around the sacrificial gesture of a mother in order to save her child, and this event is regarded as one of the most powerful forms of magic. In fact, most adult female characters in the series are mothers or in charge of children. The way they treat the little boys or girls they look after is a direct reflection of their inclination towards good or evil.

#### Narcissa Malfoy: A Witch, Witch

Narcissa Malfoy is a secondary character we do not meet until *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, though we already have some proof of her existence, since "Malfoy's eagle owl was always bringing him packages of sweets from home" (PHS: 114) which we can guess were prepared by Dobby, the house-elf at Narcissa's orders.



Draco Malfoy has someone who looks after and loves him, and judging by Draco's character, we begin to build our opinion on Narcissa's character before knowing her – for what kind of mother would love a son like him? Weaver and McMahon-Coleman state that “the measure of mothering (and parenting) success that Rowling uses throughout the series is the children”, which are “a mirror of [their] parents” (2012: 154). By looking at Draco's behaviour and ideals we understand that his mother must be a pure-blood, high-class snob, positioned on the Dark Side; if we have any doubt, in the second book we meet her husband Lucius Malfoy, whose behaviour confirms our theories about Narcissa.

According to Weaver and McMahon-Coleman's classification of mothers in the *Harry Potter* series, Narcissa Malfoy might be a Witch, defined as the mother that “(...) neglects and rejects children, whether physically or morally, ignoring or even attacking their welfare in ways that widely diverge from the motherhood mandate of moral guidance and nurturing” (2012: 153). The main Witch in the series is Petunia Dursley, who neglects both Harry, by refusing to take proper care of him, but also her own son Dudley, who is spoiled and never disciplined. This is how Narcissa would raise Draco: allowing him to do as he pleases and giving him anything he wants. The result of this mothering style are children who “lack a moral compass” (Weaver and McMahon-Coleman, 2012: 154), and who grow up into spiteful characters such as Severus Snape or even Tom Riddle, also known as Lord Voldemort.

As we keep on reading, we find out about Narcissa herself. In *Goblet of Fire* she attends the Quidditch World Cup with her husband and son, and we finally see that Draco's mother “was blonde too; tall and slim, she would have been nice-looking if she hadn't been wearing a look that suggested there was a nasty smell under her nose” (GF: 114). Her physical appearance has a certain dubious quality for, according to fairytale standards, beauty is associated with goodness. The phrase “she would have been nice-looking if...” suggests that Narcissa could have been good had she not belonged to the snobbish, anti-Muggle, blood-purity-fanatic aristocracy of the Wizarding world.

By the end of *Goblet of Fire*, Lucius Malfoy is openly declared a fervent Death Eater. Narcissa is, as well, firmly proclaimed a member of the Dark Side, and becomes officially an 'Evil Character'. Throughout *Order of the Phoenix* we find out more about Sirius Black's ancient family of pure-blood-loving and mudblood-hating snobs, to which Narcissa, *née* Black and Sirius' cousin, actually belongs. She represents, thus, the twisted ideology of not one but two aristocratic families: the Malfoys and the Blacks. Once Narcissa's own sister Bellatrix kills Sirius at the end of *Phoenix*, Narcissa becomes a truly despised character like her sister, husband, and son. Yet, as Mikulan reminds us "characters in Rowling's novels are not what they seem at first; some start as negative characters, only to suddenly become positive and vice versa" (2009: 293).

#### Motherhood: The Ultimate Redemption

*Half-blood Prince* is a turning point for some of the secondary characters in the *Harry Potter* series. Severus Snape, supposedly evil, turns out to be on the Bright Side, yet he kills Dumbledore, perplexing readers again. Something similar happens with Narcissa Malfoy, but maybe not in such a drastic manner.

The second chapter in the book shows a very anxious mother, fearing for her child's life. Her image is that of absolute despair, and her attitude has begun to change. She is contradicting the Dark Lord's orders, and when she is advised not to do so, her answer is "There is nothing I wouldn't do anymore!" (*HBP*: 15). The rest of the chapter reveals that Lord Voldemort has ordered Draco to perform a very dangerous deed, murdering Dumbledore, and she asks for Severus Snape's help.

