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Witches, Bitches, and the Patriarchy: Gender and Power in the Harry Potter Series

Delaney Bullinger
Linfield College

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Witches, Bitches, and the Patriarchy:
Gender and Power in the *Harry Potter*
Series

By Delaney Bullinger

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the Bachelor of Arts in English

Linfield College

August 24, 2015

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Bullinger, Debney

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Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| CHAPTER ONE—THE NUCLEAR FAMILY | 6 |
| CHAPTER TWO—THE MINISTRY OF MAGIC..... | 20 |
| CHAPTER THREE—HOGWARTS SCHOOL OF WITCHCRAFT AND WIZARDRY | 27 |
| CHAPTER FOUR—THE DEATH EATERS AND THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX..... | 41 |
| CHAPTER FIVE—HERMIONE | 56 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 69 |

Introduction

At the start of the Harry Potter series, J.K. Rowling employs traditional gendered thinking in her construction of character roles, but as the series continues, the gender roles are complicated. In the three main communities of J.K. Rowling's world – the Ministry, Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, and the societies of the Death Eaters and the Order of the Phoenix – a struggle between the constructive, equalizing force of white magic and the violent, dominating force of black magic influences the gender roles operative in each. As a vehicle for the exercise of magic, the nuclear family also influences wizarding society in similarly bipolar ways, perpetuating patriarchal ideas while simultaneously encouraging the power of motherhood and maternal love. One sees the patriarchal impact of the family paradigm on the novel's central female character Hermione Granger, who defies gender norms in her adeptness in white magic and her heroic partnership with Harry himself, but who ultimately dwindles into a stereotypically feminine role as Ron's wife in the series epilogue.

My analysis will focus on Rowling's fictions rather than her adaptations and I use primarily gender and feminist critical lenses in a close textual reading. As a feminist critic, I will examine how J.K. Rowling's wizarding world in the *Harry Potter* series handles the binary of black and white magic and the gender inclusiveness of both forms of magic in their relative spheres. I focus on the novels themselves rather than on J.K. Rowling's intentionality and will not rely on much of the post-publication digital interplay Rowling and others have conducted to prevent any digression on my part into how fanbase bias may have influenced plot choices and character development. For that reason, I limit my use of the informational site Pottermore.com to relevant historical

details and post-series character additions. My focus remains on the published volumes themselves and what they demonstrate regarding the gender dynamics that unfold across the series.

The struggle between white and black magic in *Harry Potter* is a Manichean one in its intricacies of gender and power. Interestingly, descriptions of that cosmology often engage highly gendered language that Rowling's fictions undercut. Scholar John Coyle states:

[Mani's]¹ cosmogony describes three moments or phases—the original separated existence of good (synonymous with spirit and light) from evil (identified with matter and darkness); their current intermingled state; and the ultimate return of good and evil to their separate realms. In the first moment, two co-eternal principles exist in total separation from each other. One, all good, is God, the Father of Greatness, Light itself dwelling in a realm of light made up of this principle's substance. The other principle, Darkness, is intrinsically evil and disagreeable. Often called simply "Matter," Darkness inhabits the realm of its own dark substance. . . . On three sides both realms stretch to infinity, but on their fourth side they touch each other. From eternity the two principles have been completely apart; but the second (or middle) moment begins when the evil principle rises to his border with light, which it sees, desires and attacks. In the ensuing war, particles of the divine light-substance are imprisoned in the darkness (Coyle xiv).

Translated into the world of *Harry Potter*, this concept underlies the struggle between white and black magic, between Dumbledore and his protégé Harry Potter vs. Voldemort,

¹ Mani was a third century Persian prophet and the creator of Manichaeism.

between love and hate. The “ensuing war” also emerges in each individual within *Harry Potter*: as Sirius Black says in the film version of *Order of the Phoenix*, “We’ve all got light and dark inside us. What really matters is the part we choose to act on. That’s who we really are.”²

The Manichean struggles that take place throughout *Harry Potter* depict a complicated presentation of gender roles. Because white magic in the series furthers healing, helping, and human equality, the spheres where white magic reigns challenge traditional gender roles. Even the nuclear family, while problematic in terms of its gender hierarchies, offers evidence of the influence white magic has had. Though Lily Evans dies before the events in the series begin, she still affects Harry’s development and survival across the novels. Her undying love saves him from Voldemort several times, and she is continuously referenced as an extremely powerful woman and witch³ because of the force of her maternal love. Conversely, dark magic is so tied to hierarchical power structures and violence that it becomes tied to the patriarchy.

My first section discusses the nature and influence of the nuclear family—typically the seat of male authority and patriarchy—across the *Harry Potter* series. I compare the gender dynamics within the Dursleys, the Malfoys, and the Weasleys and analyze how blood status influences those gender dynamics. I also discuss the effect the patriarchy has on the nuclear family, and explore the role of white vs. black magic as it allows some families to break past the power structures of patriarchy. Broken families produce some of the most violent, hierarchical characters in the series—Severus Snape

² *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. Dir. David Yates. Perf. Daniel Radcliffe, Emma Watson, Rupert Grint. Warner Bros., 2007. DVD.

³ Horace Slughorn describes Lily as “one of the brightest [he] ever taught. Vivacious, you know. Charming girl” (*Half-Blood Prince* 70).

and Lord Voldemort among them, and Rowling juxtaposes the patriarchal rigidities present in these broken families to the more egalitarian dynamics within nuclear families.

Some spheres show the Manichean struggle as leaning toward patriarchy even within the world of white magic; however, my second section on the Ministry of Magic addresses the male dominance in high-ranking positions of the Ministry, especially the position of Minister of Magic. Among the wider implications of this gender imbalance on wizarding society is the treatment and positioning of women in the Ministry, whose power differs from that of Ministry men. The level of respect and value given to women in the Ministry compared to their male counterparts also reflects patriarchal hierarchies. Tellingly, key women in the Ministry like Dolores Umbridge both exploit and reinforce patriarchal gender expectations. This gendered power imbalance within the Ministry reflects the widespread patriarchy dominant in wizarding government and policy generally, making it ripe for Voldemort's infiltration as the series unfolds.

My third section discusses Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, which both subverts and reinforces patriarchal gender roles and stereotypes. Gender equality operates on several fronts: the authority accorded to professors teaching subjects not traditionally associated with their gender as well as notable students who break traditional gender roles. It also discusses the gendered implications of several of Hogwarts' positions, including the Headmaster/mistress position as well as the prefect position. Headmaster Albus Dumbledore's life's history demonstrates an evolution from patriarchal rigidities and subsequently influences his policies and attitudes toward gender roles as Hogwarts' longtime leader. Yet even Hogwarts itself becomes a site of Manichean struggle when Dolores Umbridge temporarily displaces Dumbledore as Head.

The pitting of light and dark, white magic vs. black magic, emerges most dramatically in the conflict between the societies of the Order of the Phoenix and the Death Eaters. Here too Rowling complicates the gender dynamics, given the freedom female characters have within both of these societies, even as they face limitations in each. The Death Eaters include powerful female villainesses, including Bellatrix Lestrange and Narcissa Malfoy. Within the Order of the Phoenix, one finds Nymphadora Tonks, Molly Weasley, and several other notable female characters with considerable emotional power born of their relationships with others.

My fifth and final section examines Hermione Granger's transforming gender identity across the series and how her friendship with Ron and Harry impacts her gender identity. I also explore the psychosexual evolution of Hermione, especially her transforming relationship with Ron Weasley and the taming of her personality to suit traditionally gendered expectations as the series progresses. I examine Hermione's relationship with Harry as an alternative to her stereotypically feminized and ill-fitting match with Ron in the epilogue of the series.

The gender dynamics present within the *Harry Potter* series are complex and dynamic, creating a world rife with possibilities for readers and for the characters themselves. Rowling writes several female characters who embody the Manichean struggle between the inclusive power of white magic and the hierarchical, dominating force of black magic. Through these women, Rowling attempts to collapse the binary between female and male traits and create a society free of polarizing gendered stereotypes, and through such women as Molly Weasley, Minerva McGonagall, and Hermione Granger, she succeeds.

Chapter One—The Nuclear Family

The nuclear family⁴ plays a pervasive role in the *Harry Potter* series. Rowling presents the nuclear family as an alternative model to the hierarchical power structures existing in most of the wizarding world. She juxtaposes the holistic familial dynamics of some families with the patriarchal rigidities present in others. The most damaged characters come from broken families—Severus Snape and Lord Voldemort most notably—and their adult prejudices reflect this emotional castration. The most prominent nuclear families—the Dursleys, the Malfoys, and the Weasleys—map differing approaches to the character of the wizarding world, including its polarized values of exclusionary blood status versus the inclusiveness of motherly love. Each of these values stereotypically aligns with masculinist versus feminized worldviews.

The type of love presented by each parent (especially the mother) is key to my discussion. The *Harry Potter* series at its foundation celebrates motherly love. Lily Potter sacrificed herself to save her son's life and in doing so transferred literal protection to Harry from the power of her love,⁵ the greatest act of white magic within the texts. Love becomes one of the foremost standards to which characters are held. It is the ultimate source of sacrifice, of white magic, and so can transcend traditional gender roles and patriarchal family structures, reconciling tradition and love.

In the series, characters are judged in part by their blood status: non-magical (or Muggle), Muggle-born (or Mudblood), half-blood, or pureblood. These distinctions are

⁴ The nuclear family is a family that includes a mother, father, and biological children (as opposed to an extended family, with aunts, uncles, or grandparents in the same household as the nuclear family).

⁵ Dumbledore tells Harry: "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" (*Sorcerer's Stone* 299).

based on the amount of non-magical blood present in a family's lineage. Blood status is the wizarding equivalent of racial essentialism: the presence of Muggle blood in a lineage equates to animalistic unintelligence, the sign of a lowborn family. Muggle-born persons, then, are most scorned in wizarding society (with Muggles themselves so far below wizards that they don't warrant consideration). Half-bloods occupy the majority of society (the term "half-blood" refers to any amount of Muggle blood in one's lineage, rather than half as the term suggests). Purebloods have no Muggle blood in their ancestry, and traditionally occupy the highest social class. Gender dynamics within the nuclear family are similarly tied to blood status—pureblood families follow the strictest patriarchal hierarchies, while half-blood or Muggle-born families are more egalitarian.

The Dursleys are the first nuclear family readers are presented with in the *Harry Potter* series. Comprised of Vernon, Petunia, their son Dudley and adoptive wizarding son Harry, they are the only non-magical family highlighted in the series. Because of their lack of wizarding blood, they exist in a society most similar to our own: a modern patriarchal society with very strict gendered hierarchies. The Dursleys are "proud to say they [are] perfectly normal, thank you very much" and are "the last people you'd expect to be involved in anything strange or mysterious, because they just [don't] hold with such nonsense" (*Sorcerer's Stone* 1). Because of their existence in a non-magical—and therefore patriarchal—society, the Dursleys are stereotypically gendered. Vernon Dursley is a "big, beefy man with hardly any neck" and a "very large mustache" (1) and is the director of a drill-making company. This job has violent connotations which escalates his patriarchal, abusive personality in his home. At work, Vernon yells, shouts, [eyes] people angrily (4), and translates this dictatorial nature to his home, locking Harry in his

bedroom (a cupboard under the stairs) and starving him for even the slightest mistakes. When a house elf magically ruins the Dursley's dinner party, Harry is blamed and Vernon fits bars on his window and forbids him from ever attending school again. Vernon refuses to accept Harry into his family because he displays subversive behavior, which Vernon feels will reflect poorly on the family's reputation.

Petunia Dursley also contributes to the Dursleys' traditional gender stereotyping. She is "thin and blonde" with "nearly twice the usual amount of neck" and is usually depicted cleaning, cooking, or spying on her neighbors (*Sorcerer's Stone* 1). Petunia is the stereotypical blonde housewife: feminine, keeps house, and is rather nosy toward neighbors. But though she seems the beautiful picture of domesticity, she is as poisonous as Vernon. She treats Harry like a slave rather than a son, ordering him to cook and clean and physically diminishing him by cutting his hair⁶ and dyeing his second-hand clothes gray in the hopes of stamping out his abnormality. This treatment is strikingly different than their treatment of their biological son, Dudley. Their constant doting on him creates a narcissistic bully who torments Harry, making Dudley the perfect son in the eyes of the Dursleys. They are exceedingly concerned with their reputation, and uphold patriarchal family hierarchies to hide their inadequacies. The Dursleys are not completely irredeemable, however, as Dumbledore explains:

“[Petunia] may have taken you grudgingly, furiously, unwillingly, bitterly, yet still she took you, and in doing so, she sealed the charm I placed upon you. . . .

While you still call home the place where your mother's blood dwells, there you cannot be touched or harmed by Voldemort . . . [Petunia] knows that allowing you

⁶ Petunia 'had taken a pair of kitchen scissors and cut his hair so short he was almost bald except for his bangs, which she left "to hide that horrible scar"' (*Sorcerer's Stone* 24)

houseroom may well have kept you alive for the past fifteen years” (*Order of the Phoenix* 836).

And Dudley, though raised with Vernon and Petunia’s worst qualities, rises past patriarchal expectations and shakes Harry’s hand as an equal as Harry leaves the Dursleys for the final time. Dudley’s grudging brotherly love for Harry and Petunia’s adoption of Harry despite her deep-seated fear of magic evinces that the Dursleys are capable of love and redemption, though patriarchal rigidities are the basis of their family dynamic.

