

# Women Characters in the Harry Potter Series/Ženski likovi u Harry Potter serijalu

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Šustić, Filip

Master's thesis / Diplomski rad

2018

*Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj:* **Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences / Sveučilište Josipa Jurja Strossmayera u Osijeku, Filozofski fakultet**

*Permanent link / Trajna poveznica:* <https://urn.nsk.hr/urn:nbn:hr:142:924070>

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*Download date / Datum preuzimanja:* **2025-03-01**



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Sveučilište J. J. Strossmayera u Osijeku

Filozofski fakultet Osijek

Dvopredmetni sveučilišni diplomski studij engleskog jezika i književnosti i  
nakladništva

Filip Šustić

**Ženski likovi u Harry Potter serijalu**

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Mentorica: izv. prof. dr. sc. Biljana Oklopčić

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Znanstveno područje: humanističke znanosti

Znanstveno polje: filologija

Znanstvena grana: anglistika

Mentorica: izv. prof. dr. sc. Biljana Oklopčić

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## Abstract

This paper presents the analysis of the female characters from the *Harry Potter* series. The analysis of the characters is based on their personalities, roles, their development throughout the novels as well as the way in which they reinforce or subvert typical female stereotypes. The first chapter defines stereotypes, female stereotypes, and explains the dynamics of sex-roles. In the second chapter, the emphasis is put on the young witches who all develop and change greatly as the story progresses. The third chapter deals with mothers of the series, followed by two major antagonists. The final chapter analyzes the characters of Minerva McGonagall and Hermione Granger. As the story progresses, the characters in question both develop and show unseen sides to their personality. Considering their increasing complexity, it becomes obvious that the gender stereotypes are not prevalent in the series. While some characters fall into certain categories of stereotypes, they gradually seem to break out of them in more than one way. Therefore, the paper reaches a conclusion that more importance should be attributed to a person's individuality and development than to the concepts such as masculinity and femininity.

**Key words:** Harry Potter, female characters, gender stereotypes, roles, development

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## Introduction

Generally speaking, it cannot be denied that the majority of literature, be it for adults or children, suffers from the lack of strong, or at least well crafted, female protagonists and that literature is largely male-dominated. The case of the famous book series about the wizard Harry Potter is not different. Throughout the seven novels, not only must young Harry deal with his glorified status of “the Boy Who Lived”<sup>1</sup> and countless dangers that go hand in hand with it, but he also grows and matures both physically and mentally.

During the course of Harry’s adventures, there are, however, also numerous female characters who either develop and change drastically, or exhibit such complexity (this is usually the case with older, more mature characters) that allows the reader to see them in a new, completely different light. Heilman and Donaldson (qtd. in Geerts 17) thus point out that the number of female characters has risen throughout the novels and that some characters, such as Ginny Weasley, have been given new elements to their characters, which were completely absent in previous novels. As such, the relevance they bear is in many roles they take on, from school students to teachers to caring mothers, or even villainous followers of the evil wizard Voldemort, through which they reinforce or subvert typical female stereotypes and enable the readers of various age groups to find someone they can relate to.

In order to gain better insight into their complexity, relevance, and numerous roles they play throughout the novels, this paper will deal with female characters of the *Harry Potter* series by analyzing their personalities, roles, and character development. The first chapter will concentrate on stereotypes: what they are, their main features, their formation, as well as female stereotypes and the dynamics of sex-roles. In the second chapter, the focus will be mainly on personalities and development of young witches who are, with the exception of Nymphadora Tonks, still attending school and going through many challenges of growing up and forming lasting relationships, so they are more susceptible to change. The third chapter will deal with characters who all take on the roles of mothers and make great sacrifices for their children but at the same time differ greatly in their worldviews and the way they raise their children. The following two chapters will be concerned with the antagonists Dolores Umbridge and Bellatrix

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<sup>1</sup> “The Boy Who Lived” is Harry’s nickname. He earned it because he was the only person who managed to survive the killing curse of the evil wizard Lord Voldemort (*Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* 20).



Lestrangle, and the last chapter will focus on Professor Minerva McGonagall and one of Harry's best friends, Hermione Granger.

# 1. Stereotypes as the Reading Strategy

In order to put as few constraints on them as possible, Schneider defines stereotypes quite simply by saying that they are “qualities perceived to be associated with particular groups or categories of people” (24). Stereotyping, therefore, entails perceiving individual members of a certain group as having the same qualities or characteristics. While it is virtually impossible to reach a unanimous consensus on the valid definition of stereotypes, it is safe to assume that they share some general features. First of all, they can often be inaccurate as it is hard to make assumptions by going from the general to the particular or vice-versa. For instance, great restaurants can sometimes serve bad food and friendly dogs can sometimes bite (Schneider 18). They also tend to emphasize the negative features of groups rather than the positive ones (19), which is further reinforced by Stangor who claims that people generate much more negative stereotypes, and even when they express positive ones they are not perceived as such (2). Additionally, categorizations such as these present a major problem because they usually lead to depersonalization of people instead of perceiving them as unique individuals (Hogg et al. 254).

Despite such negative connotations, it cannot be denied that stereotypes play an enormous role in everyday life since one of their most important characteristics is that they are shared among many people (Stangor and Schaller qtd. in Schneider 23). The formation of stereotypes is based on perception of differences between groups, even though this perception does not necessarily reflect real differences (Brown and Turner 69). Categorization also plays a pivotal role in formation of stereotypes – for example, Bruner believes that the true function of categories is to “allow observers to make sense of the environment” (65), wherein lies the importance of stereotypes. Sometimes stereotypes can even influence judgments and behavior toward individuals entirely out of one’s awareness (Bargh et al; Dijksterhuis et al.; Wheeler and Petty 9) and can be described as “well-learned” and “habitual” (Devine and Fazio qtd. in Lambert et al. 278), which shows just how automatically they tend to be used.

Since this paper deals with female characters and their development throughout the novels, female stereotypes and the dynamics of sex-roles is of the utmost importance for their understanding. In that respect, women are generally believed to be more affectionate, dependent, emotional, sensitive, and sentimental while men are ambitious, independent, confident, stable, unemotional, and tough (De Lisi and Soundranayagam; Williams and Bennett qtd. in Schneider 438). Schneider attempts to summarize these traits by claiming that men possess “agentic”

qualities while women possess “communal” ones (438-439). Diekman and Eagly use the same terminology, stating that men are supposed to be more “agentic, e.g., competitive and individualistic, whereas women are assumed to be more expressive and communal, e.g., kind and nurturing” (135). Since the mid-twentieth century, however, not only have women’s roles changed much more than those of men but women have also started taking on some of the male-dominated roles (Sczesny et al. 137). Moreover, women adopt counter-stereotypic traits significantly more than men do and continue to gain different types of power, such as individual, occupational, economic, political, and relational (Diekman et al. 142), which becomes quite obvious in the subsequent chapters of this paper. That being said, women stereotypes are obviously much more dynamic than men stereotypes, which are relatively static (Sczesny et al. 153). If men and women are expected to be different in the future than they are in the present, they can actually change with the help of those expectations, which shows that the power of stereotypes can literally alter reality (Geis 155).

## 2. Personality and Development of Young Witches Throughout the Novels

### 2.1. Luna Lovegood

In the whole fictional universe of Harry Potter, it is difficult to imagine a character, regardless of gender, who escapes the confines of normal behavior in such an obvious manner as Luna Lovegood. Immediately after her character is first introduced in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, it is fairly obvious that Luna differs considerably from other female characters or Hogwarts students in general, both physically and mentally:

The girl beside the window looked up. She had straggly, waist-length, dirty-blond hair, very pale eyebrows, and protuberant eyes that gave her a permanently surprised look. Harry knew at once why Neville had chosen to pass this compartment by. The girl gave off an aura of distinct dottiness. Perhaps it was the fact that she had stuck her wand behind her left ear for safekeeping, or that she had chosen to wear a necklace of butterbeer caps, or that she was reading a magazine upside down. (*The Order of the Phoenix* 185)

Because of her peculiar way of dressing, Luna becomes an object of derision on numerous occasions throughout the series. In *The Order of the Phoenix*, she wears something that “looked like the pair of orange radishes for earrings” (261) and is therefore mocked by the Parvati twins. In the same novel, she also makes a hat in the shape of a “life-sized lion’s head” (403) in order to support the Gryffindor<sup>2</sup> Quidditch<sup>3</sup> team, which completely perplexes Harry and his friends. During *The Half-Blood Prince*, Luna accompanies Harry to a party and shows up in unusual attire: “She was wearing a set of spangled silver robes that were attracting a certain amount of giggles from the onlookers” (314). Unsurprisingly, Luna’s way of thinking is just as unorthodox as her appearance. For instance, even though she is living in a magical world, which is by itself quite incomprehensible to normal human beings without magical powers, Luna believes in things that are unbelievable or superstitious even to wizards, which is the main reason why her worldview often clashes with the logical reasoning of most other characters, especially Hermione

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<sup>2</sup> Gryffindor is one of the four houses in the magical school Hogwarts, along with Ravenclaw, Slytherin and Hufflepuff (*Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* 114).

<sup>3</sup> Quidditch is a sports game in wizarding world, which is similar to soccer but played on flying brooms in the air (*The Sorcerer’s Stone* 79).

Granger: “Ginny’s told me all about her, apparently she’ll only believe in things as long as there’s no proof at all” (*The Order of the Phoenix* 262). Dasgupta, for example, points out that people usually conform to social norms because they want to be liked by their peer group, so they shift their attitudes toward it (274). However, the afore-mentioned examples show that Luna exhibits no such tendencies, but is rather persistent in keeping her identity unbound by the mockery of her peers. It is also important to mention that Luna is not unaware of her social status as she tells Harry the following: “People expect you to have cooler friends than us...” (*The Half-Blood Prince* 139).