Narcissa keeps suffering for her son's life during the rest of this volume and the following, last book. After her son is relieved from his mission to kill Dumbledore and her husband released from Azkaban, the Malfoy manor becomes the Death Eaters' headquarters. The Malfoys appear to be very nervous and uncomfortable at having their venerated Dark Lord staying in their home. The family sees their privacy and safety invaded and endangered, and their fear grows much stronger than their devotion to Voldemort: "Malfoy glanced sideways at his wife. She was staring straight

ahead, quite as pale as he was, her long blonde hair hanging down her back, but beneath the table her slim fingers closed briefly on his wrist" (*HBP*: 9)

By the last chapters of the book, Narcissa has lost contact with Draco and knows nothing of her son. She is aware that he is at Hogwarts on Voldemort's orders, but she ignores whether the boy has survived the fierce battle that has taken place in the castle. When Harry Potter appears and falls a victim to Voldemort's *Avada Kedavra* curse, Narcissa is asked to check whether the boy, her Lord's nemesis, is dead. When she realizes that Harry lives, she no longer cares for Voldemort, but only to get information about Draco's situation:

'Is Draco alive? Is he in the castle?'

The whisper was barely audible; her lips were an inch from his ear, her head bent so low that her long hair shielded his face from the onlookers.

'Yes', he breathed back.

He felt the hand on his chest contract; her nails pierced him. Then it was withdrawn. She had sat up.

'He is dead!', Narcissa Malfoy called to the watchers. (*DH*: 726)

This is the precise moment in which Narcissa turns from Witch to Lioness, in Weaver and McMahon-Coleman's (2012) vocabulary for the mothers in the series: from a hated, evil character to a hero. The power of motherly love redeems all her other acts and words, and suddenly she becomes a character to admire. The very author of the books, J.K. Rowling, has compared Narcissa to Lily, the main representative of the Lioness and the core of the whole story:

Ultimately there's an echo of what Lily did (...) right at the start of the story, at the very end of the story. At the start of the story Lily dies to keep her son alive. At the end of the story Harry lies, pretending to be dead, on the ground, and it's a mother who saves him again because she's trying to get to her own son. So that was (...) closing a circle. He was saved there by Lily and saved there by Narcissa. (*YouTube*, 2013: website)

Throughout the whole series a message keeps appearing: love is the most powerful kind of magic, love can win against all kinds of evil, and a mother's love is the

most complete and powerful form of love. This is why the moment Narcissa decides to put her own life in danger in order to save her son, she becomes a hero.

#### Bellatrix Lestrange: Narcissa's 'What if...?'

The importance of motherhood and its redemptive power is clear if we compare Narcissa with her own sister Bellatrix. As we have seen, Narcissa has all the characteristics to be an evil character, and she actually is one at least until the last volume. But she is not evil at all ever if compared to Bellatrix.

Bellatrix is an actual Death Eater, and she is as close to Lord Voldemort as she has been able to manage. She is one of the most evil characters in the books: she spends many years in Azkaban for torturing Frank and Alice Longbottom until driven to insanity, leaving them unable to take care for their son Neville. She is also responsible for the deaths of Sirius Black and of Nymphadora Tonks, her own cousin and niece, whom she hates for being blood traitors.

Heartless, sadistic Bellatrix shares much with her sister. Both come, of course, from the same family, whose ideals they follow; neither is on speaking terms with their sister Andromeda, Tonks' mother, because she married a Muggle-born wizard; and neither hesitates to harm or destroy whoever that gets in their way. Bellatrix, though, seems to be lacking what most matters in the *Harry Potter* series: love. Bellatrix has no friends, she does not love her husband, she has no children. She seems to love her sister, but does she? Or would she sell her to Lord Voldemort if he asked her?