The Malfoy family presents a very different, yet still hierarchical, familial representation. Lucius, Narcissa, and their son Draco are a pureblood family, supremely concerned with tradition and their status within wizarding society. Lucius is “pale, [with a] pointed face and. . . cold gray eyes” (*Chamber of Secrets* 50) with sleek, perfectly styled blonde hair. An extremely wealthy man, Lucius is pictured climbing the social ladder, meeting with the Minister of Magic to discuss policies,⁷ attending high-profile sporting events, or conferring with Albus Dumbledore as one of the twelve Governors of Hogwarts. Though Lucius Malfoy is presumably a sociable businessman, most of his time is spent serving Voldemort as a Death Eater. Lucius was a prominent Death Eater during the First Wizarding War and remains suspect as an active member throughout the series. He follows extremely traditional gender roles because of his blood status and his role as a Death Eater. He occupies a traditionally gendered role both among the Death Eaters, acting under the patriarchal authority of Voldemort, and within his family unit, keeping his wife and child in line. Lucius, though he loves his wife and son, follows

⁷ “Malfoy’s been giving generously to all sorts of things for years . . . Gets him in with the right people . . . then he can ask for favors . . . delay laws he doesn’t want passed . . . Oh, he’s very well connected, Lucius Malfoy. . . .” (*Order of the Phoenix* 155).

patriarchal rigidities in displaying emotion, instead asserting his masculinity through his family's social superiority. Though Lucius thrives in stereotypically masculinized roles, his subservience to Voldemort (who occupies an even more masculinized, patriarchal space) leads to his emasculation. After he is caught and arrested in *Order of the Phoenix*, Voldemort punishes Lucius—coopting Malfoy Manor and treating Lucius like a servant and taking and subsequently breaking Lucius' wand, the ultimate destruction of Lucius' masculinity.

Narcissa Malfoy shares some of her husband's values, including his snobbery, but her adherence to traditional gender dynamics is, like Molly Weasley, compromised by her maternal status. Like Lucius, Narcissa comes from a wealthy pureblood family and does not work outside of the home. She is tall, slim, and “nice looking” with blue eyes, long blonde hair, and a clear, cold voice⁸— a traditional beauty, in other words. Narcissa spends most of her time shopping or cooking sweets for her son, actions that reveal more love and devotion toward him than Lucius displays. Also like Molly, she is fiercely protective of her son. When Harry threatens Draco in a clothing store in *Half-Blood Prince*, Narcissa steps in: “I see that being Dumbledore's favorite has given you a false sense of security, Harry Potter. But Dumbledore won't always be there to protect you. . . I expect [you] will be reunited with dear Sirius before I am reunited with Lucius” (114). When Lucius is sent to Azkaban after he is revealed as a Death Eater in *Order of the Phoenix*, Narcissa is responsible for protecting her son and keeping the Malfoy legacy alive. To protect Draco from Voldemort's wrath, she takes a more active role in the Death Eaters. During the Final Battle of the Second Wizarding War, Narcissa is given the task of checking if Harry is alive after being hit with Voldemort's killing curse:

⁸ “Narcissa Malfoy.” *Harry Potter Wiki*. Wikimedia Foundation Inc., 7 May 2011. Web. 5 July 2015.

“Is Draco alive? Is he in the castle?”

The whisper was barely audible; her lips were an inch from his ear, bent so low that her long hair shielded his face from the onlookers.

“Yes, ” he breathed back. . .

“He is dead!” Narcissa Malfoy called to the watchers. . . Narcissa knew that the only way she would be permitted to enter Hogwarts, and find her son, was as part of the conquering army. She no longer cared whether Voldemort won.”

(Deathly Hallows 726).

Narcissa Malfoy lies directly to Voldemort, something very few people have the courage to do, and fewer get away with. Yet Narcissa cares for her son more than for life itself, which makes her willing to work on whichever side will bring him to safety. Though infected with hierarchical bigotries and the alliances they forge, Narcissa’s motherly love rises above them when her boy’s survival is at stake.

The Weasley family is, by far, the most complicated nuclear family in the series, and also the most significant in the presentation of gender dynamics within the texts. The Weasley family consists of Molly and Arthur Weasley and their children: Bill, Charlie, Percy, Fred, George, Ron, and Ginny. The Weasleys are purebloods but their family dynamics completely oppose the Malfoys’: they don’t enforce purity or tradition in their family and instead display egalitarian parenting styles. They exist in the world of purebloods as an example that past traditions don’t dictate the present, and though other pureblood families view them harshly, they are important to the wider wizarding world.

Though the Weasley family is comprised of a majority of men, Molly Weasley is the matriarch of the family. She is a “short, plump, kindly-faced woman” (*Chamber of*

Secrets 32) who helps Harry onto Platform 9¾ and introduces him to his first wizarding friends, her children. Her children recognize Harry and are about to interrogate him when Molly says, “the poor boy isn’t something you goggle at in a zoo” (*Sorcerer’s Stone* 97). Though she doesn’t know Harry, Molly automatically treats him with kindness and respect and protects him from emotional harm, the first of many motherly actions toward Harry. Throughout the series, Molly becomes Harry’s surrogate mother, providing Christmas presents when he expected to receive nothing,⁹ always opening her home to him to prevent him returning to the abusive Dursleys, and loving and bossing Harry as much as her other children.

Molly Weasley is the perfect picture of domesticity: adept at household charms, constantly cooking and cleaning, and presented in accordance with traditional domestic hierarchies—she wears aprons and dresses and is sometimes described as “porky”¹⁰ or “dumpy.”¹¹ Despite this traditional presentation, Molly is not written as powerless but is a dominating force in her household. She is loving and nurturing, but also the most frightening disciplinarian in the family. When her children break rules, she is fierce in chastising them, as in the *Chamber of Secrets* when Ron and Harry steal and wreck the family’s flying car, and Mrs. Weasley sends a Howler:

A roar of sound filled the huge hall, shaking dust from the ceiling.

**“—STEALING THE CAR, I WOULDN’T HAVE BEEN SURPRISED IF
THEY’D EXPELLED YOU, YOU WAIT TILL I GET AHOLD OF YOU, I**

⁹ ““I think I know who that one’s from . . . My mum. I told her you didn’t expect any presents and—oh, no,” [Ron] groaned, “she’s made you a Weasley sweater.” Harry had torn open the parcel to find a thick, hand-knitted sweater in emerald green and a large box of homemade fudge’ (*Sorcerer’s Stone* 200).

¹⁰ “So tell me, is his mother really that porky, or is it just the picture?” (*Goblet of Fire* 204).

¹¹ ““Dumpy sort of woman?” [Vernon Dursley] growled finally. “Load of children with red hair?”” (*Goblet of Fire* 32).

DON'T SUPPOSE YOU STOPPED TO THINK WHAT YOUR FATHER AND I WENT THROUGH WHEN WE SAW IT WAS GONE—LETTER FROM DUMBLEDORE LAST NIGHT, I THOUGHT YOUR FATHER WOULD DIE OF SHAME, WE DIDN'T BRING YOU UP TO BEHAVE LIKE THIS, YOU AND HARRY COULD BOTH HAVE DIED—ABSOLUTELY DISGUSTED – YOUR FATHER'S FACING AN INQUIRY AT WORK, IT'S ENTIRELY YOUR FAULT AND IF YOU PUT ANOTHER TOE OUT OF LINE WE'LL BRING YOU STRAIGHT BACK HOME” (*Chamber of Secrets* 87-88).¹²

As well as being a fiercely maternal figure, Molly is an extremely gifted witch. She fights in the Second Wizarding War in the *Deathly Hallows* and, in a duel with Bellatrix Lestrange, Voldemort's right-hand woman, Molly wins in a ferocious display of motherly love to preserve the life of her only girl child, Ginny:

“NOT MY DAUGHTER, YOU BITCH!”

Mrs. Weasley threw off her cloak as she ran, freeing her arms . . . Harry watched with terror and elation as [jets] of light flew from both wands, [and] the floor around the witches' feet became hot and cracked; both women were fighting to kill . . . “You—will—never—touch—our—children—again!” screamed Mrs. Weasley . . . Molly's curse soared beneath Bellatrix's outstretched arm and hit her squarely in her chest, directly over her heart (*Deathly Hallows* 736).

As critic Sarah Winters states, “Motherly protection is validated by the text [when] the mother exposes herself to the same danger threatening her child in order to protect that child” (Winters 224). Importantly, this confrontation happens outside the home, as Molly

¹² In the movie version of *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, Molly ends the Howler with “Oh, and Ginny dear, congratulations on making Gryffindor. Your father and I are *so* proud” (*Chamber of Secrets*), which humorously illustrates the dichotomy between Molly's discipline and love.

is almost always pictured in the Burrow or at 12 Grimmauld Place in domestic roles. Rowling moves Molly out of the gendered feminine space into a traditionally masculine one without a loss of power, proving that Molly exerts authority both in stereotypical presentations of maternal womanhood and through her wizarding abilities both inside and outside of the home.

Molly, for all her warmth, falls prey to patriarchal biases, as in her troubling interactions with young women. She is fiercely protective of her sons (and her pseudo-sons like Harry), but sometimes perpetuates patriarchal ideas while doing so. When journalist Rita Skeeter prints several articles with falsified claims about Harry Potter and Hermione Granger, Molly condemns the lies about Harry, saying, “Rita Skeeter goes out of her way to cause trouble!” (*Goblet of Fire* 617). But later, when Skeeter publishes an article claiming that Hermione broke Harry’s heart by cheating on him with another man, Molly believes it: she sends Hermione a pitifully small Easter egg compared to Ron’s and Harry’s,¹³ and speaks “stiffly” and with a “cold expression” to Hermione (618) until Harry tells her, “Mrs. Weasley, you didn’t believe that rubbish Rita Skeeter wrote in *Witch Weekly*, did you? Because Hermione’s not my girlfriend” (619). Molly’s mistrust of Hermione demonstrates her maternal loyalties trumping her gender allegiance, which unfairly privileges her male offspring. Molly engages in maternal privileging again when Fleur Delacour is dating Bill Weasley. Fleur is an extremely beautiful witch who is magically gifted (she was one of four participants in the Triwizard Tournament in *Goblet of Fire*) and seemingly a very worthy candidate for Bill. However, Molly disagrees,¹⁴ saying “Bill and Fleur...well...what have they really got in common? He’s a

¹³ “Both Harry’s and Ron’s [Easter eggs] were the size of dragon eggs and full of homemade toffee. Hermione’s, however, was smaller than a chicken egg” (*Goblet of Fire* 549).

¹⁴ Some of Molly’s resentment of Fleur may purely be British distrust of the French.

hardworking, down-to-earth sort of person, whereas she's—' 'A cow,' said Ginny, nodding" (*Half-Blood Prince* 93). Later, after a werewolf disfigures Bill, Fleur confronts Molly about her disapproval of their relationship and makes clear, "It would take more than a werewolf to stop Bill loving me! . . . What do I care how he looks? All these scars show that my husband is brave!" (*Half-Blood Prince* 622-3). Molly's tendency to allow her maternal prejudices to bias her view of young women unfairly positions these women as rivals and devalues both women's power. Molly becomes a caricature of the jealous mother, and the young women become objects to be fought for rather than individuals. While Fleur defends her choices and moves past the stereotype of the vapid, shallow beauty queen, gendered hierarchies prevail, leaving readers with a distasteful stereotypical depiction of Molly.

Despite Molly's conventionalized gender lapses, the males in the Weasley family also soften the nuclear family's conventional gender binary. While Arthur Weasley is the patriarch of the Weasley family, he is markedly different from Molly, lacking the masculinized rigidities of patriarchal authority. He is introduced in *Chamber of Secrets* "slumped in a kitchen chair with his glasses off and his eyes closed," a "thin man, going bald" and wearing "dusty and travel-worn" long green robes (38). His introduction is almost the complete opposite of Molly's: where she is commandeering and strong, he is slumped and weary; where she is plump and vibrant, he is thin and flat. Physically, they are as opposite as two people can be, and their parenting styles, especially disciplinary practices, are similarly polarized. While Molly sends a Howler after learning of the theft of their magical car, Arthur Weasley responds with child-like excitement:

“*Your sons flew that car to Harry’s house and back last night!*” shouted Mrs. Weasley. “What have you got to say about that, eh?”

“Did you really?” said Mr. Weasley eagerly. “Did it go all right? I—I mean,” he faltered as sparks flew from Mrs. Weasley’s eyes, “that—that was very wrong, boys—very wrong indeed....” (*Chamber of Secrets* 39).

Mr. Weasley’s reaction illustrates the matriarchal power dynamics within the Weasley family. Arthur follows his wife’s lead in decisions, nearly as afraid of her anger as her children are. Yet, Arthur wields power in the family as well. When Molly and Arthur are named to lead the Order of the Phoenix (See Chapter Four), members of the Order presume Arthur will operate as the ruling patriarch and Molly as subordinate assistant. For example, when Molly and Sirius Black argue over whether Harry should be given dangerous information pertaining to the Order of the Phoenix, these presumptions clearly surface:

“It’s not down to you to decide what’s good for Harry!” said Mrs. Weasley sharply. “He’s not a member of the Order of the Phoenix! . . . He’s only fifteen and—”

“—and he’s dealt with as much as most in the Order,” said Sirius, “and more than some—”

“Arthur!” said Mrs. Weasley, rounding on her husband. “Arthur, back me up!”

Mr. Weasley did not speak at once. He took off his glasses and cleaned them slowly on his robes, not looking at his wife. Only when he had replaced them carefully on his nose did he say, “Dumbledore knows the position has

changed, Molly. He accepts that Harry will have to be filled in to a certain extent now that he is staying at headquarters—”

“Well,” said Mrs. Weasley, breathing deeply and looking around the table for support that did not come, “well . . . I can see I’m going to be overruled. I’ll just say this: Dumbledore must have had his reasons for not wanting Harry to know too much, and speaking as someone who has got Harry’s best interests at heart—”

“He’s not your son,” said Sirius quietly.

