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Geerts, F.L.
4031245



[HARRY POTTER AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF FAMILY]

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Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Introduction | 2 |
| Chapter 1: Home and Family | 4 |
| Chapter 2: Families and Framilies | 7 |
| Chapter 3: Gender and the Mother Figure | 14 |
| Chapter 4: Genre and Generic Innovation | 18 |
| Conclusion | 21 |
| Bibliography | 22 |

Introduction

The consideration of family in fiction is important, since its representation can both reveal and obscure oppressive practices (Connel, 1995; Messner, 1997; Pyke, 1996).

Representations within fiction “are personal ways to understand ourselves, others, and society but they are also impersonal reflections of macro-level power relations” (Heilman & Donaldson, 140). The representation of family then, helps to understand what message is communicated and what ideologies are at play. In short, to study children’s literature is to analyse an adult ideal (Hunt, Introduction to Children’s Literature 3). The popularity of *Harry Potter* has been attributed to many different things, but there is an argument to be made that it derives its success in its recognisability to the reader. Barthes categorises two types of pleasure derived from reading literature; *plaisir* and *jouissance*. *Plaisir* is based in the recognisability of cultural and ideological situations; when the reader identifies with the commonly accepted ideologies presented, consciously or subconsciously. These stereotypes are also called *Doxa*. *Jouissance* occurs when the reader is confronted with the opposite, when (s)he is presented with writing which “does not reproduce the *Doxa*, the stereotype” (Barthes, 107). This “unsettles the reader” and is used to jar them “out of cultural assumptions” (Tobin, 213). These tools in turn can be used to either promote or denounce certain *Doxa*. In short, every book presents certain ideologies that authors enforce with different levels of intention.

In this essay, I will examine the ideologies and representation of family in the *Harry Potter* series. There are many ideologies at play concerning family in children’s literature as it is often a prominent topic. One of the most common ideologies that are present in children’s literature which concern family is that “true happiness (...) is impossible without the love and support of a dedicated family” (Alston, 1). According to Alston, children’s books across the ages adhere to this philosophy (1). She continues to argue that, despite many calls for change,

this underlying ideology perpetuates still (2). On the other hand, Lucy Waddey argues that in recent children's literature, the ideas about home and parents have changed. She argues that the prevalent ideology at the moment is the very "ambivalent description of home and family life" (13). One of the ways in which ideology regarding family presents itself is in the representation of home. According to Alston, "[t]he ideological and the physical presentations of the home are intrinsically linked". The appearance of the several homes in *Harry Potter*, then, represents certain ideologies pertaining to family within the text. Firstly, home and family within *Harry Potter* will be discussed. Secondly, the ideology relating to family and the elements that are needed to form one according to those ideologies will be examined. Furthermore, the mother figure and the element of gender will be inspected and the change occurring from children's literature to young adult literature. Lastly, the genre and generic innovation of *Harry Potter* will be investigated.

Chapter 1:

Home and Family

Home and family are two different things, although they are closely connected. Home generally has a physical shape and often represents the situation of the family. Home in children's literature is often presented as a haven, it is the epitome of safety and the ideal of family given physical shape. In *Harry Potter*, several homes are introduced. First, there is the Dursley's cupboard under the stairs, then there is the Weasley's burrow, and after that there is the old Order of the Phoenix base, to name a few. There is also Hagrid's home, which becomes much of a home to Harry almost from the start, even before being introduced into the Weasley's burrow. Alston argues that the home can be read in many different ways, and is an important clue as to the situation and ideology of the family (69). For example, the Dursley's cupboard under the stairs, does not represent a loving and nurturing environment, instead being presented as a place of control and oppression, being more akin to a prison than a warm home (69). The far more maternal home Hagrid offers suggests a more "womb-like retreat" (69). The idea of the womb-like homes could allude back to the Freudian theory about the desire to return to the mother's womb, although other interpretations are possible (Alston, 83). This psychoanalytical approach would explain the womb as "the ultimate home, where life begins, where the foetus is safe and nourished and if the foetus is in the womb then the adult always knows where he/she is" (Alston, 83). This representation leans heavily on the ideal family situation; a safe environment in unity, but also the ultimate control the parents have over the child, seemingly inescapable. However, this imagery has its own complications. The need for the child to move away or grow up is then hard to explain if the ultimate desire is to return to the womb. The journey or rite of passage to grow up is a tenacious pattern present in most children's fiction, including *Harry Potter*, as a growth occurs from "dependence to maturity" (McGilles, 77).

Space and restriction are often demonstrated within the home; where the adult has complete freedom of movement, the child is often restricted to certain places as well as behaviours (90). Power structures and confinement are inevitable in discussion of space, as is the case with the construction and form of the concept of home. According to Foucault, spaces are manifestations of power, or connected to power (3). In a way, home represents (an often hierarchical) structure of power (Alston, 92). In children's literature it is often the adult that controls the space, and often the male (Tosh). In *Harry Potter*, this is not necessarily the case. Although it is evident in the Dursley family that the traditional gender roles assigned to husband as head of the house and wife as the nurturing factor, the Weasleys arguably demonstrate a different distribution of power within the home. Here, it is the woman, the wife, the mother, that seems to hold the supreme power, as is demonstrated for example when she scolds her sons for taking the flying car, and then the husband for creating it and not taking proper disciplinary actions against their children as she perceives it. Alston argues that the Dursleys act as a negative foil for the Weasleys, demonstrating how not to construct a family life (2). Relating back to Barthes' theory, the Dursleys create a recognisable Doga, albeit a negative one, and the Weasleys, who seem at first glance to present a similar, inverted Doga, combines this with elements that are new, providing the reader with both *plaisir* and *jouissance*.