Out of four houses in Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, Luna is sorted in the house of Ravenclaw, which is intended only for the most intelligent and astute students, as the Sorting Hat, a magical item that sorts the students into houses, mentions: “if you’ve a ready mind, / Where those of wit and learning / Will always find their kind” (*The Philosopher’s Stone* 130). Indeed, Luna shows that she has a very keen mind on quite a few occasions, such as when she cleverly deduces that Rowena Ravenclaw’s lost diadem might be one of the horcruxes, the magical objects in which Voldemort put the pieces of his soul, in *The Deathly Hallows* (584), or when she successfully answers the riddle “Which came first, the phoenix or the flame?” by saying that “a circle has no beginning” (587) in the same novel. Additionally, Luna is a very perceptive character and, despite her social awkwardness, she is often able to see things clearly and from an angle that may not be so apparent to others, such as when she is able to recognize Harry even after he had taken the Polyjuice potion<sup>4</sup>:

“Hello, Harry!” she said.

“Er – my name’s Barny,” said Harry, flummoxed.

“Oh, have you changed that too?” she asked brightly.

“How did you know - ?”

“Oh, just your expression,” she said. (*The Deathly Hallows* 140)

If we take into consideration the shifting standards model defining stereotypes as “expectations about the attributes of a group” that also serve as the standards for evaluating group individuals (Biernat 137), the above-mentioned examples definitely justify the Sorting Hat’s decision to put Luna in Ravenclaw and reinforce somewhat stereotypical view that only the brightest witches

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<sup>4</sup> Polyjuice potion transforms the one who drinks it into someone else (*The Chamber of Secrets* 159).

and wizards should be in that house. However, while Luna may be the pride and joy of Ravenclaw, she continually proves that there is much more to her character than pure intelligence. When Harry, Hermione, and Ron founded their secret organization Dumbledore's Army in order to train students to be able to defend themselves in dangerous situations, Luna was one of the students who was willing to join them, regardless of the fact that such organizations were forbidden at the time (*The Order of the Phoenix* 350), and even after its dissolution, she was one of the very few who kept it going: "From all these things, Harry deduced that Ginny, and probably Neville and Luna along with her, had been doing their best to continue Dumbledore's Army" (*The Deathly Hallows* 314). She demonstrates great courage and the ability to utilize what she learned in Dumbledore's Army when she accompanies Harry to the Ministry of Magic to save his godfather Sirius (*The Order of the Phoenix* 761), during the fight against Voldemort's followers in *The Half-Blood Prince* (542), and in the final battle in *The Deathly Hallows* (735). On one occasion, while at the same time comparing her to her father, Ron praises Luna on her courage: "'Cowardly old wart,' said Ron. 'Luna's got ten times his guts'" (*The Deathly Hallows* 402).

Despite her reputation as "Loony Lovegood," Luna manages to connect deeply to the main character Harry Potter throughout the novels and is one of the rare people who stay on his side even in difficult situations, which Harry comments on in the fifth novel: "'D'you mind not offending the only people who believe me?' Harry asked Hermione as they made their way into class" (*The Order of the Phoenix* 262). Taub and Servaty-Seib point out that it is exactly Luna who "seems to reach Harry in his grief; emphasizing the power that exists when bereaved teens are given the opportunity to connect with each other" (qtd. in Heilman 26), which happens a number of times, for instance, when Harry loses his godfather Sirius in *The Order of the Phoenix* and she is able to comfort him because she herself had experienced a tragic loss of her mother in childhood: "I still feel very sad about it sometimes. But I've still got Dad. And anyway, it's not as though I'll never see Mum again, is it... She walked away from him, and as he watched her go, he found that the terrible weight in his stomach seemed to have lessened slightly" (864). By the end of the series, Luna socially matures so much that she knows how to help Harry even without him asking: "'I'd want some peace and quiet, if it were me,' she said. 'I'd love some,' he replied" (*The Deathly Hallows* 745).

To sum up, Luna is a great example of how comfort and help can sometimes be found in the most unusual places. Moreover, with her unique personality and courageous actions, she

demonstrates to the readers that bravery and courage are not the qualities exclusive to the house of Gryffindor, and that intelligence is not necessarily bound by logic.

## 2.2. Nymphadora Tonks

As it was mentioned in the introduction, Nymphadora Tonks is slightly older than the rest of the characters in this chapter and works as an Auror<sup>5</sup> in the Ministry of Magic. Regardless of the fact that she is an adult, Tonks is a perfect example of a character that goes through significant changes during the course of the series, and in more than one way.

When first introduced in *The Order of the Phoenix*, Tonks is depicted as a young witch with a “pale heart-shaped face, dark twinkling eyes, and short spiky hair that was a violent shade of violet” (47). Shortly afterwards, as she changes her hair to “bubble-gum pink” (52) in front of a surprised Harry in an instant, she reveals that she is a Metamorphmagus, a person who can change her appearance at will, which serves as a testament of the physical aspect of her character’s changeable nature. Considering her choices of hair color, it is easy to deduce that Tonks is quite free-spirited and even rebellious, which is further reinforced by the fact that she dislikes her own name and prefers to be known only by her surname:

“Don’t call me Nymphadora, Remus,” said the young witch with a shudder. “It’s Tonks.”

“Nymphadora Tonks, who prefers to be known by her surname only,” finished Lupin.

“So would you if your fool of a mother had called you ‘Nymphadora,’” muttered Tonks.

*(The Order of the Phoenix 49)*

What cannot be inferred solely from her appearance and behavior, however, is the fact that Tonks is born into a family of noble lineage or pure-blood wizards, as explained by Sirius Black in *The Order of the Phoenix* (113), especially since it is common for the pure-bloods such as Bellatrix Lestrange and the Malfoy family to act in a superior and arrogant way towards anyone of Muggle<sup>6</sup> origin, mainly in order to maintain their status of power (Fiske 251) by stereotyping them all as less worthy or inferior. Tonks, on the other hand, never exhibits such behavior.

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<sup>5</sup> An Auror is a person who apprehends witches and wizards who practice dark magic (*The Goblet of Fire* 161).

<sup>6</sup> Muggle is the term used in the wizarding world for normal people with no magical powers (*The Sorcerer’s Stone* 53).

Instead, she is always the life and soul of every gathering and tries to lift everyone's spirits by making them laugh: "Opposite Harry, Tonks was entertaining Hermione and Ginny by transforming her nose between mouthfuls... Apparently this was a regular mealtime entertainment, because after a while Hermione and Ginny started requesting their favorite noses" (*The Order of the Phoenix* 85). Because of her obvious and frequent inability to behave herself (*The Order of the Phoenix* 170), her love for sports (*The Order of the Phoenix* 53), and her rebellious nature, it is clear that Tonks is androgynous as she exhibits both male and female stereotypical traits, which Schneider believes to be a general advantage (442).

It is interesting to point out that while she was still attending Hogwarts, Tonks was sorted into the house of Hufflepuff, which the Sorting Hat defines as intended for those who are patient, just, and loyal in the first novel (*The Sorcerer's Stone* 118), and in the fifth novel it sings about the words of its founder Helga Hufflepuff: "I'll teach the lot, / And treat them just the same" (*The Order of the Phoenix* 205). Since the other three houses value quite distinctive qualities, Gryffindor values bravery and chivalry, Ravenclaw intelligence, and Slytherin cunning and ambition (*The Sorcerer's Stone* 118), Helga Hufflepuff's ambiguous explanation of the house's criteria leaves the reader wondering about the type of person that should belong in Hufflepuff. However, if we take Tonks as an example of what a Hufflepuff student should be like, it becomes obvious that it is someone who is quite versatile. She demonstrates bravery in *The Deathly Hallows* when she decides to act as one of the decoys for Death Eaters, evil followers of Voldemort, in order to transport Harry to safety, and when she takes part in the final battle at Hogwarts, where she ultimately loses her life (745). The very fact that Tonks works as an Auror at the Ministry of Magic from the moment she is introduced in the fifth novel until her untimely death in the seventh novel is a testament of her intelligence, ambition, hard work, and bravery, since it is one of the most difficult career choices in the *Harry Potter* series, as explained by Professor McGonagall: "You'd need top grades for that... Then you would be required to undergo a stringent series of character and aptitude tests at the Auror office. It's a difficult career path, Potter; they only take the best" (*The Order of the Phoenix* 662). While it cannot be said with certainty that the Hufflepuffs have a specific stereotype, it is definitely not an especially desirable house choice, which can be inferred from Harry's conversation with Hagrid, his half-giant friend and teacher, who mentions how everyone believes that "Hufflepuffs are a lot o' duffers" (*The Sorcerer's Stone* 80), and Draco Malfoy's malicious comment: "... imagine being in Hufflepuff, I think I'd leave, wouldn't you?" (77). In spite of these unfounded prejudices, with



her friendly personality and numerous virtues Tonks sets a truly positive example of what it is to be a Hufflepuff, but it is also one that is not easy to live up to.