“Very well,” said Mrs. Weasley, her voice cracking. “Ginny—Ron—Hermione—Fred—George—I want you out of this kitchen, now . . . I absolutely forbid—”

“Molly, you can’t stop Fred and George . . . they’re legally adults now,” said Mr. Weasley in the same tired voice. (*Order of the Phoenix* 88-91, edited for length).

Sirius Black devalues Molly’s power as surrogate mother to Harry and Arthur overrides her understandable desire to protect all of her sons from danger. Sirius and Arthur dismiss Molly’s concerns as less important than the greater war—a heartbreaking patriarchal usurpation of familial values. Molly is not exempt from this patriarchal view of war, however, as her exclusion of Hermione and Ginny from the meeting illustrates. Arthur seems very passive in this scene; he is “tired” and “weary” when disagreeing with Molly, and refuses to look her in the eye when voicing dissent, suggesting he feels shame at disagreeing with her, though he still does so.

Many of the great villains in the series come from broken families, asserting yet again that the family is monumental to propagating white magic and egalitarianism in the wizarding world. Severus Snape grew up in a neglectful family, wearing ill-fitting, mismatched clothing and spending his days alone, wandering to escape his parents' constant fighting.^{15,16} Snape is a half-blood—his mother, Eileen Prince, attended Hogwarts and married a Muggle man who disdains magic.¹⁷ The lack of parental love explains his resentment toward Harry—Lily Potter (the woman Snape has loved his whole life) died to protect Harry, while Snape never found love in childhood nor from Lily in adulthood. Snape made Lily his whole world, but if he grew up in a functional household, he might have rationalized Lily's friendship instead of becoming hard and cruel. Lord Voldemort's reign of terror may also have been averted if his childhood were different. His mother, Merope Gaunt, was a pureblooded descendent of Salazar Slytherin who fell in love with a Muggle boy, Tom Riddle. Once she was pregnant, Tom left her, and Merope died after giving birth to Voldemort in an orphanage. Voldemort grew up with deep hatred over his parents' abandonment, and murders his father and grandparents, “obliterating the last of the unworthy Riddle line and revenging himself upon the father who never wanted him” (*Half-Blood Prince* 367). Voldemort's resentment toward his parents is reflected in his adult prejudices—he disdains Muggles and takes joy in destroying families.¹⁸

¹⁵ “His black hair was overlong and his clothes were so mismatched that it looked deliberate: too short jeans, a shabby, overlarge coat that might have belonged to a grown man, an odd smocklike shirt” (*Deathly Hallows* 663).

¹⁶ “A hook-nosed man was shouting at a cowering woman, while a small dark-haired boy cried in a corner” (*Half-Blood Prince* 591).

¹⁷ Lily Evans befriends a young Snape, once asking him, “Doesn't your dad like magic?” Snape replies, “He doesn't like anything, much” (*Deathly Hallows* 667).

¹⁸ Aside from the obvious destruction of Harry's family, Voldemort assigns Draco Malfoy a suicide mission—killing Albus Dumbledore. As Snape explains, “The Dark Lord does not expect Draco to succeed

By contrasting the complex gender dynamics of healthy nuclear families with the overriding patriarchal hierarchies present in broken families, Rowling imparts to young readers the value of parental love. Love, especially maternal love, transcends Manichean struggles and patriarchal hierarchies and fosters acceptance, subverts stereotypical gender expectations, and promotes the egalitarian power of white magic.

This is merely punishment . . . slow torture for Draco's parents, while they watch him fail and pay the price" (*Deathly Hallows* 682).

Chapter Two—The Ministry of Magic

Rowling's Ministry of Magic, the seat of wizarding government and the presumed stronghold of white magic, nonetheless reveals itself to be a realm heavily influenced by patriarchal hierarchies which foster traditional gendered thinking and an uneasy status for women therein. This connection with the patriarchy explains its susceptibility to cooptation by Voldemort's black magic and gendered binaries in *The Deathly Hallows*. This section of my thesis discusses the origins of the Ministry, the legacy of male domination therein, and its elevation of Dolores Umbridge who, despite holding a powerful position within the Ministry, reinforces the patriarchy.

Before the creation of the Ministry of Magic, there existed the Wizengamot, a medieval version of the Wizards' Council that continues in the current Ministry of Magic as the high court of law. The Wizengamot acts as a disciplinary body during trials under the Department of Magical Law Enforcement. They are made up of around fifty members, in part selected by the Minister of Magic. In the book, the Wizengamot plays a minor but significant role in terms of gender representation within the Ministry. Among the few characters mentioned from the Wizengamot,¹⁹ the ratio of men to women in the court is roughly equal. Nonetheless the high court appears only three times throughout the series, making its impact on gender representation in the Ministry relatively small.

The Ministry of Magic, created in 1701, serves as the governing body of the wizarding world, helmed by the Minister of Magic, who controls various departments: magical law enforcement, games and sports, security, international magical control, regulation and control of magical creatures. The Minister also issues directives to the

¹⁹ Amelia Bones, Bartemius Crouch Sr., Elphias Doge, Albus Dumbledore, Cornelius Fudge, Ulick Gamp, Griselda Marchbanks, Tiberius Ogden, and Dolores Umbridge.

wider wizarding world. The title *Minister* itself is conventionally masculine, with no corresponding title for women in English, so the position exudes patriarchal assumptions. Only one female holder of the position is named: Millicent Bagnold.²⁰ She was succeeded by Cornelius Fudge, the Minister most active across the *Harry Potter* series. The dominance of men in the highest-ranking positions in the wizarding world reflects the systemic patriarchal orientation of wizarding society because it relegates witches to subordinate roles as functionaries marginal to decision-making and governmental policy. The few women present in the Ministry's upper echelons are either removed from power throughout the course of the series, or, in the case of Dolores Umbridge, serve to further rather than redress the Ministry's patriarchal character.

Rufus Scrimgeour's succession of Cornelius Fudge as Minister in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* perpetuates the position as male-dominated and underscores the patriarchy's hold on Rowling's wizarding world. When the question of who will succeed the current minister arises, only males earn mention: Albus Dumbledore,²¹ Tom Riddle (later to become Voldemort), and Harry Potter all merit consideration, while Minerva McGonagall or Hermione Granger, acknowledged as the "cleverest witch of [her] age" (*Prisoner of Azkaban* 346), are never mentioned. Young witches and adult women of wizarding society thus begin to see the role of Minister as a man's prerogative, however intelligent or skilled any given female may be. This situation renders the Minister as "father" controlling the "household" of wizarding society, or, more ominously, dictator controlling the bureaucracy of the state.

²⁰ There have been several female Ministers of Magic listed on J.K. Rowling's interactive informational site, Pottermore.com, but fanbase bias may have influenced J.K. Rowling's writings on that site, created after the publication of the original seven novels.

²¹ Albus Dumbledore was offered the position at least three times in his life, and turned it down each time.

Unsurprisingly, then, the Ministry itself proves inherently patriarchal. The most frequently mentioned Ministry workers in the series are men: Lucius Malfoy, Arthur Weasley, and Alastor Moody, for example. These men remain ever-present in Harry Potter's life, play repeated roles in his coming-of-age story, and exert significant influence in wizarding society as a whole. They command respect in the Ministry despite deep character flaws, which greatly differs from the treatment of women in the Ministry. Lucius Malfoy is arguably the most well-known dark wizard in the series (other than Voldemort), given his history as a prominent Death Eater during the First Wizarding War; his hierarchical mindset makes him a relentless proponent of enforcing blood purity laws.²² Yet Lucius remains a close personal friend of Cornelius Fudge (even after a warning from Harry)²³ and his substantial financial contributions to the Ministry ensure Malfoy's status as one of the twelve governors of Hogwarts. Suspicions about Malfoy's involvement in dark magic remain willfully ignored by the Ministry until he is caught and "exposed" in *Order of the Phoenix*. For contrast, Dolores Umbridge eventually earns ignominy and humiliation, exposing the gendered double standard in operation: briefly elevated higher than Lucius, she falls far further in the hierarchy.

There is no more powerful witch in the Ministry and no greater female villain in the novels than Dolores Umbridge, Senior Undersecretary to the Minister, High Inquisitor of Hogwarts and, briefly, Head of the Muggle-Born Registration Committee.

²² Draco Malfoy, Lucius' son, reflects his father's view on blood purity, saying, "Father says to keep my head down and let the heir of Slytherin get on with it. He says the school needs ridding of all the Mudblood filth..." (*Chamber of Secrets* 224).

²³ "Harry felt winded, as though he had just walked into something heavy. He had last seen [Lucius Malfoy's] cool gray eyes through slits in a Death Eater's hood, and last heard that man's voice jeering in a dark graveyard while Lord Voldemort tortured him. He could not believe that Lucius Malfoy dared look him in the face; he could not believe that he was here, in the Ministry of Magic, or that Cornelius Fudge was talking to him, when Harry had told Fudge mere weeks ago that Malfoy was a Death Eater" (*Order of the Phoenix* 154).

Umbridge earns the hatred of most characters and readers. Her first name means “sad or doleful” and her surname “is just two letters away from umbrage, which [leads one to the phrase] ‘taking umbrage’ or suspecting someone of shady dealings” (Nilsen 63). From her name to her clothes to her actions at Hogwarts, Umbridge invites scathing feminist analysis for the uses to which she puts her authority, and Rowling satirizes her ruthlessly. She is introduced in *Order of the Phoenix* as looking “just like a large, pale toad. . . rather squat with a broad, flabby face,” very little neck, and “a very wide, slack mouth” (*Order of the Phoenix* 146). This unpleasant description clashes with her physical presentation: she speaks in a “fluttery, girlish, high-pitched voice” and bedecks herself in lace, pink, and flowers. Her office at Hogwarts also displays sickly-sweet, stereotypically feminine excess:

Her office had been draped in lacy covers and cloths. There were several vases full of dried flowers, each residing on its own doily, and on one of the walls there was a collection of ornamental plates, each decorated with a large Technicolored kitten wearing a different bow around its neck (*Order of the Phoenix* 265).

She presents herself as hyper-feminine and despite her own obvious pursuit of power she spouts regressive statements like “Progress for progress’s sake must be discouraged, for our tried and tested traditions often require no tinkering” (*Order of the Phoenix* 267). Yet her actions in exercise of her power are stereotypically masculine. Her extreme cruelty, her need for dominance, and her obsession with authority, all coated with faux delicacy, reflect patriarchal extremes. As Rowling herself states, “[Umbridge] is one of those people . . . who will always side with the established order. As far as she is concerned authority cannot be wrong so she doesn’t question it, . . . whatever happened and

whoever took over at the Ministry, Umbridge would be there, she likes power.”²⁴ She embodies a schizophrenic synthesis of exaggerated gender influences, her sugary-sweet exterior hiding a will of steel determined to reverse any egalitarian impulses within the wizarding world. Umbridge seems incredibly twisted because of her fraudulent gender performativity since, aside from her feminine affect, she is not stereotypically sweet, meek, polite, or gentle. She cruelly tortures Harry, for example, and delights in publicly humiliating Sybil Trelawney.

Yet one cannot dismiss Umbridge’s status as one of the most energetic “bad girls” of the series, and as such someone who does merit some feminist acknowledgement. Her gleeful exercise of power does demonstrate a freedom of sorts that other women in the series don’t attempt. And while Umbridge’s perversion of femininity destroys the association of femininity with submissiveness, her femininity matched with her vicious personality demonizes femininity and positions it as a tool for self-serving posturing. Young readers may fail to recognize Umbridge’s parodic representation as only one version of the feminine within the series as a whole.

For all her power, Umbridge represents regression, a tool of the patriarchy, rather than an example of resistance against it. She is widely recognized as Fudge’s lackey and is hated both within the Ministry and in the greater wizarding society. Her speech during the opening ceremony at Hogwarts in *The Order of the Phoenix* illustrates her repressive agenda:

²⁴ Edinburgh “Cub Reporter” Press Conference. ITV. *Accio Quote!* 16 July 2005. Web.

The Ministry of Magic has always considered the education of young witches and wizards to be of vital importance. The rare gifts with which you were born may come to nothing if not nurtured and honed by careful instruction. The ancient skills unique to the Wizarding community must be passed down through the generations lest we lose them forever. The treasure trove of magical knowledge amassed by our ancestors must be guarded, replenished, and polished by those who have been called to the noble profession of teaching. . . . Without progress there will be stagnation and decay. There again, *progress for progress's sake must be discouraged, for our tried and tested traditions often require no tinkering*. A balance, then, between old and new, between permanence and change, between tradition and innovation. . . . Let us move forward, then . . . *preserving what ought to be preserved, perfecting what needs to be perfected, and pruning wherever we find practices that ought to be prohibited*. (212-214, emphasis added).