In conclusion, the family, as opposed the home, is intangible, and relies on emotional bonds rather than birth or genetics within the *Harry Potter* series. It does however, rely heavily on the shape of home. As Harry moves from the mundane world to the magical world, he also moves "emotionally from a place of isolation and loneliness to a sense of community and belonging" (Kornfeld & Protho, 125). This is present most evidently when Harry first moves from his cupboard under the stairs to his newfound home in Hogwarts and Gryffindor. Furthermore, the creation and adherence to certain Doga that act as each other's

foil, such as the Weasleys and the Dursleys, contribute to a sense of *plaisir*, while the elements of *jouissance* are found when the Weasleys deviate from these stereotypes.

Chapter 2:

Families and Framilies

In modern children's fiction, there are many different portrayals of the family. In *Harry Potter*, the heteronormative structure of family seems prominent, but there are arguments to be made that there are, in fact, different kinds of family to be found in the *Harry Potter* series.

According to Hollindale, there are several different layers of ideology at work in literature. There is the first one, the explicit one, which generally expresses the moral beliefs of the writer, or perceived writer. Then there is the secondary one, the passive and implicit ideology of what is assumed. Family is a concept that is subject to various ideologies as well.

The first family introduced in *Harry Potter*, the Dursleys, is at first glance the typical heteronormative family, perhaps even to the extreme; a traditional distribution of gender roles. The family comprises white, heterosexual parents in a stable nuclear family (Reynolds). So are the Weasleys, with the husband working to sustain his family and his wife remaining at home to be head of the household. Even Hermione and Malfoy live in families that have the same heteronormative, nuclear shape of family. If this were the ideal, however, the overwhelmingly negative portrayal of the Dursleys seems to counter that dogma.

The surface ideology may seem then to be that although a family is defined by its nuclear, heteronormative form, this does not guarantee a perceived 'good' family, as the text demonstrates with the Dursleys and the Weasleys. However, throughout the series, other forms of family units are formed, perhaps less visible than the arguably stereotypical families that the Dursleys and Weasleys present. This allows for different ideologies about family to emerge from the text. Though the first two books enforce the ideology that a heteronormative structure is what defines a family, the later books break away from this norm and allow for

different shapes of family units to be created through friendship and single father relationships with, for example, Sirius in the third book.

The construction of family and the expectations and ideologies bound to that concept show their complexity throughout the *Harry Potter* series. Though the Dursleys are initially presented as a one-dimensional, rather stereotypical family to show an unwelcome home, the characters later gain more depth.

The earlier ideology of the heteronormative structure may at the surface seem to be what defines a family but the passive ideology shows that outer appearance does not necessarily guarantee a safe family. Kornfield and Prothro argue that the Dursleys are portrayed as overly negative and merely serve as a stereotype, neglecting and abusing Harry for virtually no reason other than his extraordinary abilities (122). It could be argued, however that in the later books, hints of a rounder character to the Dursleys are given; Petunia tells Harry that when he lost his mother, she lost her sister (*Deathly Hallows*). The Evans family is perhaps not as idyllic as perceived; Lily was favoured over her sister, who was afraid of magic and suspicious of Snape. Petunia herself comes perhaps from a neglected family which resulted in her accepting a traditional, more reserved role as housewife, serving her husband. Although the morality of her - and her family's - actions remain the same, in the sense that the surface ideology dictates that it was wrong, it sheds light on an otherwise superficial stereotype. Her motivation comes from a history of being overshadowed by her sister because of her magic, and losing the close bond she had towards her because of the fact that her sister could go to Hogwarts, but she could not. This, from her perspective, meant that magic was the cause of her losing her sister; first she lost the tight bond they had together as they grew up due to magic, and then Lily was killed by Lord Voldemort with magic. Her treatment of Harry, then, resulted from grief and fear. Harry made odd things happen around him, reminding her of how it all started for her and her sister; she almost literally tries to hide

Harry away from the world and from her family by confining Harry to an under-stair cupboard. It is per her suggestion that the Dursleys at the start of *The Philosopher's Stone* actively run away from the letters admitting Harry to Hogwarts. This act of running away instead of handing Harry over to be taken care of for most of the year, which according to Harry's account would be all they could want, shows Petunia's fear and perhaps vindication of magic and Hogwarts stemming from her childhood experience, arguably combined with a hint of protection towards Harry. This reveals a passive ideology that abuse has an origin in abuse; magic has in a way abused or mistreated Petunia, and in return she abuses Harry. This does not mean that the abuse is excused in any way with respect to the ideology in the text, rather the abuse may instead be explained, but an explanation is by no means an excuse.