In *The Half-Blood Prince*, Tonks goes through a great emotional upheaval because of her relationship with Remus Lupin, which becomes apparent on three levels. Firstly, her usual bright and colorful appearance changes significantly: “Harry thought she looked drawn, even ill, and there was something forced in her smile. Certainly her appearance was less colorful than usual without her customary shade of bubble-gum-pink hair” (*The Half-Blood Prince* 82). Secondly, she is constantly serious and glum: “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 much more serious and purposeful” (*The Half-Blood Prince* 158). Franks (qtd. in Freund 457-458) thus argues that there exists a “fusion” of body and mind in every human being and that emotions and bodily activity are, therefore, “inextricably connected,” which is evident in Tonks’ case. Thirdly, her emotional state appears to be in such a disarray that it even begins to affect her magic as her Patronus, a defensive charm which takes the form of an animal and is unique to every wizard (*The Prisoner of Azkaban* 237), changes: “‘I didn’t know that could happen. Why would your Patronus change?’ Lupin took his time chewing his turkey and swallowing before saying slowly, ‘Sometimes...a great shock... an emotional upheaval...’” (*The Half-Blood Prince* 340). The cause of this negative change in Tonks is Lupin’s initial reluctance to be in a relationship with her, not only because he is much older than her but because he is a werewolf, a human being who becomes a large wolf during the full moon, which makes him one of the most stigmatized characters in the series. Because of this, he fears for her safety and is afraid of the possibility that his condition might be inherited by their child. Heilman and Donaldson claim that Tonks loses her power to metamorphose because she “pines” for Lupin (153), which immediately conjures up a negative image of a woman who is submissive and dependent on a man, but that is definitely not the type of person she is. Because of her persistence and willingness to face potential dangers of their relationship head-on, Tonks eventually manages to persuade Lupin that they should be together and she consequently returns to normal: “Tonks, her hair miraculously returned to vividest pink; Remus Lupin, with whom she seemed to be holding hands...” (*The Half-Blood Prince* 641). The emotional changes that Tonks experiences serve as an excellent reference point for young adult readers by showing that a person’s growth does not stop with puberty and that the real change in life awaits them once they finish school and step into the real world.

### 2.3. Fleur Delacour

While stereotypes can sometimes be quite useful, for instance, when comparing a new experience to the old ones in order to reduce the uncertainty of a situation and gain a clearer picture of it, they can also lead to “inaccurate judgments and discriminatory behavior” (Khan et al. 3). If there is a female character who is judged too quickly and superficially, it is definitely Fleur Delacour.

Fleur arrives at Hogwarts during the events of *The Goblet of Fire* as a guest from the French school Beauxbatons to participate in the Triwizard Tournament – a dangerous competition between the three magical schools, Hogwarts, Beauxbatons, and Durmstrang, in which a champion is selected to represent each school (*The Goblet of Fire* 187). Immediately upon arrival, Fleur’s captivating appearance grabs the attention of Hogwarts’ students:

A long sheet of silvery-blond hair fell almost to her waist. She had large, deep blue eyes and, and very white, even teeth. Ron went purple. He stared up at her, opened his mouth to reply, but nothing came out except a faint gurgling noise . . . As the girl crossed the Hall, many boys’ heads turned, and some of them seemed to have become temporarily speechless, just like Ron. (*The Goblet of Fire* 252)

Fleur’s beauty itself is enough to put her very high on the social ladder and, in that respect, differentiate her from the likes of Ron Weasley, which becomes obvious when he makes a fool of himself after he impulsively asks her to go to the ball with him: “She looked at me like I was a slug or something. Didn’t even answer” (*The Goblet of Fire* 309). Her looks combined with occasional pompous behavior, such as when she criticizes Hogwarts food (404) or when she says that the school’s decorations are nothing compared to those of Beauxbatons (418), is what makes her the target of many critics. Mikulan describes her as “unbearable” and “conceited” (293), and Heilman and Donaldson point out that not only was she unable to complete the second task of the Tournament but that she also ends up last (147). Furthermore, in *The Half-Blood Prince* it is revealed that Fleur is engaged to Bill Weasley, Molly and Arthur Weasley’s eldest child, so she starts spending much more time with the main characters and it then becomes clear that she is hated by many of them, especially other girls – Ginny, Hermione, and even Molly. She is often compared to Tonks because both Ginny and Molly would much rather prefer her to be in their family, which, in a way, forces the reader to perceive Fleur as a negative character compared to Tonks. On one occasion, Ginny claims that Tonks is much nicer than Fleur and Hermione says

that she is more intelligent, so Harry has to defend her: “Fleur’s not stupid, she was good enough to enter the Triwizard Tournament...” (*The Half-Blood Prince* 94).

The first chance that the reader gets to see a completely different side of Fleur is after the second task of the Triwizard Tournament when Harry selflessly saves her younger sister Gabrielle (*The Goblet of Fire* 505). She shows great concern and love for her little sister as she will not allow Madame Pomfrey, the Hogwarts’ school nurse, to even look at her wounds before taking care of Gabrielle, and is grateful to both Harry and Ron (*The Goblet of Fire* 505-506). From that moment on, her behavior towards Harry becomes friendly: “Fleur beamed at Harry as he came nearer. Her attitude toward him had changed completely since he had saved her sister from the lake” (*The Goblet of Fire* 550). The pompous and somewhat arrogant impression that she initially leaves is significantly toned down when she says that she deserved zero points for her performance during the second task even though she was awarded with twenty-five (*The Goblet of Fire* 505), which shows an honest self-reflection. In *The Deathly Hallows*, Fleur allows Harry and a few others to use her and Bill’s home as a safe house and even though Harry feels guilty about it, she shows great loyalty towards him: ““Arry, you saved my sister’s life, I do not forget” (510).

However, the biggest obstacle that prevents Fleur from proving to the reader that she possesses admirable qualities is Molly Weasley. As it is only natural that the mother wants what is best for her son, Molly is justifiably not overjoyed at the prospect of Fleur marrying her son, mainly because she sees her as superficial and completely different than Bill (*The Half-Blood Prince* 93). Crocker and Garcia explain that a stigmatized person, in this case Fleur, may fear being “devalued” by the prejudiced person, which can lead to one of two possible outcomes – “the desire to either exit the interaction (flee) or challenge the assumed devaluation (fight)” (234). This is exactly what happens when Bill’s face becomes mutilated during his fight with the werewolf Fenrir and Molly fears that Fleur’s interest in him would disappear along with his handsome features (*The Half-Blood Prince* 622). However, Fleur obviously chooses the second option:

“You thought I would not weesh to marry him? Or per’aps, you hoped?” said Fleur, her nostrils flaring. “What do I care how he looks? I am good-looking enough for both of us, I theenk! All these scars show is zat my husband is brave! And I shall do zat!” (*The Half-Blood Prince* 623)

With this act, Fleur finally breaks through Molly's prejudice and skepticism about their relationship by showing that she loves Bill unconditionally and even takes pride in his scars.

Given these points, Fleur's character definitely confirms Heilman and Donaldson's claim that there is a shift in the representation of female characters throughout the novels, from stereotypical to more developed and diverse (qtd. in Geerts 17), as well as that it is virtually impossible to make a safe conclusion about someone, especially by stereotyping, until all layers of their personality have been exposed. Fortunately, however, Fleur Delacour is a proof that a person can be beautiful on the inside just as much as on the outside.

## 2.4. Cho Chang

The character of Cho Chang probably has the biggest misfortune since she is viewed primarily as Harry's first love interest, and a failed one at that. Because of this, Cho is perceived by many as more of a symbol than a fully developed character (Heilman 54), and it is easy to overlook many qualities that she possesses.

In *The Goblet of Fire*, Cho is described as very popular, very pretty, and a very good Quidditch player (388) and during her first appearance, Harry's reaction gives away his feelings for her immediately:

Their Seeker, Cho Chang, was the only girl on their team. She was shorter than Harry by about a head, and Harry couldn't help noticing, nervous as he was, that she was extremely pretty. She smiled at Harry as the teams faced each other behind their captains, and he felt a slight lurch in the region of his stomach that he didn't think had anything to do with nerves. (*The Prisoner of Azkaban* 259)

Even though Cho has similar feelings for Harry, something always seems to get in the way of their relationship. When Harry finally musters the courage to ask her to go to the ball with him, it appears he was too late because she already promised to go with Cedric Diggory (*The Order of the Phoenix* 397), a Hufflepuff student and a Triwizard champion, who subsequently starts dating her. Cedric's tragic death at the end of the fourth novel opens the opportunity for the two to start seeing each other, but it also leaves Cho emotionally scarred in that she frequently cries and wants to talk about Cedric's death with Harry in order to gain some sort of closure, which

does not sit well with him: “This was the very last subject on earth Harry wanted to discuss, and least of all with Cho” (*The Order of the Phoenix* 561). Even their first kiss is marked by Cho’s tears for Cedric (*The Order of the Phoenix* 457), and Hermione explains to Harry and Ron that she is crying constantly: “‘Because Cho spends half her time crying these days,’ said Hermione vaguely. ‘She does it at mealtimes, in the loos, all over the place’” (*The Order of the Phoenix* 458). In his critical analysis of Cho, Flam goes so far as to claim that Rowling only created her to make Harry experience “the melodramatic trials of teenage love” (23).

While Cho may not be the paragon of virtue, it is definitely not fair to see her only through Harry’s perspective. As stated in the introduction, this chapter deals with young witches who are still developing as human beings and maturing both physically and emotionally and, in that respect, there is probably no other character who is more relatable to troubled teenagers than Cho. Hermione explains this to the reader while also defending her:

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, and she can’t work out who she likes best. Then she’ll be feeling guilty, thinking it’s an insult to Cedric’s memory to be kissing Harry at all, and she’ll be worrying about what everyone else might say about her if she starts going out with 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. Oh, and she’s afraid she’s going to be thrown off the Ravenclaw Quidditch team because she’s been flying so badly. (*The Order of the Phoenix* 459)

As mentioned above, Cho plays the Seeker on the Ravenclaw Quidditch team, which is an extremely demanding position as it requires catching a very fast and tiny flying ball, the Golden Snitch, before the other team’s Seeker while simultaneously avoiding being fouled by all other players, which happens often (*The Sorcerer’s Stone* 169). Cho, however, is definitely up to the task and even Harry, who is an excellent Seeker himself, praises her in his mind: “She was undoubtedly a very good flier – she kept cutting across him, forcing him to change direction” (*The Prisoner of Azkaban* 260).