That last phrase clearly reflects Umbridge's plan to control the students of Hogwarts rather than nurture them. Her repressive agenda is not welcomed by students nor staff at Hogwarts: after hearing this speech, Hermione says "ominously": "It means the Ministry's interfering at Hogwarts" (214). Minerva McGonagall, meeting with Harry to discuss his defiance toward Umbridge, warns, "Potter, use your common sense. . . . You know where [Umbridge] comes from, you must know to whom she is reporting. . . you need to be careful" (248-249). Eventually, though, Umbridge's quest for dominance dwindles as she pursues a personal vendetta against Harry. She reveals that she illegally sent Dementors to attack Harry because "[Everyone in the Ministry was] bleating about silencing" and "discrediting" him (*Order of the Phoenix* 747); later she is so engrossed in

punishing Harry for telling “lies” about Voldemort’s return, she naively falls for a trap Hermione sets and is carried off into the Forbidden Forest by centaurs, her reign of terror ended at Hogwarts.²⁵

In the *Deathly Hallows*, Umbridge holds the position of Head of the Muggle-Born Registration Committee, working to expose and arrest Muggle-born persons. After her expulsion from Hogwarts, Umbridge found new power in Voldemort’s coopted Ministry, enforcing patriarchal blood purity laws. She also unknowingly possesses one of Voldemort’s Horcruxes.²⁶ When Harry, Hermione or Ron wear a Horcrux, their negative emotions are amplified, but on Umbridge it strengthens her already perversely masculinized cruelty. After Harry takes her Horcrux and later restores the Ministry to its original purpose, Umbridge is arrested and sent to Azkaban. Though she does not commit the same horrors as Voldemort, Dolores Umbridge’s perversion of masculinized traits coated in false femininity leaves her etched in readers’ minds as one of the most fraudulently performative characters and the worst female villainess in the series.

The Ministry, though created to manage evil in the wizarding world, becomes vulnerable to sabotage because of its antiquated patriarchal hierarchies, corrupt blood purity laws causing gender polarizations and racializations, and infiltration by individuals such as Umbridge, hungry for personal domination.

²⁵ As Umbridge is carried off, her wand is broken. Umbridge is the only female in the series whose wand breaks. Wand-breaking implies emasculation with Lucius Malfoy and Hagrid, so it is fitting that the same emasculation occurs within Umbridge’s masculinized power grab.

²⁶ Items that contain part of a person’s soul, created through murder. They are the darkest magical objects in the wizarding world.

Chapter Three—Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Because Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry functions as an extremely influential sector of wizarding society, it plays a very significant role in the gender dynamics within the *Harry Potter* series. From its inception, Hogwarts has been a repository of learning related to white magic and an educational training ground for young witches and wizards. It was founded by four legendary witches and wizards, men and women equally represented: Godric Gryffindor, Rowena Ravenclaw, Helga Hufflepuff, and Salazar Slytherin. This gender balance already sets Hogwarts apart from the rest of the wizarding world. The school welcomed all types of students with demonstrated magical ability:

Now each of these four founders
 Formed their own House, for each
 Did value different virtues
 In the ones they had to teach.
 By Gryffindor, the bravest were
 Prized far beyond the rest;
 For Ravenclaw, the cleverest
 Would always be the best;
 For Hufflepuff, hard workers were
 Most worthy of admission;
 And power-hungry Slytherin
 Loved those of great ambition (*Goblet of Fire* 177).

Over time, however, the four founders' distinctive criteria for selection deviated more dramatically:

For instance, Slytherin
 Took only pure-blood wizards
 Of great cunning, just like him,

And only those of sharpest mind
Were taught by Ravenclaw
While the bravest and the boldest
Went to daring Gryffindor.
Good Hufflepuff, she took the rest,
And taught them all she knew (*Order of the Phoenix* 205).

Salazar Slytherin's insistence on accepting only pureblood wizards created strife among the founders, and he eventually left the school in protest. The blood purity standards at Hogwarts that he had insisted on keeping alive were eventually abandoned. Hogwarts' modern day rejection of pureblood superiority thus established it as a pillar of inclusiveness within the wizarding world, reflected in its current policies.

Run by a Headmaster (or Headmistress) and overseen by a Board of Governors (led by the Ministry), Hogwarts delegates the main disciplinary role to its faculty (especially the Heads of Houses) and the Prefects/Head Students. Both groups are composed evenly of men and women: each House has two student leaders of each sex. This administrative organization models gender equality for students. Within the faculty itself, more female professors assume major roles than male professors, which may reflect the fact that K-12 teaching has become a feminized profession in modern times. Moreover, many professors operate outside traditional gender norms, providing a realistic picture of the range of talents and temperaments across the gender spectrum. Madame Hooch, the Quidditch Instructor, has "short, gray hair and yellow eyes like a hawk," a gender neutral description. In her role as Quidditch Instructor, Madame Hooch makes clear a dedication to physical athletic development and skills-cultivation that holds all students to a similar standard. Among males who challenge gender stereotypes is

Professor Flitwick, who teaches Charms, characterized as a “soft option”²⁷ (*Half-Blood Prince* 174) despite its including “some of the most powerful and game-changing spells in existence.”²⁸ Himself a “mixed blood” half-goblin, half-human wizard, Flitwick may represent diminished masculinity physically as well as intellectually, but in fact he transcends such gendered reductionism by being an accomplished Charms Master and popular teacher who is widely valued for his abilities at Hogwarts.

Perhaps the professor who most defies gender stereotypes (as well as other binaries) is Rubeus Hagrid, who, in his fusion of stereotypically masculine and feminine qualities exemplifies queerness. He teaches a course that deals with “feeding, maintaining, breeding, and proper treatment of various magical creatures.”²⁹ While this is a relatively gender-neutral subject, Hagrid’s character and behavior reflects nurturance abilities belied by preconceptions triggered by his size and sex. His affect is strikingly maternal: when his dragon, Norbert, hatches from its egg, Hagrid declares, “Isn’t he beautiful? . . . Bless him, he knows his mummy!” When Norbert is taken to a proper dragon-keeping facility, Hagrid packs him with a teddy bear and sobs as he is being taken away, saying, “Bye-bye, Norbert! Mummy will never forget you!” (*Sorcerer’s Stone* 235, 240). These stereotypically feminine attributes emerge often: Hagrid weeps on multiple occasions throughout the series, wears a flowery apron while cooking in his hut, and carries a pink umbrella disguising the broken halves of his wand. In keeping with its phallic implications, wand breaking is seen as emasculating, and Hagrid’s affinity for

²⁷ “I see Charms as a slightly lighter subject than Transfiguration which is very hard work. With Charms there would be a little more leeway for a little more personal creativity—Transfiguration you have to get it exactly right, Transfiguration is more scientific.” (Rowling, J.K. Interview by Stephen Fry. *Harry Potter’s Page*. Mugglenet, 26 June 2003. Web.)

²⁸ “Charms.” *Harry Potter Wiki*. Wikimedia Foundation Inc., 7 May 2011. Web.

²⁹ “Care of Magical Creatures” *Harry Potter Wiki*. Wikimedia Foundation Inc., 8 May 2011. Web.

“girly” items like aprons and pink umbrellas and his emotionality often make him a comedic character. But one can also regard Hagrid as queer in his natural indifference to heteronormative alignment. At times he proves extremely masculine, displaying great strength and physical presence, yet he also has fully developed emotions, stereotypically seen as feminine qualities. Hagrid embodies the intersectionality of gender more overtly than Dumbledore or the Golden Trio and becomes the series’ most beloved character in the process.

Among the professors who best embody Hogwarts’ ideals of gender equality and freedom of expression stands Minerva McGonagall, beloved by students and fans alike. She teaches Transfiguration, a complex and dangerous skill transforming objects (such as a rat into a goblet, as in *Prisoner of Azkaban*). As Head of House of Gryffindor, she models courage and stalwartness in the face of threat. Though a strict disciplinarian and fearsomely difficult teacher, McGonagall has a greater depth of compassion for her students than any other Hogwarts instructor. When Harry first glimpses Minerva McGonagall in *Sorcerer’s Stone*, he sees a “tall, black-haired witch in emerald green robes” with a “very stern face” and his “first thought was that this was not someone to cross” (113). Minerva’s imposing first impression proved true: during their first Transfiguration class, she “gave them a talking-to the moment they sat down” (133) about the dangers of improper Transfiguration and disregarding her instruction. Yet she never receives ridicule as Professor Trelawney does, for example, or earns the hatred visited on Professor Snape. Her compassionate side, though selectively shown, reveals her capacity for nurturance. In *Chamber of Secrets*, for example, Minerva, “with a tear glistening in her beady eye,” allows Harry and Ron to see Hermione after she has been

petrified by a basilisk, though it violates the rules (288). Though she has no children of her own, Minerva provides the students of Hogwarts, especially those in her own House, comfort when necessary, and she imposes structure throughout their training to make them all the best witches and wizards they can be. True to her Greek goddess namesake, Minerva proves fierce in protection of her charges; during the Final Battle at Hogwarts, she shepherds a “herd of galloping desks” down the hall to fight the Death Eaters, her hair free from her strict bun and a “gash on her cheek” (*Deathly Hallows* 644). She later emits a scream of utter despair when Harry is presented “dead” to Hogwarts’ forces.

Also like the goddess for whom she is named, Minerva possesses a keen intellect in service to considerable power. On top of being very skilled at Transfiguration and being a registered Animagus,³⁰ McGonagall proves herself an extremely talented witch. She fearlessly sends Death Eaters running away in fear when she attacks,³¹ and “[moves] faster than Harry could have believed: Her wand [slashing] through the air. . . brandishing her wand at a torch on the wall” and transforming the flames into “a ring of fire that filled the corridor and flew like a lasso” at Professor Snape in *Deathly Hallows* (598). Albus Dumbledore greatly values her power and clearly considers her his equal given his regular reliance on her advice. Minerva remains staunchly supportive of Dumbledore, risking imprisonment in Azkaban for defending him against unjust arrest by the Ministry in *Half-Blood Prince*. As well as being Acting Headmistress in Dumbledore’s absence on many occasions, Minerva assumes Dumbledore’s role as Headmistress after his death in *Half-Blood Prince*, having been prepared by him to lead

³⁰ A very difficult process of Transfiguration in which a person transforms herself into an animal at will and for an extended period of time.

³¹ “Take that!” shouted Professor McGonagall, and Harry glimpsed the female Death Eater, Alecto, sprinting away down the corridor with her arms over her head, her brother right behind her” (*Half-Blood Prince* 599).

Hogwarts. She thus receives more respect and wields more authority than any other woman in the series.

Accordingly, McGonagall fiercely aligns herself with white magic in its Manichean struggle with black magic, corresponding with her challenge to patriarchal norms. When Dolores Umbridge is installed at Hogwarts, Minerva consistently resists the Ministry's patriarchal attempt to corrupt the school. She concedes the power the hierarchy has bestowed on Umbridge as High Inquisitor and explicitly warns the students of the danger she poses, saying in a "low and anxious and somehow much more human" voice than usual, "Misbehavior in Dolores Umbridge's class could cost you much more than House points and a detention. . . . You know where she comes from, you must know to whom she is reporting. . . . Tread carefully around Dolores Umbridge" (*Order of the Phoenix* 248-249). But she refuses to submit to Umbridge's browbeating. During a meeting to discuss Harry's future, McGonagall frankly announces her opinion of her antagonist:

[Harry] has achieved high marks in all his Defense Against the Dark Arts tests—"

"I'm terribly sorry to have to contradict you, Minerva, but as you will see from my note, Harry has been achieving very poor results in his classes with me—"

"I should have made my meaning plainer," said Professor McGonagall, turning at last to look Umbridge directly in the eyes. "He has achieved high marks in all Defense Against the Dark Arts tests set by a competent teacher" (*Order of the Phoenix* 664).

Minerva risks her job with such challenges to Umbridge's plays for dominance and demonstrates female strength that rejects the other's faux femininity. Where Umbridge uses saccharine manners to cloak hateful and dominating actions, Minerva compassionately exercises her authority, secure in its legitimacy. Where Umbridge is duplicitous, Minerva is steadfast and honest. Where Umbridge derives her power from her usefulness to the patriarchal Ministry and to Fudge particularly, Minerva has earned the role of right-hand advisor to Dumbledore. Though both exhibit female modes of wielding power, Umbridge's allegiance to the Ministry's corrupting, regressive ideology renders her a caricature of female power, while Minerva aligns herself with Hogwarts' foundational egalitarian principles and Dumbledore's collaborative leadership style. Moreover, Umbridge's selfishness collides with Minerva's selflessness. When Umbridge attempts to fire the Divination Professor, Sybill Trelawney, who she believes is a fraud, she convenes the full Hogwarts community in the courtyard to humiliate the weaker female. Though McGonagall regards both Divination³² and Professor Trelawney³³ skeptically, she "marches straight up to [Sybill] and [pats] her firmly on the back while withdrawing a large handkerchief from within her robes" saying, "There, there, Sybill . . . Calm down . . . It's not as bad as you think, now . . . You are not going to have to leave Hogwarts" (595). While Umbridge sadistically exercises her power at the expense of others, Minerva risks her own safety by publicly mitigating Umbridge's extremism.

Apart from the faculty of Hogwarts, there are several students who influence the gender dynamics in the books. Hermione Granger is the most well-known of these

³² "Divination is one of the most imprecise branches of magic. I shall not conceal from you that I have very little patience with it" (*Prisoner of Azkaban* 109).

³³ "Sybill Trelawney has predicted the death of one student a year since she arrived at this school. None of them has died yet. Seeing death omens is her favorite way of greeting a new class. If it were not for the fact that I never speak ill of my colleagues—" (*Prisoner of Azkaban* 109).

students, blending stereotypically masculinized and feminized traits that highlight her intelligence, bravery, and strength. Critic Debbie Rodrigues states:

[Hermione] subverts many common expectations of femininity and masculinity in the classroom: she is not only unafraid to speak up in class, but is fiercely independent and makes no excuses for her love of learning. . . . Although she tends to be a stickler of rules and respects authority, she is not scared openly to oppose and rebel against the despotic Umbridge's narrow-minded teaching methods or loudly voice her disdain for the dubious knowledge Professor Trelawney teaches in her Divination class (Rodrigues 52).