As it seems, Lord Voldemort is the only person Bellatrix truly loves. According to the author herself, Bellatrix's "ideal of love is very perverse and twisted (...). Voldemort is clearly her idol, her obsession" (*YouTube*, 2013: website), so even her love turns out to be wrong. The fact that she is childless and she cannot feel/have/give this powerful motherly love gives her a 'freakish' connotation as a woman, which adds to her insanity and sadism. As Mikulan states in reference to the two sisters:

Both characters are intentionally represented as caricatures, their behaviour is impulsive, and they embody two opposing currents of the female psyche as seen from the male perspective –the caring mother willing to do anything for her

children (but also willing to inflict pain and destruction in order to protect their offspring); and the evil and unscrupulous follower of evil. (2009: 293)

Thus, the biggest difference between the sisters is that one of them is willing to kill and die for her son, and the other one is willing to kill and die for her evil beloved leader. Again, motherhood has the power to tell who is good and who is evil.

### Rowling's Feminism

The importance motherhood has in the *Harry Potter* series, to the point of being enough reason to turn an evil character into a good one, contrasts with the author's declarations that she is a feminist. This does not mean that a mother cannot be a feminist or vice versa, but that the message Rowling is sending is quite contrary to feminism.

Feminists have been fighting to end with the idea that all women have to be mothers. Neyer and Bernardi remind us that Simone de Beauvoir "considered motherhood as the main feature which caused women to be seen as 'others' and to tie them to immanence. She felt that women are made to see motherhood as the essence of their life and the fulfilment of their destiny" (2011: 165). They also state that the sexual difference created by patriarchy made men become equal "as members of society", but "women were relegated to 'nature', with childbearing and motherhood forming the core of women's nature" (165). Motherhood has been one of the main aspects causing inequality between the sexes: since women are the ones to carry and give birth to children, men regarded that it is their nature to look after them.

However, this opinion on motherhood is quite controversial, and many feminists have protested against it. Postmodern and poststructuralist feminist theorists would state later that:

Being a mother is rather (...) part of a woman's identity, equal to many other identities which a woman might acquire. It neither implies being the 'other', the 'second sex' (...) nor does it imply subordination per se. It rather opens the possibility for agency, for a great diversity of (self-defined) 'motherhoods' and for a positive identification with maternity. (Neyer and Bernardi, 2011: 167)

The key words here are “might” and “possibility”. Motherhood is a characteristic, or quality, that a woman might acquire if she decides to become a mother, and the fact that she is or not a mother will not make her worse or better as a woman.

JK Rowling’s treatment of motherhood is not sexist *per se*, but sends the message that to be a good, complete woman you have to be a mother: a mother’s love is the most powerful force, so if you are not a mother, you will be missing something; if you are not a good woman but you sacrifice yourself for your child’s benefit you are not that bad (as Narcissa proves). In female characters, the measure of goodness is in the way they treat their children, with Molly Weasley at the top, as if it was their natural responsibility. Fathers, by the way, count far less, if at all (James also dies for Harry).

In *Harry Potter* most female characters are stay-at-home-mothers or (unmarried) teachers, all in charge of children –even Dolores Umbridge. At the end of the book, in the epilogue, the main female characters (Hermione, Ginny) are happy because they have their own children, and are thus complete as women. The importance given to motherhood is too big to think of it as a choice: it is a prerequisite both for womanhood and for goodness.

### Conclusion

Narcissa Malfoy is just the kind of secondary evil character whose actions and attitude you are supposed to hate. This perception changes, though, when she shows that she is not only a Death Eater’s wife: she is also a mother willing to sacrifice herself for her son’s sake. Suddenly, she becomes a hero. Comparing her to her downright evil sister Bellatrix we can see that the main difference between them is that Narcissa is a mother while Bellatrix is childless. The importance motherhood has in the *Harry Potter* series contrasts, thus, with Rowling’s defining herself as a feminist. While feminism has tried to fight the direct association by which it is understood that a woman’s nature is to be a mother, she seems to agree with this idea, and establishes straight links between goodness (and happiness) and motherhood. Evil Narcissa’s transformation into heroic mother validates this position.

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In development: *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* (trilogy)



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## CREDITS

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