In a similar fashion to Luna, Cho proves that intelligence is not the main quality she possesses. She displays bravery and determination when she decides to join Dumbledore’s Army to fight the evil that killed Cedric despite her parents not approving of the idea (*The Order of the Phoenix* 395). She also continually shows loyalty towards Cedric by honoring his memory, be it

through her grief or willingness to fight. When Dumbledore's Army gets disbanded because her friend Marietta Edgecombe betrays its members, Cho risks and ultimately ends her romantic relationship with Harry because she stands up for her friend: "You know, her mum works for the Ministry, it's really difficult for her –" (*The Order of the Phoenix* 537). And yet, at the end of *The Deathly Hallows*, she shows that she bears no ill feelings towards Harry, despite their unsuccessful relationship, and is willing to help him defeat Voldemort (585).

Despite Cho's inability to gain the sympathy of the readers, by having to cope with numerous troubles on her mind, she proves to be more than relatable, especially to younger readers. Also, when she is successfully detached from Harry, many of her qualities begin to see the light of day.

## 2.5. Ginny Weasley

Ginny stands out as one of the most amazing characters as she manages to break almost every gender stereotype, excel at various activities and, to top it all, marry the most famous wizard in the series, Harry Potter. As the only girl in the Weasley family, it is only natural that Ginny is constantly striving to be one of the boys. She first appears alongside Molly in *The Sorcerer's Stone* while escorting her brothers to school and wants to join them even though she is only ten years old at the time: "Mom, can't I go..." (92). Ginny becomes a more relevant character in *The Chamber of Secrets* where it is revealed that she has a crush on Harry, as she is unable to speak in his presence while usually she is never quiet, as explained by Ron (40). Even though she does speak her mind on one occasion in order to defend Harry in front of Malfoy (*The Chamber of Secrets* 51), the main role that she plays in the second novel is that of a "damsel in distress" since she becomes possessed by Voldemort's diary and under its influence opens the Chamber of Secrets, a hidden chamber in Hogwarts containing the snake-like monster Basilisk, which attacks several students, so Harry has to save her. In those early stages of the series, Ginny is depicted by Heilman and Donaldson as the "archetypal girl" who is "deeply passive, weak, and receptive" (153-154), which is not far from the truth but it can be overlooked since she is simply too young at the time. As the story progresses, Ginny develops and changes significantly but it always seems to happen far from the reader's prying eyes.

In *The Goblet of Fire*, Ginny is already confident enough around Harry to shush him and Ron when they are laughing too loud (399) and even accepts Neville's offer to go to the ball with

him (401) despite still having a crush on Harry. In *The Order of the Phoenix*, Ginny's character is almost unrecognizable. She becomes much more rebellious, which is obvious when she refuses to be left out of the adults' meeting because she is too young: "Ginny did not go quietly. They could hear her raging and storming at her mother all the way up the stairs..." (*The Order of the Phoenix* 91). She even stands up to Harry on one occasion: "'There's no need to take that tone with me,' she said coolly. 'I was only wondering whether I could help'" (*The Order of the Phoenix* 735). Also, much to the surprise of both Harry and the reader, Ginny becomes Gryffindor's new Seeker in the same novel. Since there were no indications up until the fifth novel that Ginny had any potential as a Quidditch player because she was never actually allowed to play, her brother's curiosity, as well as the reader's, about how she became so good at it is only natural (*The Order of the Phoenix* 574). However, Hermione reveals her secret: "She's been breaking into your broom shed in the garden since the age of six and taking each of your brooms out in turn when you weren't looking..." (*The Order of the Phoenix* 574).

Furthermore, Ginny's love life takes quite a leap in *The Order of the Phoenix*. She starts dating other boys, namely Michael Corner and Dean Thomas, deciding that she will not wait for Harry anymore (*The Order of the Phoenix* 348). This culminates in the sixth novel when Ron accuses her of being too "sexually free," as pointed out by Cherland, and almost addresses her with a derogatory word (277). As usual, however, Ginny does not go out without a fight. She "stands her ground, points to the unfairness of a sexual double standard, and declares herself free to act as she pleases" (Rowling qtd. in Cherland 278), clearly showing that her life will not be defined nor dictated by her brother: "'Right,' said Ginny, tossing her long red hair out of her face and glaring at Ron, 'let's get this straight once and for all. It is none of your business who I go out with or what I do with them, Ron –'" (*The Half-Blood Prince* 287). Aside from her abundant love life, the definite testament of her skyrocketing popularity is a party invitation she receives from professor Slughorn, Hogwarts Potions teacher during the sixth novel: "It was as Harry suspected. Everyone here seemed to have been invited because they were connected to somebody well-known or influential – everyone except Ginny" (*The Half-Blood Prince* 145). At that point, she can almost be perceived as a stereotypical popular girl – beautiful, great athlete, desirable by the boys, and, judging by Slughorn's invitation, a pretty good student. Green and Kenrick claim that both males and females prefer feminine to masculine traits in romantic partners (qtd. in Schneider 442). However, when Harry finally falls in love with Ginny, Heilman and Donaldson claim that it is exactly because she lacks stereotypical female characteristics (154), which Harry himself admits: "He chanced a glance at her. She was not tearful; that was

one of the many wonderful things about Ginny, she was rarely weepy. He had sometimes thought that having six brothers must have toughened her up” (*The Deathly Hallows* 116).

On one occasion, Ginny says that growing up with Fred and George made her think “anything’s possible if you’ve got enough nerve” (*The Order of the Phoenix* 655), and since she shines so many times throughout the novels, one can assume that being the only girl in the family really made her into a character that she ultimately becomes. She is kind towards social outcasts Luna Lovegood and Neville Longbottom (*The Order of the Phoenix* 185-186), brave enough to join Dumbledore’s Army, clever enough to even name it (*The Order of the Phoenix* 392), and persistent to keep it active in the absence of its founders. Her numerous qualities soundly justify Kornfeld and Prothro’s claims that by the final novel she “emerges as a strong, independent popular girl, quite capable of acting on her own, even spearheading the secret resistance to Voldemort” (qtd. in Heilman 132). All things considered, it really is no wonder that Ginny managed to snatch the Snitch from Cho literally (*The Order of the Phoenix* 704), and Harry’s love for Cho figuratively, all in one game.



## 3. The Magical Power of Motherly Love

### 3.1. Petunia Dursley

Harry's aunt Petunia is described by Gallardo-C. and Smith as "true to the wicked old stepmother stereotype" (192), which is, for the majority of the novels, quite accurate. Petunia and her husband Vernon allow Harry to live with them because his parents, James and Lily, were killed by Lord Voldemort, so Petunia is supposed to act as a motherly figure to both her son Dudley and her nephew Harry. That task, however, she handles poorly.

Even though Petunia adores her spoiled son Dudley, Eccleshare believes that her love for him is indulgent and misplaced (96), which is justified since she answers to his every whim unconditionally. At the very beginning of the first novel, Dudley gets no less than thirty-six presents for his birthday and is still not satisfied with the amount, so Petunia promises to buy him another two (*The Philosopher's Stone* 21) in order to please him. Furthermore, Dudley is concerned that Harry's mere presence may dampen his birthday mood, so she has to comfort him: "'Dinky Duddydums, don't cry. Mummy won't let him spoil your special day!' she cried, flinging her arms around him" (*The Philosopher's Stone* 23). Throughout the novels, she also deliberately ignores many of Dudley's flaws and makes excuses for his large size and bad grades. Garver explains that not only do Vernon and Petunia believe that there is no finer boy than Dudley but they also "build up and reinforce Dudley's sense of self at Harry's expense." Towards Harry, on the other hand, Petunia is cold and reserved and his status in the Dursley family is beyond miserable. Until his twelfth year, Harry was forced to sleep in the cupboard under the stairs, which was full of spiders (*The Philosopher's Stone* 10), he always had to wear Dudley's old clothes (20), all he got for Christmas in the first novel was 50 pence (*The Philosopher's Stone* 200), which is virtually nothing, especially compared to Dudley's presents, and his birthdays were usually forgotten (*The Chamber of Secrets* 5). Therefore, a sentence in the fourth novel about Harry being welcome in Dursley's house as "dry rot" (*The Goblet of Fire* 19) is not far-fetched.

However, in order to understand Petunia better, it is necessary to look at her past and her relationship with her younger sister and Harry's mother, Lily. Out of the two, only Lily inherited the gift of magic, which made Petunia jealous: "'How do you do it?' she added, and there was

definite longing in her voice” (*The Deathly Hallows* 664). Magic took Lily from Petunia two times. First time it was temporarily, when she started attending Hogwarts (*The Deathly Hallows* 669), and second time, when Voldemort took her life, it was forever (*The Deathly Hallows* 678). Because of this, Petunia despises magic and refuses to be associated with it in any way. That is why she marries Vernon Dursley and together they pride themselves in being perfectly “normal” (*The Philosopher’s Stone* 1) and detached from anything out of the ordinary. Being in her home, Harry is a constant reminder of Lily to Petunia, both physically and magically, and Geerts brilliantly deduces that, since magic abused and mistreated Petunia, she in return abused Harry (9).