Among the students themselves, none is perhaps as gender neutral as Luna Lovegood, first introduced in *Order of the Phoenix*, when Harry, Ron, Hermione and Ginny choose the same compartment on the Hogwarts Express. She has “straggly, waist-length, dirty-blond hair, very pale eyebrows, and protuberant eyes that [give] her a permanently surprised look” and she gives off an “aura of distinct dottiness” (185). She is extremely eccentric, both in physical presentation and in personality. She wears “necklaces made out of butterbeer caps,” (*Order of the Phoenix* 185) and carries “green onion[s],” “spotted toadstool[s]” and “cat litter” in her bag for no apparent reason (*Half-Blood Prince* 424). Luna is wonderfully weird, a character who “has that unbelievably rare quality of actually not giving a damn what anybody thinks of her” (Rowling, “Women of Harry Potter!”). She is rarely described as pretty or beautiful, and characters are more concerned with her eccentric personality than her physical presentation. The male gaze is never applied to Luna, allowing her accomplishments and intelligence to stand out. She also does not display stereotypically masculinized or feminized

characteristics; she is intuitive, philosophical, connected to the immaterial world, and intelligent but reserved, all androgynous qualities. Because of her maturity and lack of self-consciousness, Luna often says things like “Well, I’ve lost most of my possessions. . . . People take them and hide them, you know. But as it’s the last night, I really do need them back, so I’ve been putting up signs” (*Order of the Phoenix* 862). Rather than taking offense at fellow students’ teasing, Luna serenely goes about her business, expecting her items to return to her because she wholeheartedly trusts in the goodness of people. This wonderful lack of inhibition makes Luna an integral part of the Hogwarts story, as she is unencumbered by patriarchal gender expectations, providing a realistically androgynous female character. Luna makes visible the gendered assumptions within Hogwarts and provides an alternate view for readers.

Luna Lovegood and Hermione Granger polarize the spectrum of female students at Hogwarts. They are very different characters, but both are key to Hogwarts’ subversion of patriarchal expectations. Luna relies on intuition and believes “crazy” theories, whereas the cerebral Hermione relies on fact and logic, researching everything before making judgments. Physically they differ as well. As previously mentioned, Luna’s appearance combined with her “sing-song,” dreamy voice (*Order of the Phoenix* 186), contrasts with Hermione’s “bossy sort of voice, lots of bushy brown hair, and rather large front teeth” (*Sorcerer’s Stone* 105). They disagree on almost everything, foregrounding another binarism the series challenges: intuition vs. intellect. On one memorable occasion, Luna mentions a fantastical (and probably nonexistent) creature, and Hermione challenges her:

“[Fudge’s] got an army of heliopaths,” said Luna solemnly.

“No, he hasn’t,” snapped Hermione.

“Yes, he has,” said Luna.

“What are heliopaths?” asked Neville, looking blank.

“They’re spirits of fire,” said Luna, her protuberant eyes widening so that she looked madder than ever. “Great tall flaming creatures that gallop across the ground burning everything in front of—”

“They don’t exist, Neville.” Said Hermione tartly.

“Oh yes they do!” said Luna angrily.

“I’m sorry, but where’s the *proof* of that?” snapped Hermione.

“There are plenty of eyewitness accounts, just because you’re so narrow-minded you need to have everything shoved under your nose before you—” (*Order of the Phoenix* 345).

From the moment Luna speaks, Hermione is on the defensive, snapping and speaking tartly to Luna. Luna is deeply offended by almost everything Hermione says (and vice versa) because each challenges the fundamental worldview of the other.

Ginny Weasley falls in the middle of the spectrum of female pupils at Hogwarts. As the sole girl child of the Weasley family, Ginny has to fight to find her own identity. She grows up in a male-dominated household, yet constructs her own sense of femininity at Hogwarts. Having had so many older male siblings, Ginny proves her mettle early on. In *Chamber of Secrets* as an 11 year-old, she forcefully defends Harry to Draco Malfoy, who is older, male, and more physically imposing, saying “Leave him alone! He didn’t want [those free books of Lockhart’s!]” (61).³⁴ A few years later, when Ron

³⁴ Gilderoy Lockhart, the new Defense Against the Dark Arts professor, is a celebrity in the wizarding world, widely regarded as insufferably narcissistic.

unintentionally injures a female Quidditch player in *Half-Blood Prince* after failing to block a goal, Ginny erupts: “You prat, Ron, look at the state of her!” Nor does she accept rebuke that she has overstepped her authority, rebuking Harry (the Team Captain) in turn: “Well, you seemed too busy to call [Ron on his behavior] and I thought someone should—” (285-6). During the fight in the Department of Mysteries in *Order of the Phoenix*, a Death Eater breaks Ginny’s ankle, yet she attempts to continue fighting unassisted saying, “It’s only my ankle, I can do it myself!” (796). As well as being tough and stubborn, Ginny is exceptionally good at charms with a black magic flair, like curses and hexes,³⁵ and is an accomplished Quidditch player. While the qualities of physical strength, stubbornness, and an affinity for dark magic have all been stereotypically masculinized, one never feels Ginny consciously adopts these qualities or uses them for personal dominance, as Umbridge does. In fact, it is because of these qualities that Ginny is so strongly connected to white magic through her family, the Order of the Phoenix, and Harry.

Ginny’s unique connection to black magic was facilitated when one of Voldemort’s Horcruxes possesses her in *Chamber of Secrets*. For most of the year, Ginny unknowingly summons a basilisk from Salazar Slytherin’s Chamber of Secrets to petrify several students (including Hermione Granger). The Horcrux, manifesting as Voldemort in his youth at Hogwarts, plays on her innermost fears and dark secrets, gaslighting her until she feels she can trust no one, not even her own sanity:

³⁵ ““How did you get away?” asked Harry in amazement, taking his wand from Ron. “Couple of Stunners, a Disarming Charm, Neville brought off a really nice little Impediment Jinx. . . .But Ginny was best, she got Malfoy—Bat-Bogey Hex—it was superb, his whole face was covered in the great flapping things” (*Order of the Phoenix* 760).

Dear Tom, I think I'm losing my memory . . . There was another attack today and I don't know where I was. Tom what am I going to do? I think I'm going mad . . .

I think I'm the one attacking everyone, Tom! (*Chamber of Secrets* 310-311).

The Horcrux eventually lures Ginny into the Chamber of Secrets and nearly consumes her soul before Harry destroys it. Though she does not destroy the Horcrux herself, eleven year-old Ginny demonstrates incredible strength in surviving its black influence for so long, something Harry, Ron and Hermione struggle to do together at seventeen in *Deathly Hallows*.

Ginny is the only character in the series with more than one boyfriend in the course of her Hogwarts years.³⁶ Her romantic life is generally accepted at Hogwarts, but her brothers make stereotypic gendered assumptions about her lifestyle and shame her. When Hermione casually mentions that Ginny and Michael Corner are dating in *Order of the Phoenix*, Ron displays stereotypically masculinized protective instincts:

“They met at the Yule Ball and got together at the end of last year,”

Hermione said composedly.

“Which one was Michael Corner?” Ron demanded furiously.

“The dark one,” said Hermione.

“I didn't like him,” said Ron at once.

“Big surprise,” said Hermione under her breath (348).

Sometimes, though, brotherly protection turns into something much more troubling: slut shaming. Though Ginny is never pictured doing more than kissing her boyfriends, her brothers make unfair assumptions about her lifestyle:

³⁶ Romanian Quidditch superstar Viktor Krum is briefly infatuated with Hermione in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, but Hermione, while intrigued at first, never shares anything more serious than a kiss with Krum.

“But we’re not selling [love potions] to our sister,” [George] added, becoming suddenly stern, “not when she’s already got about five boys on the go, from what we’ve—”

“Whatever you hear from Ron is a big fat lie,” said Ginny calmly . . .

“Are you or are you not currently going out with a boy called Dean Thomas?”

“Yes, I am,” said Ginny. “And last time I looked, he was definitely one boy, not five”

“But you’re moving through boyfriends a bit fast, aren’t you?” [said Fred]

Ginny turned to look at him, her hands on her hips. There was such a Mrs. Weasley-ish glare on her face that Harry was surprised Fred didn’t recoil.

“It’s none of your business.” (*Half-Blood Prince* 121).

As Cherland states, “Without using the word, [Fred] positions [Ginny] as “slut.” But Ginny is quick to refuse this subject position. She stands her ground, points to the unfairness of a sexual double standard, and declares herself free to act as she pleases” (Cherland 277-8). Her dating attempts seem sincere, rather than a childish attempt to make Harry jealous, and when their relationship progresses from platonic to romantic, it feels natural, not forced like Hermione and Ron’s partnership. However, after Ginny and Harry enter into a romantic relationship, Rowling essentially writes Ginny out of the narrative.

Though Ginny and Harry forge an important bond in the Chamber of Secrets that is carried through Harry’s possession in *Order of the Phoenix*, Ginny is not given equal importance in the narrative of the series. Ginny is perfectly matched with Harry: both are

intelligent, popular, extremely skilled at Quidditch, incredibly brave and strong when facing dark magic, and become uniquely connected through their shared experience of being possessed by Lord Voldemort. Yet Ginny is always a secondary character. She is never highlighted as Hermione, Ron and Harry are, though her contributions to the fight against black magic are equally valid. Even more troubling, after she and Harry begin dating, she virtually disappears from the narrative. Harry attempts to martyr himself by breaking up with her at Dumbledore's funeral to "protect" her from the coming war, but passionately embraces her before embarking on the search for the Horcruxes in *Deathly Hallows*.³⁷ While Harry is not intentionally taking advantage of Ginny, it is still troubling that, for the rest of *Deathly Hallows* until the Final Battle, Ginny is absent from the narrative (and even during the Final Battle, she plays only a small role). This transforms Ginny from a complex character into a stereotypically feminized trope: the hero's love interest. Rowling does not take advantage of the potential for character growth within this role, instead turning Ginny into an auxiliary character, "of value for a kiss (and kids) at the end" and nothing more (Cordova 22).

Hogwarts, as the stronghold of white magic, is revolutionary in subverting patriarchal stereotypes and hierarchies. It accomplishes this through gender egalitarianism in its creation, the presence of diverse, gender role-breaking professors, and multifaceted female students who challenge conventional assumptions. Though it is not completely free of antiquated hierarchies, it is the space that most extremely subverts gender norms and makes huge strides in providing equal education and opportunities for all its students, regardless of gender or blood status.

³⁷ After kissing her at the Burrow, Harry says, "She's not an idiot, she knows it can't happen, she's not expecting us to—to end up married, or—" (*Deathly Hallows* 117).

Chapter Four—The Death Eaters and the Order of the Phoenix

The Death Eaters and the Order of the Phoenix are two societies in J.K. Rowling’s wizarding world that display Manichean dualism at its most starkly confrontational. The Death Eaters represent black magic by supporting Voldemort and reinforcing rigid patriarchal presentations of gender. Conversely, the Order of the Phoenix represents white magic and promotes freer gender presentations. The leadership structure within each group illustrates these binaries even though both offer examples of full gender presentation. The powerful villainesses Bellatrix Lestrange and Narcissa Malfoy differ in their adherence to the Death Eaters’ patriarchal hierarchies and illustrate the failings of Voldemort’s dictatorship, whereas Nymphadora Tonks and Molly Weasley find power in the communal strength of the egalitarian Order of the Phoenix.

The Death Eaters, organized by Voldemort to support and enact his goal of heading a world at the mercy of black magic, embody patriarchal values at their most destructive. They are Voldemort’s black magic army—they cultivate a world of fear ripe for Voldemort’s conquest. They stand at the forefront of the infiltration of the Ministry in *Order of the Phoenix* and Hogwarts’ corruption in *Deathly Hallows*. They spread gendered hierarchies in their destructive wake, taking advantage of the already vulnerable Ministry and hardening racialized binaries existing in blood purity laws. At Hogwarts, they revive antiquated punishments, forcing students to torture each other when they resist the new system.³⁸

Arguably the most powerful person in wizarding society, Voldemort aims to become the greatest sorcerer in history through the use of fear and violence to dominate

³⁸ Neville is brutalized after refusing to “practice the Cruciatius Curse on people who’ve earned detentions” and says the Death Eaters “torture us a bit if we’re mouthy” (*Deathly Hallows* 574).

both the material and immaterial realms. His earlier efforts so traumatized wizarding society that his name has become taboo—he is referred to as “He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named,” “You-Know-Who,” or the “Dark Lord.”³⁹ Within his repertoire of terrorizing tactics, Voldemort uses Unforgivable Curses (so powerful and violent they are outlawed by the Ministry), and aims to wipe out white magic and become the dictator of the wizarding world. In doing so, he rejects anything that could associate him with white magic, like companionship, love, and friendship. Voldemort is heartless, cruel, and so powerful he is almost indestructible—his only remaining weakness is his inability to understand love, and as such underestimates its power.

Formidable as the leader of the Death Eaters, Voldemort becomes even more dominant in wizarding society when he leads the takeover of the Ministry of Magic in *Deathly Hallows*. He and his Death Eaters cast the Imperius Curse (a curse that allows the caster to control the body of the cursed person) on various Ministry employees who then pass laws that enable him and his followers to infiltrate and take over the Ministry. This makes him the would-be patriarch of the wizarding world, with majority rule over two-thirds of wizarding society. Voldemort promotes stagnancy and rejects anything that could threaten his power—love, friendship, innovation—all tenets of a successful, egalitarian society. With Voldemort achieving dominion over the wizarding world, all sources of societal growth would be stamped out, including gender equalization. Gender stereotypes and a patriarchal society would prevail, because patriarchy allows Voldemort to occupy the highest position possible.

³⁹ Voldemort’s symbol is a skull eating a snake, known as the Dark Mark. The snake recalls the story of Adam and Eve, when the Devil disguised as a snake tricks Eve into eating the forbidden fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, yet another herald to the Manichean struggle in the series. The skull conjures death imagery, further associating Voldemort with black magic and death.

The Death Eaters, aside from being led by the satanic antagonist to all practitioners of white magic, demonstrate very unequal gender representation. Out of at least twenty Death Eaters mentioned in the books, only three are women: Narcissa Malfoy, Bellatrix Lestrange, and Alecto Carrow. Of these three women, Narcissa Malfoy is never confirmed as a Death Eater, though she is present at many meetings and both her husband and her son are confirmed Death Eaters. Alecto Carrow, introduced only in the sixth book, remains at Hogwarts through the rest of the series, though the narrative takes place mostly outside of the school, which minimizes her impact. However, Bellatrix Lestrange, an extremely powerful witch and influential in the Death Eaters, both fights against and acts in accordance with gendered hierarchies present in Voldemort's upper echelon.

Bellatrix presents a very different alignment with black magic than Umbridge. Where Umbridge seeks perfect bureaucratic dominance, Bellatrix longs for chaos, an apocalyptic world where she and Voldemort are free to create mayhem and pain. Umbridge is repressively self-controlled, but Bellatrix revels in chaos, heralding back to the Greek Maenads.⁴⁰ Bellatrix has a deeper connection with Voldemort than any other Death Eater. They complement each other—Voldemort is sadistic, obsessed with immortality, staunchly upholds blood purity, and ruthlessly pursues dominion over the entire wizarding world. Bellatrix proves equally sadistic, finds joy in torturing and murdering Muggle-born citizens and remains fiercely devoted to Voldemort's quest for dominance. Unlike several other complementary pairs in the series who foster a deeper

⁴⁰ Followers of the god Dionysus, they are wild, insane women who ripped people apart limb from limb in ecstatic fury.

sense of humanity through their bond, Bellatrix and Voldemort embrace the opposite—cultivating deeper hatred and evil.

Bellatrix believes herself to be Voldemort’s “most faithful” and “loyal” servant (*Half-Blood Prince* 29). After the First Wizarding War, Bellatrix was sent to Azkaban⁴¹ after torturing two members of the Order of the Phoenix using the Cruciatus Curse (an Unforgivable that inflicts excruciating pain). During her trial for this torture, Bellatrix sits “in the chained chair as though it were a throne,” disturbingly beautiful with her “thick, shining dark hair and heavily hooded eyes” (594). She displays unashamed regal pride in her alignment with Voldemort: “Throw us into Azkaban; we will wait! [Voldemort] will rise again and will come for us, he will reward us beyond any of his other supporters! We alone were faithful! We alone tried to find him!” (595-6). Her unerring devotion pays off—ten years later, she breaks out of Azkaban, still wearing her “arrogant, disdainful smile” (*Order of the Phoenix* 554). While aligning herself with the greatest patriarch in the wizarding world, Bellatrix subordinates herself with traditional gender binaries, but otherwise defies easy inclusion within feminine stereotypes.

Bellatrix LeStrange also holds a unique position among the female characters in the *Harry Potter* series because of her erotic suggestiveness: she exudes raw power and sensuality with her “heavily hooded eyes,” “dark, shining hair,” and self-assurance bordering on arrogance. Rowling presents her in extensive physical detail: almost every time she is mentioned, her chest continuously rises and falls,⁴² she is breathless,⁴³ panting,⁴⁴ flushed,⁴⁵ and her mouth,⁴⁶ an erotic facial point, receives mention. Bellatrix’s

⁴¹ The wizarding prison, very similar to Alcatraz.

⁴² *Order of the Phoenix* 783, *Half-Blood Prince* 25

⁴³ *Deathly Hallows* 10

⁴⁴ *Half-Blood Prince* 21, *Deathly Hallows* 462, 471

sexualization, combined with her exotic features, creates a picture of a wild, wanton woman whose passionate fixation on Voldemort suggests that she is in love with him. Her longing becomes especially pronounced in the *Deathly Hallows* where she leans “toward Voldemort, for mere words [cannot] demonstrate her longing for closeness” (9), she gazes at him “imploringly” (10) with “tears of gratitude” (11) and she speaks to him “as if to a lover” (724). Bellatrix’s perverse love for the most unlovable, evil person imaginable demonstrates her deviance within the series. Her feminine energies serve evil incarnate, she finds ecstatic pleasure in torture and death, and repudiates one of the greatest sources of power for women within the series: maternal love. Yet Bellatrix does not totally reject traditional gender presentation since she aligns herself very closely—almost romantically—with the patriarchy via her bond with Voldemort. And he, in turn, exploits her desire while severely reprimanding her for non-submission. According to Rowling, Bellatrix acts as a female psychopath usually does, “needing to meet a male counterpart to release that part of [herself]” (Rowling, “Women of Harry Potter!”). Bellatrix could not have found her power without the support from Voldemort and her utter devotion to him. She believes herself to be his “most faithful *servant*,” (*Order of the Phoenix* 811) evincing her willing subordination to him.

When Harry travels to the Department of Mysteries to rescue his godfather Sirius in *Order of the Phoenix*, Bellatrix says, “*The little baby woke up fwightened and fort what it dweamed was twoo*” in a “horrible mock-baby voice” (782) and takes pleasure in telling Neville Longbottom about her joy in torturing his parents. In *Deathly Hallows* when Bellatrix duels Molly Weasley, she “roars with laughter” at the prospect of fighting

⁴⁵ *Half-Blood Prince* 25, 29, *Deathly Hallows* 9, 10

⁴⁶ *Order of the Phoenix* 544, *Half-Blood Prince* 28, 36, *Deathly Hallows* 11

a seemingly pathetic witch, and again takes pleasure in taunting Molly about the death of her son Fred, saying, “What will happen to your children when I’ve killed you? . . . When Mummy’s gone the same way as Freddie?” (736). Bellatrix sees motherhood as disempowering and thus goes out of her way to expose the bond between mother and child as powerless before dark magic. Critic María Sánchez states that Bellatrix “cannot feel/have/give this powerful motherly love” but instead replaces this love with her obsession with Lord Voldemort, giving her “a freakish connotation as a woman” which adds to her “insanity and sadism” (223). Bellatrix learns her mistake in presuming motherhood equates to weakness, however. While motherhood creates profound emotional vulnerability in women, it also fosters great strength, as Narcissa Malfoy, Lily Potter, and especially Molly Weasley demonstrate.

Narcissa Malfoy bridges the binary between white and black magic—she is disempowered by her patriarchal subordination in the Death Eaters but finds strength and active empowerment through maternal protection of her son. She sits “rigid and impassive” at Death Eater meetings and refuses to make eye contact with Voldemort, distancing herself as much as possible from his patriarchal rigidities. Narcissa aligns herself with the Death Eaters because of her strong pureblood heritage and devotion to her husband, though she has none of Bellatrix’s passion for black magic. Narcissa’s physical characteristics also distance her from other Death Eaters—while most are dark and imposing in stature (for example, Bellatrix), Narcissa is blonde, slender and unimposing—a beacon of light in the darkness.

On the other side of the Manichean binary structuring the series stands the Order of the Phoenix, the white magic practicing group created by Albus Dumbledore to oppose

Voldemort and the Death Eaters. They are much more dynamic in both gender representation and gender fluidity. Albus Dumbledore, the most revered person in the *Harry Potter* series, did not come early to his allegiance with white magic and its communitarian ethic. In his youth, Dumbledore flirted with the idea of wizarding supremacy and befriended Gellert Grindelwald, who was to become the second greatest Dark wizard of all time: as Rita Skeeter writes, “he would miss out on the top spot only because You-Know-Who arrived, a generation later, to steal his crown” (*Deathly Hallows* 355). Another adherent to pureblood ideology, Gellert Grindelwald believed wizards far superior to Muggles, and pursued the three Deathly Hallows⁴⁷ in order to become the Master of Death and force Muggles into subservience. At this point in his moral evolution, Dumbledore also favored a hierarchical subordination of Muggles but even here his orientation privileged white magic over dark: he never aligned with the latter and naively believed conquest and good can coexist. In a letter to Grindelwald he explained:

Your point about Wizard dominance being FOR THE MUGGLES’ OWN GOOD—this, I think, is the crucial point. Yes, we have been given power and yes, that power gives us the right to rule, but it also gives us responsibilities over the ruled. We must stress this point, it will be the foundation stone upon which we build. Where we are opposed, as we surely will be, this must be the basis of all our counterarguments. We seize control FOR THE GREATER GOOD. And from this it follows that where we meet resistance, we must use only the force that is necessary and no more. (*Deathly Hallows* 357)

⁴⁷ Three items that, if used together, would make one the Master of Death, the Deathly Hallows consist of the Resurrection Stone, the Elder Wand, and the Cloak of Invisibility.

Dumbledore was brilliant, gifted, and selfishly longed for glory (*Deathly Hallows* 715), as Voldemort would be in the next generation, but Dumbledore quickly realized that the essence of white magic eschews domination. After his sister Ariana tragically died during a duel between Grindelwald and Dumbledore, he overcame the seductive danger of black magic and rejected it in favor of progress, love, and equality.

In later decades, Dumbledore organizes the Order of the Phoenix as a resistance force to Voldemort, and creates a community-based leadership system to counteract the dictatorial leadership of the Death Eaters. However, there are members who stand out as leaders within the Order, one of whom is Molly Weasley. Molly runs the home base of the Order, 12 Grimmauld Place. Once the home of Sirius Black, it was abandoned for several years when Sirius was in Azkaban and his parents passed away. As an ancestrally pureblood household, it is an ambiguous space filled with powerful dark magic mementos. Molly leads the charge in “waging war on the house” (*Order of Phoenix* 117) as well as cooking for its residents and any members passing through. She also organizes the Order’s meetings, communicates with Dumbledore on mission progress, and makes sure all members are accounted for. Molly’s leadership is met with begrudging acceptance, since several male members of the Order find her overbearing and controlling, especially Sirius,⁴⁸ Remus Lupin, and Harry himself.

Though leading a radical group like the Order of the Phoenix proves extremely stressful, Molly does it while caring for her four youngest children as well as Harry and Hermione until the school term starts. The stress finally overwhelms her one evening when she is battling a boggart in 12 Grimmauld Place. Every time she cast the

⁴⁸ One scene where Sirius undermined Molly’s authority was discussed in Chapter One.

counterspell, the boggart displays another dead family member, and Remus Lupin steps up to finally destroy it. Molly admits her maternal anxieties were used against her:

“I’m just s-s-so worried,” she said, tears spilling out of her eyes again. “Half the f-f-family’s in the Order, it’ll b-b-be a miracle if we all come through this . . . and P-P-Percy’s not talking to us. . . .What if something d-d-dreadful happens and we had never m-m-made up? And what’s going to happen if Arthur and I get killed, who’s g-g-going to look after Ron and Ginny. . . .D-d-don’t tell Arthur, I d-d-don’t want him to know. . . .Being silly” (*Order of the Phoenix* 176-177).

Molly worries intensely about her children, but keeps her feelings in check as much as she can. Though she occupies a domestic role within her family and the Order, Molly isn’t “just the 1950s housewife, warm and cozy. . . there [is] some real steel there” (Rowling, “Women of Harry Potter!”)

Nymphadora Tonks, one of the youngest members of the Order of the Phoenix, is predictably rebellious regarding traditional hierarchy, even within this egalitarian community. As a Metamorphmagus, she can “change [her] appearance at will” (*Order of the Phoenix* 52). Rather than making herself unrealistically beautiful, Tonks⁴⁹ uses her talent to create wild hair shades (her favorite being bubblegum pink) or to give herself a variety of comedic noses for others’ enjoyment. Tonks also serves as a skilled Auror⁵⁰ in the Ministry, although she is never shown there, an omission that lessens her association in the reader’s mind with its patriarchal and bureaucratic practices. Conversely, because

⁴⁹ This preference for a gender-neutral name already distinguishes her from other female characters in the books, and illustrates her rejection of traditional gender characteristics.

⁵⁰ An “elite unit of highly trained, specialist officers within the Department of Magical Law Enforcement in the Ministry. They are trained to investigate crimes related to the Dark Arts, and apprehend or detain Dark wizards and witches” (Harry Potter Wiki, “Aurors”).

Tonks is one of only two known female Aurors, her transgression of gender stereotypes offers more proof that the Ministry is not completely in thrall to the patriarchy.

While Tonks proves very skilled at defensive spells, she “never quite got the hang of . . . householdy spells” (53), defying another stereotype. Tonks values playfulness over beauty, thrives in a traditionally male-dominated job over domestic bliss, and has absolutely no grace,⁵¹ making her a wonderfully realistic female character. After falling in love with werewolf Remus Lupin, Tonks displays profound vulnerability: “last year she had been inquisitive (to the point of being a little annoying at times), she had laughed easily, she had made jokes. Now she seemed older and more purposeful,” abandoning her fantastical bubblegum pink hair for a “mousy” color (157-158). Her newfound gravitas comes from loving a werewolf, a species feared in wizarding society. After Bill is attacked by a werewolf and Fleur defends her choice to marry him despite his disfigurement, Tonks exclaims: “You see! . . . She still wants to marry him, even though he’s been bitten! She doesn’t care. . . .But I don’t care either, I don’t care! . . .I’ve told you a million times” (*Order of the Phoenix* 623-624). Tonks defends her right to love whomever she chooses, risk social scorn, and accept danger as part of the responsibility of membership in the Order. In *Deathly Hallows*, Tonks further embraces feminine attributes when she gives birth to a son, Teddy, yet remains an active member of the Order and plays a prominent role in the Final Battle, reinforcing yet again the power of motherhood. That the Order values child-bearing women because of their maternal abilities rather than despite them marks the difference between the Death Eaters and the Order. Where the Death Eaters rely on strict patriarchal hierarchies to create order, the

⁵¹ ‘CRASH. “Tonks!” cried Mrs. Weasley exasperatedly, turning to look behind her. “I’m sorry!” wailed Tonks, who was lying flat on the floor. “It’s that stupid umbrella stand, that’s the second time I’ve tripped over [it]” (*Order of the Phoenix* 77).