Little by little, it becomes obvious throughout the novels that there is an inner battle going on in Petunia. While on the one hand Harry stands for everything she lost and could not have, she still, somewhere deep inside, cares for her nephew, which Harry first notices when he sees genuine concern in her face after he tells her about the return of Voldemort: “She was looking at Harry as she had never looked at him before. And all of a sudden, for the very first time in his life, Harry fully appreciated that Aunt Petunia was his mother’s sister” (*The Order of the Phoenix* 38). While Vernon wants to throw Harry out of the house upon learning that Voldemort is back because he is also putting the rest of them in danger, Kornfeld and Prothro explain that Petunia then “takes over the role of decision-making head of the family” (133) from Vernon and allows Harry to stay in the house to keep him safe. The culmination of Petunia’s inner battle happens in the last novel when she and her family part ways with Harry:

She stopped and looked back. For a moment Harry had the strangest feeling that she wanted to say something to him: She gave him an odd, tremulous look and seemed to teeter on the edge of speech, but then, with a little jerk of her head, she bustled out of the room after her husband and son. (*The Deathly Hallows* 42)

On one occasion, even Dumbledore defends Petunia, implying that the bond between sisters still exists: “She may have taken you grudgingly, furiously, unwillingly, bitterly, yet still she took you...” (*The Order of the Phoenix* 836).

While Petunia never treats Harry the way a mother should, with love and care, she still provides him with a safe home for many years in spite of the constant danger looming around him. Just by doing that, the wicked stepmother from the fairy tales, according to Nikolajeva, turns out to be a “model of perseverance and bravery” (204).

### 3.2. Narcissa Malfoy

Narcissa Malfoy is one of the main antagonists of the series, so it is not easy to perceive her as a caring mother, let alone a devoted and selfless one at that. Since the importance of one's social identity lies in both description and evaluation of an individual (Hogg et al. 257), it is not easy for Narcissa to live up to her noble status. Being a part of the respectable and pure-blooded Malfoy family, as well as one of the Voldemort's followers, it is only logical to assume that Narcissa was raised in a manner that does not allow equal treatment of all people and, consequently, that she also does not have the privilege of imposing an open-minded worldview upon her son Draco. In her family, there is a strong obligation to preserve a superior image in society, which, according to Dasgupta, also "influences implicit attitudes toward outgroups" (273). She acts in this manner in the sixth novel: "'You're right, Draco,' said Narcissa, with a contemptuous glance at Hermione, 'now I know the kind of scum that shops here.... We'll do better at Twilfitt and Tatting's'" (*The Half-Blood Prince* 114). While her character is rarely present for the majority of the series, she is seen mainly alongside her husband Lucius, looking down on anyone they deem inferior to them: "His mother was blonde too; tall and slim, she would have been nice looking if she hadn't been wearing a look that suggested there was a nasty smell under her nose" (*The Goblet of Fire* 101).

At the beginning of *The Half-Blood Prince*, Narcissa, however, shows a different side. She goes to Severus Snape for help because Draco becomes one of the Death Eaters in his father's stead so she is terrified of what might happen to him in Voldemort's service: "Why, Severus? Why my son? It is too dangerous!" (*The Half-Blood Prince* 33). She also shows loyalty to her husband and does not allow even her sister to say a word against him, which shows how much she cares for her family: "Don't you dare – don't you *dare* blame my husband!" (*The Half-Blood Prince* 20). Wolosky believes that at this point Narcissa is caught between her obedience to Voldemort and love for her own son, and this moral choice reaches its conclusion in the last novel when Narcissa is sent to confirm Harry's death (205). Instead of simply checking if Harry is alive or dead, Narcissa takes this chance to ask him if Draco is still alive, and when she gets her answer, she decides to betray Voldemort: "He felt the hand on his chest contract; her nails pierced him. Then it was withdrawn. She had sat up. 'He is dead!' Narcissa Malfoy screamed to the watchers" (*The Deathly Hallows* 726). Wolosky believes that this act of love for her son redeems Narcissa (209), and while the act itself cannot erase her previous mistakes, it

simultaneously allows the reader to see Narcissa in a new light and to grasp just how much she values her loved ones.

### 3.3. Lily Potter

Even though Lily is not present during the course of the novels, while she was alive, her love has touched many characters in many different ways and made an everlasting impact on them. Geerts points out that Lily is “talked about with much love by various characters in the book, professors and old friends alike” (14). Indeed, ever since she was a child, Lily was loving and kind towards anyone in her life. She loved her sister and always defended her (*The Deathly Hallows* 668) and she even wanted to take her to Hogwarts with her, despite the fact that Petunia did not possess any magical powers: “She caught her sister’s hand and held tight to it, even though Petunia tried to pull it away... ‘Maybe once I’m there, I’ll be able to go to Professor Dumbledore and persuade him to change his mind!’” (*The Deathly Hallows* 669). While she was still at school, she was a favorite student of Professor Slughorn, which he mentions to Harry: “Lily Evans. One of the brightest I ever taught. Vivacious, you know. Charming girl. I used to tell her she ought to have been in my House” (*The Half-Blood Prince* 70). Perhaps, however, one of the strongest impacts her love has in the novels is the one on Severus Snape. Even though Snape is perceived as one of the most bitter and dislikeable characters in the entire series (*The Philosopher’s Stone* 136), he is a completely different person around Lily. The two of them meet when they are still children and, in stark contrast to his personality, Snape immediately tries to shield Lily from the harsh and discriminative reality of the wizarding world that she is about to enter:

“Does it make a difference, being Muggle-born?”

Snape hesitated. His black eyes, eager in the greenish gloom, moved over the pale face, the dark red hair.

“No,” he said. “It doesn’t make any difference.” (*The Deathly Hallows* 666)

Lily also has strong feelings towards Snape and defends him and stands up for him on many occasions, in front of her sister (*The Deathly Hallows* 670) and against bullies such as her future husband James Potter (*The Order of the Phoenix* 647). Although their friendship eventually falls

apart and Lily loses her life at the hands of Voldemort, Snape's love for her remains undying: "After all this time?" 'Always,' said Snape" (*The Deathly Hallows* 687). Deavel and Deavel claim that Snape's love for Lily changes him so much that it matches his patronus to hers, and turns him into a character who is able to place himself, just like James and Lily did, between Voldemort and Harry.

The biggest and most significant impact that Lily's actions have is the continuing protection she provides for her son by sacrificing her own life for him. This act of sacrifice proves to be so strong that it renders Voldemort unable to even touch Harry and Dumbledore explains its strength to 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 however. (*The Philosopher's Stone* 299)

While Lily herself never changes, her actions and personality change many things, among others James Potter, who goes from a bully (*The Order of the Phoenix* 648) to a brave husband and father, and her love for Harry, which transcends even death, proves that there is no stronger bond than the one between a mother and her child.

### 3.4. Molly Weasley

When mothers of the *Harry Potter* series are mentioned, it is highly unlikely that someone would spring to mind faster than Molly Weasley. In an interview, J.K. Rowling rightly says that Molly "will mother the whole world if she can" (qtd. in Geerts 15). While it is extremely difficult to summarize just how much Molly does for her family and friends on a daily basis, she is definitely worth the effort of trying to.

To start off, Molly and her husband Arthur are parents of seven children: Bill, Charlie, Percy, Fred, George, Ron, and Ginny, so simply keeping her household under control presents an extremely demanding task. Still, Molly shows that she is up to the task, and Kornfeld and Prothro say that she keeps everything in check through "cute and funny magical means – making

the dishes wash themselves in the sink, and using enchanted clocks to keep track of her children's schedules and her husband's whereabouts" (122). The fact that the Weasleys are extremely poor does not make the situation easier (*The Prisoner of Azkaban* 9), but Zettel still praises Molly's household management: "she's successfully raising seven kids on a tight budget. Honestly, the woman should get a medal" (qtd. in Smith). Molly always makes sure that everyone eats properly, she shows love to all her children and their friends (*The Prisoner of Azkaban* 72), but she also shows her frightening side and scorns them when they deserve it: "Beds empty! No note! Car gone – could have crashed – out of my mind with worry – did you care? – never, as long as I've lived – you wait until your father gets home, we never had trouble like this from Bill or Charlie or Percy" (*The Chamber of Secrets* 33; emphasis Rowling's).

Molly takes a liking to Harry immediately at their first encounter (*The Philosopher's Stone* 97) and since that moment plays a big role in his life, she tries to the best of her abilities that Harry does not feel motherless. She makes sure that he eats well (*The Order of the Phoenix* 61), sends him presents for Christmas (*The Philosopher's Stone* 200), and loves him like her own child: "'He's not your son,' said Sirius quietly. 'He's as good as,' said Mrs. Weasley fiercely" (*The Order of the Phoenix* 90). All things considered, Fenske legitimately describes Molly as a stereotypical caring mother "wearing a flowered apron and carrying a wooden spoon instead of a wand (184).

However, Molly's array of skills and tasks does not end there. Even with all those obligations, she is also a member of the Order of the Phoenix, a secret society of people who fight against Voldemort (*The Order of the Phoenix* 67), and while mediating between those two worlds would present an impossible task for the majority people, Molly does it without breaking a sweat. Gladstein puts an even bigger emphasis on her participation in the Order than on her role as a mother, and LaHaie explains that Lily and Molly both give their lives for their children, Lily literally, and Molly because "her life is consumed by taking care of her family" (qtd. in Lundhall 6). Even so, Molly plays the role of a mother so good that it is practically impossible to see her from any other angle up until the last novel. Then, however, upon seeing that her child is in danger, Molly engages in a duel with one of the most dangerous witches in the series, Bellatrix Lestrange: "Harry watched with terror and elation as Molly Weasley's wand slashed and twirled, and Bellatrix Lestrange's smile faltered and became a snarl. Jets of light flew from both wands, the floor around witches' feet became hot and cracked; both women were fighting to kill" (*The Deathly Hallows* 736). Cordova goes as far as to describe this event as a culmination of Molly's motherly role: "a mother bear protecting her cubs" (20). While almost anyone would

perceive Molly as an archetypal mother, she soundly proves that she can be much more, if she needs to.