Order's communitarian values elevate women's power to equal that of men, allowing them to flourish where the Death Eaters stagnate.

The Manichean struggle between the Death Eaters and the Order of the Phoenix comes to a head in the Final Battle of Hogwarts in *Deathly Hallows*. For the first time in the series, Voldemort attacks Hogwarts, its white magic haven is breached, and students are dragged into the confrontation between the Death Eaters and the Order of the Phoenix. A moral as well as physical battle takes place, and Voldemort and his patriarchal binaries are defeated.

The first confrontation happens between two characters central to the faculty's seeming Manichean binaries: Minerva McGonagall and Severus Snape. After Snape deposes Minerva as Headmaster of Hogwarts in the beginning of *Deathly Hallows*, she is forced to watch the slow replacement of true professors with Death Eaters, unable to stop the corruption without risking danger to students in her own House. But when Harry returns to the school heralding Voldemort's imminent attack, Minerva acts:

Professor McGonagall moved faster than Harry could have believed: Her wand slashed through the air . . . the descending flames [became] a ring of fire that filled the corridor and flew like a lasso at Snape—

Then it was no longer fire, but a great black serpent that McGonagall blasted to smoke, which re-formed and solidified in seconds to become a swarm of pursuing daggers . . . [Snape] hurtled through a classroom door and . . . with a tingle of horror, Harry saw in the distance a huge, batlike shape flying through the darkness.

[Harry] heard McGonagall cry, “Coward! *COWARD!*” (*Deathly Hallows* 598-9, edited for length)

After Severus flees from battle, Minerva takes control of Hogwarts once again, calling the faculty to action to fight the oncoming army. She plays a lead role in the attack and at one point battles Voldemort himself.⁵² Minerva fearlessly leads Hogwarts’ mobilization and attack, again demonstrating her commitment to protecting Hogwarts’ white magic stronghold at the risk of imprisonment or death.

Hogwarts students also play an important role in the battle, though gender discrimination limits some characters’ impact. Hermione, while at the forefront of battles throughout the rest of the series, plays a less significant role in the battle than she deserves. While she does destroy a Horcrux, the series glosses over the action in passing summary rather than dramatizing the act as had occurred with the other six Horcruxes. As critic Melanie Cordova states:

The diary shows Voldemort’s rise to power and Harry’s bravery in saving Ginny; the locket shows Ron dealing with his feelings of inadequacy and reunites the heroes; the diadem shows how Vincent Crabbe’s violence backfires and kills him . . . Nagini shows Neville Longbottom’s bravery in the face of evil; Harry’s death shows his willingness to die for truth, love and fairness. Quite literally, the cup’s destruction show nothing, as there is no scene at all (31).

Even more troubling is the framing of Hermione’s Horcrux destruction. Ron, looking “delighted with himself,” says: “Hermione stabbed [the Horcrux]. Thought she should. She hasn’t had the pleasure yet” (*Deathly Hallows* 623). Rather than looking delighted with Hermione, Ron is pleased with himself for generously “permitting” her the

⁵² *Deathly Hallows* 735

opportunity. Neither Ron nor Harry acknowledge Hermione's skill in destroying the Horcrux, and she doesn't speak at all in the scene, imparting to readers not that Hermione is a skilled witch but that Ron is the hero, a step backwards for strong female representation in the series.

Ginny's position in the Final Battle is also troubling. Despite having co-led the student rebellion against the corrupt professors with Neville Longbottom, Ginny is pulled out of Hogwarts at Easter and Molly forbids her from fighting in the Final Battle, saying, "You're underage! . . . I won't permit it. The boys, yes, but you, you've got to go home!" She also devalues Ginny's role in Dumbledore's Army by calling it just a "teenagers' gang" (*Deathly Hallows* 604). Ginny ignores Molly's command and fights alongside the other students, but Molly's exclusion of Ginny on the basis of age and gender goes against everything Rowling had previously depicted. She undermines two of the most intelligent, adept young women in the series in the Final Battle.

Older female characters, however, are empowered through the Final Battle. As discussed in Chapter One, Molly defeats Bellatrix in a prodigious display of maternal protection and magical skill. Tonks, though recently having a child, fights to protect her husband, saying she "couldn't stand not knowing [if he lived or died]" (624). Both women invert the traditional depiction of men fighting to protect their housebound wives. Predictably, the ultimate empowerment happens to the male Harry, whose life up to this moment has been fighting Lord Voldemort's rise to supremacy. Harry enters the Forbidden Forest knowing he will sacrifice himself to Voldemort. Instead of dying, though, he is transported to a ghostly King's Cross Station, where Dumbledore confesses he had desired to be "Master of Death" like Voldemort, that "Power was [his] weakness

and [his] temptation” (Deathly Hallows 713). He delivers the final lesson in his long mentorship of Harry: “those who are best suited to power are those who have never sought it” (*Deathly Hallows* 718) and thereby explains Harry’s victory. As critics Pugh and Wallace state, “The test of Harry’s manhood becomes largely Christ-like in the need for him to resist the temptation to power inherent in the Deathly Hallows and in his willingness to surrender his own life for the greater good” (189). Harry, through the selfless sacrifice of his life, proves himself a better man than both Albus and Voldemort. Harry settles the Manichean struggle for good by destroying the Horcrux inside of him and then killing Voldemort himself. Even when facing his ultimate nemesis, Harry offers love rather than hate, offering Voldemort a chance for retribution: “Be a man . . . try for some remorse” (741). Harry does not fall to Voldemort’s level and kill him out of hate, though he has ample reason to do so; rather, he tries to give Voldemort his humanity back through repentance, a chance to mitigate the eternal suffering Voldemort will face after death. Alas, Voldemort refuses, devoted to hatred and evil until the end, while Harry has reaffirmed the superior power of white magic and his own dignity.

The Death Eaters and the Order of the Phoenix embody the Manichean struggle by highlighting the conflict between the racialized patriarchal hierarchies of black magic and the communitarian values of equality, love, and acceptance of white magic. At the Final Battle at Hogwarts, the two societies confront each other in an apocalyptic battle where white magic triumphs over black magic. Drawing back to Mani’s cosmogony, the Final Battle at Hogwarts represents the final phase of the Manichean struggle, when “the evil principle and all its substance will be forced to withdraw into the dark realm, which will once more be completely separated from the light. But the restored order will not be

exactly what it was at the beginning, for some light will remain entrapped in the darkness forever” (Coyle xv). Voldemort’s patriarchy is abolished, and white magic reigns supreme once again, yet two of the most powerful young female characters, Hermione and Ginny, are excluded from active roles in the Final Battle, tarnishing white magic’s victory with antiquated patriarchal gender assumptions.

Chapter Five—Hermione

Hermione Granger, the most beloved and most hotly debated character in the *Harry Potter* series, stood as a childhood hero and mentor to me—she still remains someone I aspire to be. I concluded there was no better choice than to talk about the novels and the female characters that have been constantly a part of my life since I was eleven years old. Hermione’s years at Hogwarts, including her interactions with Harry and Ron and her relationships with female mentors, strongly influence her evolving gender identity. Yet her eventual taming throughout the series, culminating in her role as Ron’s wife, prompts me to explore a more fitting romantic partnership alternative in Harry, whose balanced gender complexity more closely matches her own.

Hermione is first introduced in *Sorcerer’s Stone* when she enters Harry and Ron’s compartment on the Hogwarts Express looking for another classmate’s pet toad. She is already wearing her robes, has a “bossy sort of voice, lots of bushy brown hair, and rather large front teeth” (*Sorcerer’s Stone* 105). She becomes extremely excited when Ron appears to be about to perform a spell. After he fails, she says:

Are you sure that’s a real spell? . . . Well, it’s not very good, is it? I’ve tried a few simple spells just for practice and it’s all worked for me. Nobody in my family’s magic at all, it was ever such a surprise when I got my letter, but I was ever so pleased, of course, I mean, it’s the very best school of witchcraft there is, I’ve heard—I’ve learned all our course books by heart, of course, I just hope it will be enough—I’m Hermione Granger, by the way, who are you? (105-6).

This entrance describes Hermione perfectly—exuberant, polite but a little insulting, self-confident, and extremely intelligent. Harry and Ron are, of course, a bit taken aback at

her seeming arrogance, and Ron says, “Whatever House I’m in, I hope she’s not in it” (106) which is the general reaction from the students of Hogwarts.

Hermione remains a very unlikeable character in the beginning of the series. She bosses people around, interferes in other people’s business, and proves to be, in Snape’s words, an “insufferable know-it-all” (*Prisoner of Azkaban* 172). Hermione’s priorities seem twisted—incredibly intelligent, she sees this intelligence as paramount—at the expense of her friendships. After intercepting a duel between Harry, Draco and Ron and accidentally discovering Fluffy, the three-headed guard dog, Hermione furiously yells at Harry and Ron: “I hope you’re pleased with yourselves. We could all have been killed—or worse, expelled. Now, if you don’t mind, I’m going to bed” (*Sorcerer’s Stone* 162). Hermione blends stereotypically masculinized and feminized traits: she is loud, nagging, bossy, intelligent, and plain, and this amalgamation offends her traditionally oriented peers. Ron voices everyone’s opinion when he snaps, “It’s no wonder no one can stand her . . . she’s a nightmare, honestly” (172). Hermione, though confident, is deeply wounded by this comment, and flees to a bathroom where, unfortunately, a troll is released later that evening. Luckily, Ron and Harry rescue Hermione and knock out the troll, and “from that moment on, Hermione Granger became their friend” (*Sorcerer’s Stone* 179). This incident propagates troublesome commentary on male-female friendships—Ron and Harry assume dominance and rescue a vulnerable female before considering her worthy of friendship, and Hermione is uncharacteristically powerless during the fight, though she has the requisite skills: it appears her feminine dependence must make her “safe” before the young males can accept her in their circle. Despite the negative implications of her initial friendship with Harry and Ron, Hermione retains most

of her previously abrasive traits, and her classmates eventually acclimate. She remains top of her class and favorite of most of her professors in her first three years at Hogwarts.⁵³ In *Prisoner of Azkaban*, Hermione is permitted to have a Time Turner in order to take every subject offered, confirming her as the “cleverest witch of [her] age” (346). Together Harry, Ron and Hermione make the perfect team: “Harry tends to be the one who has to shoulder the most of the burden—he is the true hero in that sense, Hermione . . . is really the brain of the outfit, and Ron . . . is a very brave character” (Rowling, *Accio Quote!*). Hermione’s logic and intelligence match with Harry’s bravery and inventiveness, and together with Ron’s steadfastness, they are able to defeat Voldemort on several occasions. Hermione’s integral role in the trio as the “brain of the outfit” challenges gender stereotypes in ways that have empowered millions of young female readers, who receive daily messages that intelligence is not valued in women and girls. Furthermore, Hermione is not relegated to the sidelines of the action or left behind to do research or caretake while the men fight battles; rather, she is an active participant in the course of the narrative.

Hermione’s blood status also revolutionizes her accomplishments at Hogwarts. As Muggle-born (or Mudblood)—one of the least respected groups of people in the wizarding world, she is singled out and humiliated several times within the series. Despite the dangers Hermione faces because of her blood status, she takes pride in her identity, saying “I’m hunted quite as much as any goblin or elf . . . I’m a Mudblood! . . . Mudblood, and proud of it!” (*Deathly Hallows* 489). Rather than allowing her blood

⁵³ “Flitwick told me in secret that I got a hundred and twelve percent on his exam. They’re not throwing me out after that” (*Sorcerer’s Stone* 270).

status to define her or make her weak, she reclaims her identity as Mudblood and finds power through solidarity with others who lack pureblood status.

In her first three years at Hogwarts, Hermione proves to be one of the most complex female characters in the *Harry Potter* series. She unapologetically develops her gender identity separate from the patriarchal expectations of the wizarding world. It is interesting, then, that the language used to describe some of Hermione's behavior in the first three books undercuts her authority, intelligence, and power. Critic Eliza Dresang argues:

Rowling allows Hermione to lose sight of her own strength and revert to stereotypic behavior [facilitated by] employing gender-related stereotypic words to Hermione's behavior again and again. Repeatedly Rowling has Hermione "shriek," "squeak," "wail," "squeal," and "whimper," verbs never applied to the male characters in the book [and] for Hermione the bossy, assertive champion of rights and problem solver, these words . . . seem unbelievable and completely out of character (223).

While the use of stereotypically feminine descriptive words solely with Hermione is troubling, I argue that the impact of these words is not entirely negative. Vulnerability, which feminist critics tend to undervalue in female characters, is a valuable emotion for all persons, as Rowling portrays throughout the series. Hermione cries many times, but so do Hagrid, Molly, Draco,⁵⁴ and Harry himself.⁵⁵ Such vulnerability, evidence of a developed emotional side, is not only a feminine trait in the series.

⁵⁴ "Malfoy was crying—actually crying—tears streaming down his pale face into the grimy basin" (*Half-Blood Prince* 522).