## 4. Under the Thumb of Dolores Umbridge: Tyranny in Hogwarts

Dolores Umbridge comes to Hogwarts on the Ministry's initiative during Harry's fifth year to take the position of the Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher. Harry's initial impression of her is terrible as her appearance reminds him of a frog and her girly voice surprises him: "The witch spoke in a fluttery, girlish, high-pitched voice that took Harry aback; he had been expecting a croak" (*The Order of the Phoenix* 146). Immediately at her reception at Hogwarts, Umbridge gives an opening speech, which she starts in a seemingly endearing manner: "'Well, it is lovely to be back at Hogwarts, I must say!' She smiled, revealing very pointed teeth. 'And to see such happy little faces looking back at me!'" (*The Order of the Phoenix* 212). The rest of her speech, however, consists mostly of talk about progress and future changes, which is understood by very few, so Hermione has to clarify the situation: "'I'll tell you what it means,' said Hermione ominously. 'It means the Ministry's interfering at Hogwarts'" (*The Order of the Phoenix* 214).

Indeed, during her very first lesson, Umbridge points out that they will not be using any spells in the classroom: "'Using defensive spells?' Professor Umbridge repeated with a little laugh. 'Why I can't imagine any situation arising in my classroom that would require you to *use* a defensive spell, Miss Granger. You surely aren't expecting to be attacked during class?'" (*The Order of the Phoenix* 242; emphasis Rowling's). Since Voldemort had been resurrected in the previous novel (*The Goblet of Fire* 643) and the imminent danger every student has to face is greater than ever, this type of lecture makes it fairly obvious that the Ministry of Magic does not want to acknowledge Voldemort's return nor to teach the students how to defend themselves, and for that, Dolores Umbridge becomes their tool. This situation, of course, does not sit well with Harry so he tells the truth about the evil wizard's return in front of the whole class and earns himself a detention, which requires him to write sentences using his own blood as ink (*The Order of the Phoenix* 267). As the novel progresses, Umbridge's teaching methods become more and more medieval and she gradually gains more and more power in Hogwarts. The first title that she gains is that of a "High Inquisitor" which gives her the power to inspect other teachers (*The Order of the Phoenix* 307), and later she even becomes a Headmistress in Dumbledore's stead (*The Order of the Phoenix* 626).



Lundhall explains that Umbridge's power comes from her work relationship with the Minister of Magic and that she craves power so much that the more she is defied in Hogwarts, the more regulations which benefit her she implements (9-10). When Hermione discreetly invites people to organize Dumbledore's Army, Umbridge, based purely on a suspicion that there might be something going on behind her back, bans any type of student organization that has not been approved by her (*The Order of the Phoenix* 351). Her desire for absolute control actually benefits Harry once when he does an interview for the magazine *The Quibbler* so she immediately bans it: "If she could have done one thing to make absolutely sure that every single person in this school will read your interview, it was banning it" (*The Order of the Phoenix* 582). Wright describes this situation in Hogwarts as "downright corruption," which is, according to her, what happens when the state gets involved in education (qtd. in Thomas et al. 438). During one of Umbridge's lessons, Hermione shows not only that she has already read the assigned chapter but the entire book, and even offers her own opinion on the study material (*The Order of the Phoenix* 316-317). However, instead of praising her for her ability to think critically and her eagerness, Umbridge hinders Hermione's desire to learn so Vaughn believes that she is more of a tyrant than a teacher, which is hard to argue against. Williams and Kellner also point out that Umbridge's lack of self-restraint presents a particular problem since very little is necessary to unleash her "passive-aggressive rage." This happens when she loses her patience during the questioning of Marietta Edgecombe: "Professor Umbridge seized Marietta, pulled her around to face her, and began shaking her very hard. A split second later Dumbledore was on his feet, his wand raised" (*The Order of the Phoenix* 616). On one occasion, she shows that she will even use the Cruciatus curse<sup>7</sup> on a student if necessary (*The Order of the Phoenix* 746).

LaHaie believes that Umbridge makes the readers uncomfortable because of her mixture of typical feminine and masculine attributes (qtd. in Lundhall 16). More specifically, her feminine traits are evident from the fact that she is always wearing a fluffy pink cardigan (*The Order of the Phoenix* 203), her office is full of ornamental plates decorated with kittens (*The Order of the Phoenix* 265), and, as already mentioned, her voice is very girly. According to Smith, the typical masculine traits that she exhibits are control, hierarchy, and structure in her takeover of Hogwarts. Even though she is by no means likeable, this leads to belief that Umbridge is one of the most complex characters in the series. Schütz further emphasizes this by claiming that she demonstrates to the reader that there is no clear distinction between good and

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<sup>7</sup> Cruciatus curse is an illegal curse, which is used to inflict large amounts of pain upon someone (*The Goblet of Fire* 212-214).

evil (115), which is also reinforced by Sirius when Harry complains about her: “‘Yes, but the world isn’t split into good people and Death Eaters,’ said Sirius with a wry smile” (*The Order of the Phoenix* 302). That being said, Umbridge’s character provides a very useful insight about evil in the sense that it does not always have to wear its distinctive colors and it can lurk in the most unexpected places.

## 5. Bellatrix Lestrange: Blind Devotion or Mental Illness?

Bellatrix Lestrange is Narcissa's older sister so she shares her pure-blood status and aversion to anyone of mixed origin. However, while Narcissa shows loyalty towards Voldemort mostly out of obligation, Bellatrix takes it to a whole new level and out of all female characters analyzed in this paper, she is arguably the vilest.

Gallardo and Smith explain that the name Bellatrix means "female warrior" in Latin (qtd. in Lundhall 8), which fits her personality perfectly. Similar to Dolores Umbridge, Bellatrix also possesses numerous masculine traits, but in her case there is no conflict between masculine and feminine ones (Lundhall 17) because she was stripped of her femininity when she was sent to the magical prison Azkaban: "Azkaban had hollowed Bellatrix Lestrange's face, making it gaunt and skull-like, but it was alive with a feverish, fanatical glow" (*The Order of the Phoenix* 783).

She shows her sadistic and violent nature on numerous occasions throughout the novels. Harry explains that she was sent to Azkaban in the first place because she tortured Neville's parents with Cruciatous Curse until they lost their minds (*The Order of the Phoenix* 515). Furthermore, after Bellatrix kills her cousin Sirius in *The Order of the Phoenix* (805-806), Harry, in a fit of rage, improperly uses Cruciatous on her so she lectures him on how to use it the right way:

"Never used an Unforgivable Curse before, have you, boy?" she yelled. She had abandoned her baby voice now. "You need to *mean* them, Potter! You need to really want to cause pain – to enjoy it – righteous anger won't hurt me for long – I'll show you how it is done, shall I? I'll give you a lesson -" (*The Order of the Phoenix* 810)

Dumbledore also mentions on one occasion that Bellatrix "likes to play with her food before she eats it" (*The Deathly Hallows* 683). It is important to mention that Bellatrix is magically quite gifted as she is able to fight against Hermione, Ginny, and Luna at the same time on equal grounds in the seventh novel (*The Deathly Hallows* 735), and she is described as a witch "with prodigious skill and no conscience" (*The Deathly Hallows* 461).

It is virtually impossible for Bellatrix to comprehend the real meaning of love, so Rowling rightly says that her idea of it is "perverse and twisted" (qtd. in Geerts 15), which is obvious from her relationships with Narcissa and Voldemort. While she does show care and concern for Narcissa, Geerts believes that the only reason for that is because her sister married

into the pure-blood Malfoy family (15) as it is the only thing acceptable for their superior position in society. This proves to be an accurate assessment since she renounces her niece, Tonks, in front of Voldemort without hesitation because she married the werewolf Lupin: “‘She is no niece of ours, my Lord,’ she cried over the outpouring of mirth” (*The Deathly Hallows* 10). Also, when Narcissa breaks down in tears in front of Snape because she is concerned for her son’s well-being, Bellatrix tells her that she should instead be proud because Draco is able to serve Voldemort (*The Half-Blood Prince* 35). Towards Voldemort, she expresses unwavering devotion. In *The Order of the Phoenix*, she does not allow Harry to even speak his name: “You dare speak his name with your unworthy lips...” (784). She is also certain that Voldemort shares everything with her (*The Half-Blood Prince* 29) and in the last novel she speaks to him with great affection: “It was Bellatrix’s voice, and she spoke as if to a lover” (*The Deathly Hallows* 724). Even though Voldemort values her to some extent (*The Deathly Hallows* 736-737), it is obvious that he does not feel even remotely the same about her since he refuses to hear her “sniveling apologies” (*The Order of the Phoenix* 812) and mocks and taunts her about her niece in front of other Death Eaters (*The Deathly Hallows* 10), so Geerts describes her love for him as “unreciprocated” (15) and Heilman and Donaldson claim that he keeps her by his side only because of her faithfulness (145). Mikulan believes that her evil nature might actually be mistaken for a mental illness and is not sure whether she genuinely cares about her sister and Draco or she simply wants to ensure Voldemort’s success (293). Given all these points, it is, however, certain that there is no room in Bellatrix’s heart for anything besides her pure bloodline or her evil master, if she even has one.