⁵⁵ "And the tears came before [Harry] could stop them . . . he let them fall, lips pressed hard together" looking down at "the place where the last of Lily and James lay" (*Deathly Hallows* 328-9).

In *Goblet of Fire*, the introduction of students from wizarding schools Durmstrang and Beauxbatons for the Triwizard Tournament introduces issues of physical presentation and sexualization just as the characters enter puberty. With these new students comes the possibility of romantic interaction, and Hogwarts students become very concerned with physical appearance. After Hermione is hit with a curse causing her already overlarge front teeth to grow alarmingly fast so that she resembles “a beaver” (299), Hermione shrinks her teeth to average size rather than keeping her original imperfections. Her self-conscious physical transformation continues at the Yule Ball, when she appears wearing beautiful periwinkle blue robes, her hair “no longer bushy but sleek and shiny, and twisted up into an elegant knot at the back of her head” (414). Her adoption of traditionally feminized beauty standards for one evening does not reflect a radical change in her personality especially since she returned to her former appearance the next day, saying “it’s way too much bother to do every day” (433). However, the reactions from her fellow students, most notably Ron Weasley, illustrate antiquated patriarchal assumptions still present in wizarding society. Ron displays resentment and jealousy, accusing Hermione of “fraternizing with the enemy” (421) by taking Quidditch superstar Viktor Krum as her date.⁵⁶ Ron’s reaction is problematic for multiple reasons: he presumes that Hermione changes her appearance to impress men; he feels he is entitled to have her as his partner for the ball, insinuating she does not have freedom of choice; and he accuses her of betrayal by accepting the invitation of a rival athlete, villainizing her sexuality.

⁵⁶ “Just because it’s taken *you* three years to notice, Ron, doesn’t mean no one *else* has spotted I’m a girl!” (*Goblet of Fire* 400).

After Ron's condemnation, Hermione guards against further commandeering of her romantic choices. Gossip columnist Rita Skeeter soon publishes a defamatory article saying "Miss Granger . . . has a taste for famous wizards that Harry alone cannot satisfy. Since the arrival at Hogwarts of Viktor Krum . . . Miss Granger has been toying with both boys' affections" (*Goblet of Fire* 512). Hermione retaliates against this attempt to shame her by threatening to expose Skeeter as an unregistered Animagus unless she stops telling "horrible lies about people" (728).

In the later *Harry Potter* books, Hermione develops very powerful female relationships that influence her gender identity. Minerva McGonagall becomes her mentor and one of Hermione's staunchest supporters, calling her "a model student" (*Prisoner of Azkaban* 395) and facilitating her getting a Time Turner. In turn, Hermione emulates Minerva's stalwartness, even adopting the same "steely glint in her eye" (*Chamber of Secrets* 213). Hermione also forms a close friendship with Ginny, both women confide in each other⁵⁷ and, when necessary, defend the other against patriarchal assumptions from their male friends.⁵⁸

One of my biggest disappointments with Rowling's achievements in the series involves Ron and Hermione's relationship. Ron undermines Hermione's power or makes sexist, hurtful comments toward her several times in the series. He only compliments Hermione when he has an ulterior motive: for example in their fifth year he attempts to guilt her into doing his homework: "We just haven't got your brains or your memory or

⁵⁷ Ginny, when discussing her unrequited youthful crush on Harry in her first year at Hogwarts, says, "Hermione told me to get on with life, maybe go out with some other people, relax a bit around you (Harry), because I never used to be able to talk if you were in the room, remember? And she thought you might take a bit more notice if I was a bit more—myself" (*Half-Blood Prince* 647).

⁵⁸ For an example of this, see Chapter Four, when Hermione and Ron discuss Ginny's relationship with Michael Corner.

your concentration—you're just cleverer than we are—is it nice to rub it in?" (*Order of the Phoenix* 229). Ron accuses Hermione of mocking him with her intelligence and shames her for questionable morality when her talents undermine him. Hermione's intelligence and self-worth challenge Ron's masculinity, which is unacceptable to him. When Hermione is invited to join Professor Slughorn's exclusive club for the best and brightest students at Hogwarts, Ron retaliates by mocking her intelligence and accusing her of promiscuity, saying, "*Slug Club* . . . it's pathetic . . . Why don't you try hooking up with McLaggen, then Slughorn can make you King and Queen Slug" (*Half-Blood Prince* 282). Ron uses the same slanderous tactics as Rita Skeeter to shame Hermione for her romantic choices. Ironically, one of the only times Ron truly compliments Hermione occurs when he is trying to sway her into dating him. Ron gives Harry a birthday present, "Twelve Fail-Safe Ways to Charm Witches," saying, "It's pure gold . . . If only I'd had this last year I'd have known exactly how to get rid of Lavender and I would've known how to get going with [Hermione]" (*Deathly Hallows* 113). A few minutes later, Harry sees Ron compliment her: "'Nice,' said Ron, as with one final flourish of her wand, Hermione turned the leaves on the crabapple tree to gold. 'You've really got an eye for that sort of thing.' . . . [Harry] had a funny notion that he would find a chapter on compliments when he found time to peruse his copy of *Twelve Fail-Safe Ways to Charm Witches*" (119). Ron is interested in Hermione as a child is interested in a toy: wanting the toy, claiming the toy, then asserting dominance to protect it from other children. This removes Hermione's autonomy, transforming her into an object to be claimed and perpetuating the patriarchal purity myth that once a woman aligns with another man, she is soiled and impure.

Once the trio is on the run from Voldemort, Ron imposes traditionally feminized domestic expectations on her, relying on her to cook yet criticizing her skill, saying “it’s disgusting. . . .My mother can make good food appear out of thin air” (*Deathly Hallows* 292-3). When she points out this sexist double-standard, he tries to excuse his comment by saying she always cooks because she’s “supposed to be the best at magic!” (293). While this is a plausible explanation, neither Harry nor Ron are ever pictured cooking after this conversation, perpetuating the sexist stereotype.

Though Ron consistently shames Hermione for not adhering to patriarchal gender stereotypes, in the epilogue of the series, she is married to him and has two children, Rose and Hugo. Rowling has stated that this choice was wish fulfillment on her part,⁵⁹ and I argue that most of the epilogue continues that self-indulgence. Harry also receives an overly stereotypic gender depiction in the epilogue, though not to the level of Hermione. He works as an Auror for the Department of Mysteries, his childhood dream, and is married to Ginny with three children, jovially resigned to domestic bliss. While he lacks the wit and fire he had in his youth, his end seems generally well-matched to his temperament and future dreams. Hermione’s modest future, in contrast, seems unrealistically stereotyped given her childhood character. Hermione never expressed a desire for motherhood in the texts, and Rowling’s inclusion of children fits more with her idealized worldview of the nuclear family as the seat of goodness and love than with Hermione’s original personality. Furthermore, the adult Hermione has become the

⁵⁹ I wrote the Hermione/Ron relationship as a form of wish fulfillment . . . 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 and Ron . . . I’m not sure you could have got over [the combative side] in an adult relationship, there was too much fundamental incompatibility. . . . In some ways Hermione and Harry are a better fit” (Rowling, J.K. “Wonderland Interview.” Interview by Emma Watson. *Mugglenet*. Feb. 2014. Web.)

Deputy Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement in the Ministry.⁶⁰ This seems a rather lowly position for the “cleverest witch of her age.” Given her early intelligence and ambition, she could conceivably become Minister of Magic or Headmistress of Hogwarts. Yet she occupies a mid-level position in the Ministry aligned with bureaucratic oversight instead of pursuing her own assertion in *Deathly Hallows* to the Minister of Magic that she wasn’t pursuing a career in the Ministry because she is “hoping to do some good in the world!” (124). The Hermione viewed at the end of the series falls far short of the energetic, intelligent stereotype-breaking young woman introduced in the rest of the series.

Hermione deserves a life partner much more befitting her intelligence and gender complexity—namely, Harry Potter. Harry is the archetypal hero—intelligent, strong, brave, and skilled—but blends feminized characteristics with the archetypal “masculine” ones, becoming a more developed and complex hero figure. Harry does not shy away from “feminine” emotions, but embraces them. For example, after his longtime mentor and friend Albus Dumbledore dies in *Half-Blood Prince*, Harry “could not prevent hot tears spilling from his eyes” (644). Harry also seeks advice and friendship from a variety of people, many of them women, defying the stereotype of the brave, solitary hero. Harry would not have defeated Voldemort each year were it not for the guidance of Hermione Granger, and he confides in Minerva McGonagall his suspicions about Umbridge and Draco Malfoy in *Order of the Phoenix* and *Half-Blood Prince*. While Harry’s best friend is Ron, Harry has “heterosocial relationships with Hermione, Luna, and Ginny [which] set him apart from the traditionally heroic male with his male sidekick” (Wannamaker).

⁶⁰ Rowling, J.K. “Dumbledore’s Army Reunites at Quidditch World Cup Final.” *Pottermore*. Warner Brothers, 8 July 2014. Web.

Harry also seeks parental figures to guide him, though his biological parents are dead. Molly Weasley and Minerva McGonagall act as surrogate mothers, while Albus Dumbledore and Sirius Black provide him with father figures.

Hermione and Harry have a unique relationship that complements the gender spectrum operating in each. Harry's relationship with Hermione encompasses a range of emotion, unlike Ron and Hermione's relationship. Harry and Hermione have always been open with each other about their deepest feelings. When Harry struggles to understand his first crush Cho Chang, Hermione explains:

Well, obviously, she's feeling very sad, because of Cedric dying. Then I expect she's feeling confused because she liked Cedric and now she likes Harry . . . Then she'll be feeling guilty, thinking it's an insult to Cedric's memory to be kissing Harry . . . And she probably can't work out what her feelings toward Harry are anyway, because he was the one who was with Cedric when Cedric died, so that's all very mixed up and painful (*Order of the Phoenix* 459).

Harry provides the same level of emotional support when Hermione is hurt by Ron dating Lavender in the movie version of *Order of the Phoenix*. Hermione is sobbing alone in a chamber and asks, "How does it feel, Harry? When you see Dean with Ginny?" and Harry responds, "It feels like [that]."⁶¹ While not as eloquent as Hermione, Harry shares his pain with her, something men stereotypically struggle with.

Harry and Hermione's styles of intelligence also work well together. When Harry, Ron and Hermione go through the obstacle course to reach the Sorcerer's Stone, Ron is almost immediately separated from the action, having been knocked unconscious in a

⁶¹ *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. Dir. David Yates. Perf. Daniel Radcliffe, Emma Watson, Rupert Grint. Warner Bros., 2007. DVD.

game of wizarding chess. Hermione accompanies Harry until the very end of the course, solving the complicated logic problem that allows Harry to move on into the chamber and retrieve the Stone. After Harry says Hermione is a better wizard than him, Hermione responds: “Books! And cleverness! There are more important things—friendship and bravery” (287).⁶² While Hermione presents as more book-smart and logical, and Harry as more magically gifted, faster and innovative, their partnership enhances the inherent strengths of each while making them both more balanced. Harry and Hermione work better as a team—in *Deathly Hallows*, after Ron abandons the search for the Horcruxes, Harry and Hermione continue on the quest together. When the pair visits Bathilda Bagshot, they are surprised when Nagini, disguised as Bathilda, attacks Harry. Hermione, acting quickly to fend off the snake and get her and Harry to safety, accidentally breaks Harry’s wand, but instead of allowing this to remove Harry’s power, lends him hers until a replacement can be found. The trust and respect required for her to do this is immense, and proves their unique bond. Even more tellingly, Hermione’s wand performs for Harry. Since a wand is an extension of the witch or wizard to whom it belongs, Harry and Hermione are compatible enough for one wand to perform for both.

While I don’t necessarily see Harry and Hermione as romantic soulmates, their bond is undeniable. Both are incredibly intelligent in different contexts, and they share an emotional openness and honesty that transcends gender barriers. Through his friendship with Hermione, Harry gains emotional depth and selflessness, while Hermione becomes braver, more confident in her abilities, and more openly vulnerable. That both are

⁶² While this quote is traditionally seen as a dismissal of Hermione’s power, critic Katrin Berndt argues that “her diffidence serves to show Hermione initially underestimating her capacity for friendship and bravery—a credible starting point for a young girl character who will grow into an extraordinary woman” (Berndt 168).

reduced to stereotypic gender depictions in the epilogue is a great failing on Rowling's part.

While Rowling portrays a dynamic world with complex gender paradigms and hierarchies, her fantasy world is thus not perfect. Because it gained worldwide acclaim, the *Harry Potter* series was held to an incredibly high imaginative standard, one that no author could truly meet. Though Rowling's world has revolutionary female characters, the epilogue, rather than continuing to challenge patriarchal hierarchies, regresses into traditional stereotypes. Most disappointing in this regard is that Hermione, the most promising female character in the series, is denied her full potential. However, Rowling has continued the series beyond the original seven books through consultation with scriptwriters on the movie adaptations, as well as through interviews, and, most influentially, Pottermore. The interactive site Pottermore allows users to relive the seven novels with added information on the history of the wizarding world and glimpses into the most beloved characters' futures. One can see it as a way for Rowling to correct her mistakes, but by extension it creates an opportunity for readers to develop a worldview that incorporates the many positive outcomes from the series. I view it as an opportunity—for the generation for whom *Harry Potter* shaped their childhood, Pottermore creates a space to transform a childhood passion into engaging, mature discourse. Fans also continue the series through the fan fiction they write and post on the web. On one fan fiction site (of which there are many), over 125,000 works exist on Hermione Granger alone, many of them on her life after Hogwarts. Though the series ended nearly ten years ago, new stories are published every day, proving that Rowling's

Harry Potter series inspired creativity in a generation of young people and made a staggering impact on the world.

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