## 6. The Pride of Gryffindor: Minerva McGonagall and Hermione Granger

### 6.1. Minerva McGonagall

Teaching is, without any doubt, one of the most important and demanding professions since the task of shaping young minds at various critical stages in life (Geher 2015) lies in the hands of teachers. As, according to Vaughn, Rowling herself enjoyed being a teacher and the majority of the novels about Harry Potter revolve around the magical school Hogwarts and its teachers, it is obvious that Rowling is also sending a message about the importance of education. With this in mind, of all the teachers in Hogwarts, the one who is most fit to deliver this message to the readers while simultaneously shedding some light on its complexity is most likely Minerva McGonagall.

Professor McGonagall is the one who welcomes students into Hogwarts and explains to them how the school and its system of four Houses work (*The Philosopher's Stone* 114). She is first described as a strict woman with square glasses and hair “drawn into a tight bun” (*The Philosopher's Stone* 9), which is, according to Mayes-Elma, exactly how teachers are usually portrayed in society. Upon his arrival at Hogwarts, Harry is immediately aware of who he is dealing with: “Harry had been quite right to think she wasn't a teacher to cross. Strict and clever, she gave them a talking-to the moment they sat down in her first class” (*The Philosopher's Stone* 133). She is also the Head of the Gryffindor House, but does not favor Gryffindors nor does she treat them any different than other students (*The Philosopher's Stone* 135). When they deserve to be punished, she does so strictly and without hesitation, proving that she is not biased: “If I hear you've come anywhere near here again, I'll take another fifty points from Gryffindor! Yes, Weasley, from my own House!” (*The Philosopher's Stone* 269). In *The Goblet of Fire*, McGonagall explains the customs of the traditional Yule Ball to the students and even though the event presents a chance for both students and teachers to relax, she is not too thrilled about the prospect of having fun, showing just how much of a stickler for rules she is: “Harry could see what was funny this time: Professor McGonagall, with her hair in a tight bun, looked she had never let her hair down in any sense” (*The Goblet of Fire* 386).

Despite her serious demeanor and adherence to rules, there are many sides to McGonagall that become visible depending on the situation. Firstly, Vaughn believes that she

“challenges the stereotype” of a teacher because she occasionally bends the rules. In the first novel, instead of punishing Harry after his misconduct at the Quidditch practice (*The Philosopher’s Stone* 148-149), she instead recognizes his ability and talent for the game and recommends him for the Gryffindor Seeker (*The Philosopher’s Stone* 151). In the third novel, she shows her confidence in Hermione by entrusting her with a Time-Turner, a small device used for turning back time, to help her attend all the lectures that she is interested in, even though a mere school student should not be in a possession of such a powerful item: “Professor McGonagall made me swear I wouldn’t tell anyone. She had to write all sorts of letters to the Ministry of Magic so I could have one” (*The Prisoner of Azkaban* 395). Furthermore, in *The Order of the Phoenix*, she openly shows her dislike for Dolores Umbridge in front of Harry despite the fact that she is her colleague at the time:

“Is it true that you shouted at Professor Umbridge?”

“Yes,” said Harry.

“You called her a liar?”

“Yes.”

“You told her He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named is back?”

“Yes.”

Professor McGonagall sat down behind her desk, frowning at Harry. Then she said, “Have a biscuit, Potter.” (*The Order of the Phoenix* 248)

Secondly, it becomes obvious that underneath her hard exterior, there lies a deeply passionate and caring woman. Gallardo and Smith even go so far as to claim that she “constantly struggles to refrain from emotional outbursts” (193). This, for example, becomes obvious when she cries after Gryffindors win the Quidditch Cup (*The Prisoner of Azkaban* 313), showing not only that she is proud of her own House but also her love and passion for sports. She is often concerned for Harry when he faces dangerous situations and occasionally even proud when he emerges victorious from them: “‘That was excellent, Potter!’ cried Professor McGonagall as got off the Firebolt – which from her was extravagant praise. He noticed that her hand shook as she pointed at his shoulder” (*The Goblet of Fire* 356). When Harry says that he and Ron want to visit Hermione in the hospital even though it is not allowed, she gives them permission with tears in her eyes because she understands the strength of their friendship (*The Chamber of Secrets* 288).

There are also instances when her fiery temper gets the best of her, which is usually the case when she perceives injustice. For instance, she completely loses control when a Dementor, a fearsome creature with the ability to suck one's soul (*The Prisoner of Azkaban* 247), is allowed on the school grounds in the fourth novel because of the fear for students' lives: "Harry had never seen Professor McGonagall lose control like this. There were angry blotches of color in her cheeks, and her hands were balled into fists; she was trembling with fury" (*The Goblet of Fire* 702). Similarly, when Umbridge tramples on Harry's dreams of becoming an Auror, she does not stand for it: "'Potter,' she said in ringing tones, 'I will assist you to become an Auror if it is the last thing I do! If I have to coach you nightly I will make sure you achieve the required results!'" (*The Order of the Phoenix* 665). Vaughn believes that with this act McGonagall displays her ethics by having Harry's best interests at heart, and she also shows the same belief in her students' abilities when she encourages Neville to carve out his own path instead of fulfilling his grandmother's wishes: "It's high time your grandmother learned to be proud of the grandson she's got, rather than the one she thinks she ought to have..." (*The Half-Blood Prince* 174). Overall, her actions paint a clear picture of her as the Head of Gryffindors: she is both their mentor and their family (Geerts 16).

Mayes-Elma describes McGonagall as a "strong agentic woman" (86), attributing her typical male traits. However, in comparison to Umbridge and Bellatrix who also possess male traits but both seem to want more and more power, McGonagall is satisfied with her position at school (Ludhall 9-10). Even so, if necessary, she is perfectly capable of taking on a more challenging role, regardless of the pressure:

"I shall expect you and the Slytherins in the Great Hall in twenty minutes, also," said Professor McGonagall. "If you wish to leave with your students, we shall not stop you. But if any of you attempt to sabotage our resistance or take up arms against us within this castle, then, Horace, we duel to kill." (*The Deathly Hallows* 602)

Heilman and Donaldson explain that in this situation McGonagall's character changes by assuming leadership rather than consulting with her colleagues or her superiors (143), which would happen in most other cases. Her bravery and determination to protect the school and its students make her both a devoted teacher and a model Gryffindor (*The Philosopher's Stone* 118), worthy of being the head of its House.

Considering all this, it does not come as a surprise that the first time Harry truly understood Bellatrix's words about wanting to cause pain was exactly at the moment he felt the

need to defend Professor McGonagall from a Death Eater who disrespectfully spat in her face (*The Deathly Hallows* 593). Through her actions and way of living, Minerva McGonagall embodies the very best of being a teacher. Strict and caring, just and flexible, dutiful and independent, she makes sure that as long as she is in Hogwarts, the future generations are in good hands.

## 6.2. Hermione Granger

Each and every one of the characters analyzed in this paper makes the fictional world of *Harry Potter* more colorful, brings something new to the table, and contributes to the story in a unique way. However, it is questionable how far Harry and Ron would have made it in their fight against Voldemort, their education, or their lives in general if they did not have Hermione Granger as their best friend. Over the course of seven novels, Hermione's character takes on so many challenging roles, subverts so many stereotypes, and helps the boys in so many ways that Cherland struggles with simply perceiving her as a credible character (278).

When Harry and Ron first meet Hermione in the train compartment heading to Hogwarts, she leaves the impression of an insufferable know-it-all straight away by talking way too fast and claiming that she already read all the books for their first year (*The Philosopher's Stone* 105-106), so Ron says to Harry: "Whatever House I'm in, I hope she's not in it..." (*The Philosopher's Stone* 106). Hermione's intelligence comes to the fore during their very first class with McGonagall where she proves to be the most successful with the task they have been given, and even earns McGonagall's "rare smile" (*The Philosopher's Stone* 134). As the story progresses, her knowledge and preparedness for classes become a common and a well-known thing: "Everyone sat in motionless silence; everyone except Hermione, whose hand, as it so often did, had shot straight into the air (*The Prisoner of Azkaban* 171). She always makes sure that if there is a book at her disposal, no page will remain unturned, even if it is about a practical subject such as flying: "This was something you couldn't learn by heart out of a book – not that she hadn't tried" (*The Philosopher's Stone* 144). Hermione's initial reluctance to break the rules and her determination to stop Harry and Ron from doing the same irritates the boys greatly (*The Philosopher's Stone* 154-155), even though she is the one who saves them on their very first secret adventure around the castle corridors by unlocking a door with a spell so they can all hide and remain unnoticed (*The Philosopher's Stone* 166). Afterwards, she clearly states her priorities



to them: “I hope you’re pleased with yourselves. We could all have been killed – or worse, expelled” (*The Philosopher’s Stone* 162).

It is not until a giant Troll attacks her and the boys have to come to her rescue (*The Philosopher’s Stone* 175) that the trio becomes inseparable. Because she needs rescuing, Hermione is heavily criticized by feminists who describe her as being typically helpless (Berndt 165), even though she is only eleven years old at the time. However, her helplessness is immediately overshadowed by the strength of her character as she decides to take the blame from the boys in front of Professor McGonagall, completely baffling Harry and Ron who cannot believe that she would lie to a teacher or do anything against the rules (*The Philosopher’s Stone* 178). Berndt praises her for this by saying that her action shows “generosity of character rather than ‘submission to peer pressure’” (165). More importantly, it earns her two lifelong friends: “There are some things you can’t share without ending up liking each other, and knocking out a twelve-foot mountain troll is one of them” (*The Philosopher’s Stone* 179).

After this incident, Hermione is always there to help the boys with homework, but she never lets them copy it in order for them to actually learn something (*The Philosopher’s Stone* 182). She never even asks for much in return: “What you can say is, We promise we’ll never leave our homework this late again...” (*The Order of the Phoenix* 299). Her responsibility and concern not only for her own grades but also for Harry and Ron’s prompt Heilman to describe her as the “mother figure” of the group (qtd. in Cordova 23) and, in many respects, she is also like a younger version of McGonagall, which proves to be a true blessing since Harry and Ron can be pretty high-maintenance at times: “Hermione gave him a look so reminiscent of Professor McGonagall that he gave up” (*The Goblet of Fire* 183).

Considering her brilliant mind, it does not come as a surprise that Terry Boot believes she should have been in Ravenclaw instead of Gryffindor (*The Order of the Phoenix* 399). Croft, however, explains this by saying that the Sorting Hat placed her in Gryffindor without hesitation because it actually foreshadowed that “her challenges will require not just theoretical mastery of magic but heroic use of it as well” (135). Hermione’s magical and researching skills indeed prove to be invaluable since there is not a single novel without a mystery for the trio to solve, and Freier rightly claims that the “access and use of information become increasingly important as the series progresses” (5). In *The Philosopher’s Stone*, Hermione is the one who discovers the identity of Nicholas Flamel and correctly deduces that his Philosopher’s Stone might be hidden in Hogwarts (*The Philosopher’s Stone* 219-220), bringing them one step closer to finding it. As

they advance towards the Stone, she saves all three of them from a dangerous plant by applying what she learned during the Herbology class: “‘Lucky you pay attention in Herbology, Hermione,’ said Harry...” (*The Philosopher’s Stone* 278). In the second novel, she is able to brew a Polyjuice Potion, a concoction far too advanced for a normal second-year student (*The Chamber of Secrets* 165), in order for them to get necessary information from Draco Malfoy, while also demonstrating that she became much more flexible about breaking the rules: “We’d be breaking about fifty school rules, I expect -” (*The Chamber of Secrets* 159). In *The Prisoner of Azkaban*, McGonagall shows so much confidence in her that she entrusts her with a Time-Turner, as already mentioned, and because of it, she and Harry are able to go back in time and save two innocent lives (*The Prisoner of Azkaban* 415). During that same year, she also earns a well-deserved praise from Lupin, who is a very intelligent man himself: “You’re the cleverest witch of your age I’ve ever met, Hermione” (*The Prisoner of Azkaban* 346). Furthermore, in *The Goblet of Fire*, Harry manages to pass the first task of the Triwizard Tournament mostly because Hermione practices casting a spell with him: “He was best at flying. He needed to pass the dragon in the air. For that, he needed his Firebolt. And for his Firebolt, he needed - ‘Hermione’, Harry whispered...” (*The Goblet of Fire* 345). Even though their adventures become more and more dangerous with each novel, Hermione never falls short. When the trio decides to leave school in order to defeat Voldemort once and for all, it is Hermione who makes sure that they have everything they need for their journey, from the most common accessories to crucial magical items, and she neatly fits it all into an enchanted bag:

“When did you do all this?” Harry asked as Ron stripped off his robes.

“I told you at the Burrow, I’ve had the essentials packed for days, you know, in case we needed to make a quick getaway. I packed your rucksack this morning, Harry, after you changed, and put it in here... I just had a feeling....”

“You’re amazing, you are,” said Ron, handling her his bundled-up robes. (*The Deathly Hallows* 162).

Freier believes that Hermione’s skills “as a librarian and researcher” lead to Voldemort’s eventual demise, which is, considering the scope of her contributions to the team, right on point.

One of the most impressive aspects of Hermione’s character is also her willingness to take the initiative and do something about the injustice in society, even when no one else wants to. At only fourteen, upon witnessing the cruel mistreatment of the house-elves firsthand (*The*

*Goblet of Fire* 139), she decides to set up the Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare, with the unfortunate acronym S.P.E.W., in order to secure fair wages and working conditions for the house-elves (*The Goblet of Fire* 224-225). Her organization is met with little success, making it obvious that she is pretty much the only one who is not comfortable with the “natural slavery of the house-elves” (Gupta 117). In spite of this, Hermione still tries her best to do something for them and even learns how to knit elfish clothes: “However, Hermione, who was taking more subjects than either of them, had not only finished all her homework but was also finding time to knit more elf clothes” (*The Order of the Phoenix* 334). Her organizational skills do not end there, as she is the one who initiates the foundation of Dumbledore’s Army, frustrated by the unproductive teaching methods of Dolores Umbridge: “‘No, I agree, we’ve gone past the stage where we can just learn things out of books,’ said Hermione. ‘We need a teacher, a proper one...’” (*The Order of the Phoenix* 325). She also invites people who are interested in the idea and finds them a meeting place (*The Order of the Phoenix* 337).

Since she is constantly hanging out with Harry and Ron, Hermione is perceived as one of the boys for the majority of the novels. In *The Goblet of Fire*, however, things start to change: “But Ron was staring at Hermione as though suddenly seeing her in a whole new light. ‘Hermione, Neville’s right – you *are* a girl....’ ‘Oh well spotted,’ she said acidly” (*The Goblet of Fire* 400). She accepts Viktor Krum’s offer to go to the Yule Ball with him, and it is then that she transforms from a bookworm into a beautiful girl (Gallardo-C. and Smith 200), enchanting everyone present: “His eyes fell instead on the girl next to Krum. His jaw dropped. It was Hermione” (*The Goblet of Fire* 414). Berndt and Steveker illuminate her somewhat discreet development into a girl by saying that she is “maturing outside of the male gaze” (4), which enables her to develop into a true female heroine. Berndt goes further with her analysis by explaining that Hermione matures into a female individual instead of becoming merely an “assembly of feminine stereotypes” (161). This is largely due to the fact that she is able to trust her own instincts and intellect, so she successfully avoids the “paralyzing concepts of femininity” (Berndt 164). For instance, when she is faced with a difficult choice of either staying with Harry on his quest against Voldemort or leaving with an enraged Ron, she chooses to stay with Harry even though she is already in love with Ron at the time (*The Deathly Hallows* 310). By doing this, she decides to put the task of defeating Voldemort for the greater good above her own happiness and stands by this decision regardless of the fact that Ron’s departure leaves her heartbroken: “She threw herself into a chair, curled up, and started to cry” (*The Deathly Hallows* 310).

It is important to mention that both of Hermione's parents are Muggles, and yet, with her academic achievements, magical skills, bravery, and unwavering friendship and loyalty, she constantly undermines any possible significance of being pure-blooded, as well as the distorted worldview of Voldemort and his followers (Gupta 167). With her numerous values and, more importantly, her "humanist notion of responsibility not only for her own life, but also for the impact her actions will have on her society" (Berndt 161), Hermione emerges as a savior who diminishes the importance of the prism of stereotypes by going beyond the restrictions of masculinity and femininity. She proves that it is not one's background or gender that matters, but the person's heart and mind. At the very beginning of their adventures, she says to Harry: "'Me!' said Hermione. 'Books! And cleverness! There are more important things – friendship and bravery and...'" (*The Philosopher's Stone* 287). Harry, however, knew where those things lied all along: "Everywhere he looked he saw families reunited, and finally, he saw the two whose company he craved most. ... They stood up at once, and together he, Ron, and Hermione left the Great Hall" (*The Deathly Hallows* 746).

## Conclusion

The analysis done in this paper makes it obvious that J.K. Rowling has created a world filled with highly developed, but also changeable characters. While the paper does provide an insight into the complexity of female characters, it also makes it obvious that none of them can be labeled as completely “stereotypical.”

First of all, it is impossible to strictly categorize young witches analyzed in the first chapter as they are bound to develop and change more and more as the story progresses. Even though they can sometimes fit into certain stereotypes perfectly, such as the one of a popular school girl in cases of Cho Chang and Ginny Weasley, their other, more prevalent, qualities make them deviate from the said stereotype. The case of Fleur Delacour, for instance, serves as an excellent warning about attaching stereotypes too quickly. Her vain exterior proves to be only a part of her personality, even though it initially seems like the most prominent one, while her love and devotion, which become apparent only later in the novels, turn out to be her defining traits. The characters analyzed in the first chapter justify their selections in their respective Houses, but by exhibiting a multitude of qualities and abilities throughout the novels they also successfully break out from the stereotypes of those same Houses. Furthermore, the mothers of the series differ greatly from one another. Molly goes from a stereotypical stay-at-home mother with an apron to a fearsome member of the Order of the Phoenix, while Narcissa goes from an arrogant Death Eater to a mother whose primary concern is her family. They have little similarities, but the one thing they all have in common is love for their children. The female antagonists prove to be just as complex since they possess both masculine and feminine traits so they, too, are able to avoid being stereotyped. In case of Dolores Umbridge, those traits are conflicted, which only adds to her character’s complexity, whereas Bellatrix is much more masculine, but it is impossible to predict her actions and behavior, owing to her unstable state of mind. Minerva McGonagall also seems to possess many contradictory qualities. However, the fact that she mediates between them in such a balanced way makes her one of the most admirable characters. At the same time, she is able to provide some insight about numerous intricacies of the teaching profession and how to deal with them, even though she by no means sets an easy example.

Overall, applying certain stereotypes to characters of such complexity seems to be useful only to an extent. With her vivid imagination, Rowling has shrewdly introduced her female

characters as somewhat one-dimensional, seemingly susceptible to criticism, and then proceeded to shape them as intricate individuals who all successfully escape the confines of stereotyping. Through the character of Hermione Granger, Rowling has been able to distance herself from the lens of stereotypes by putting a bigger emphasis on the person as an individual instead of attaching immoderate importance to the seemingly opposite constructs of masculinity and femininity.

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