Harry Potter sets out to find a home for himself, a family. As seen in the Mirror of Erised, his deepest desire is to have his family back; his mother and his father. Though this ideal is unattainable, the quest for belonging and identity connected to heritage remains to play a big role in the series (Piippo, 79). The first surrogate family he encounters is during his enrolment. There are the four houses in Hogwarts, explained by McGonogall in *The Philosopher's Stone* as "something of a family within Hogwarts" and that each house comes with "its own noble history" (105). This matches Hess and Handel's theory of a family theme, which compromises a family unit's fundamental ideology from which a sense of justice and actions are derived (10). These family themes have their way of doing things and by that pattern become a unit (11). These family themes or units resurface in multiple ways in the series. His sorting into Gryffindor is the first time that Harry has a chance to find his own home, his own family and he jumps on this opportunity. He requested to not be sorted into Slytherin, and although his sorting into Gryffindor is the first alternate family Harry is introduced into, arguably the most important unit Harry forms is within this family theme: his friendship with Ron and Hermione.

Most friendships or family units Harry forms, he forms through a shared purpose in which all involved either benefit or there is a mutual interest in helping. Even his friendship with Ron and Hermione starts with them saving each other from the troll, their initial friendship described and explained by Rowling as “from that moment on, Hermione Grainger became their friend. 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” (163). Here, the mutual shared purpose of knocking out the troll is what eventually bonded the three together, even though previously neither Harry nor Ron were interested in befriending Hermione. Later, this bond strengthens to an inseparable force, through the hardship they face together. Other family units he forms through friendship and mutual interest are Dumbledore’s Army and the Order of the Phoenix. The important factor for these groups as a family unit is the protection they extend to each other. Dumbledore’s Army, for example, is created from a need of protection, and is reciprocated by each member. Although it can be argued that the Order of the Phoenix is created for a similar reason, the dominant force behinds its creation is in defence of their ideology, which is at jeopardy by the rise of Lord Voldemort. This shared ideology is the family theme that binds this group together in unison to form another family unit.

Another ideology at play involving family is its importance in shaping and directing the actions of the child, or later adult. Several antagonists in the series have a clear background of a family that does not adhere to the stable, loving families portrayed as positive. It could be argued that Voldemort’s drive as the Dark Lord stems from the failure of his family. Lord Voldemort, or Tom Riddle as he was known before he established himself as Lord Voldemort, is a product of a broken family himself. The first hints on his background and family situation become clear in the second book, *The Chamber of Secrets*. The act of erasing his own name alone is explained as he cannot stand using his father’s name.

“I, keep the name of a foul, common Muggle, who abandoned me even before I was born, just because he found out his wife was a witch? No, Harry — I fashioned myself a new name, a name I knew wizards everywhere would one day fear to speak, when I had become the greatest sorcerer in the world!” (272).

This hatred towards his father stems from the fact that his mother was a witch and his father abandoned his pregnant wife. As the series later explained, his mother had bewitched his father with a love potion, and when she stopped giving that to him, he realised what she had done and cut all ties with her. He too bears resentment towards his son, when later Voldemort seeks him and his family out, he is rebuked. These events instilled a deep hatred towards Mudbloods that perpetuated his entire life.

Barty Crouch Jr., the antagonist in *The Goblet of Fire* follows a similar path to the Dark Arts by the destruction of his family. He has a father who neglected him, his son, and when his son got into trouble he chose his own ambitions above his son's care. Sirius explains Crouch Senior should have “left the office early once in a while [and] gotten to know his own son”. For Crouch Senior “[a]nything that threatened to tarnish his reputation had to go”, this ultimately included his own son (450). According to Sirius, “Crouch's fatherly affection stretched just far enough to give his son a trial, and by all accounts, it wasn't much more than an excuse for Crouch to show how much he hated the boy” (451). This hatred for his son, then, is the reason why he sent him to Azkaban, even though the evidence that Crouch Junior is a Death Eater is shoddy at best; it was all circumstantial. This failure of the family to protect the son is emphasised when Sirius describes that Crouch Junior was “screaming for his mother by nightfall”, but went quiet in a couple of days (451). Not only did his father send him to Azkaban, a terrible sentence, his mother was there for the trial and despite her son calling out to her multiple times, she only sobbed and at hearing the sentence she merely “gave a great gasp and slumped in her seat” (511). Both his mother and

father had failed in their roles as parents the protection the family should provide. The response to this loss of family for young Crouch is to search for a new one, and in the Death Eaters he finds a new one. Lord Voldemort in specific becomes a father figure to him, as he says when he attempts to murder Harry for Lord Voldemort “I will be his dearest, his closest supporter... closer than a son” (579). He later kills his remaining family and seeks to build a new one with his Death Eaters, mirroring Lord Voldemort’s desires. However, unlike Crouch Junior, Lord Voldemort is physically unable to love due to being conceived under the effects of a love potion (*Deathly Hallows*). This may explain his inability to build a sustainable family based on the values of the dominant ideology within *Harry Potter*. The Death Eaters are kept together by fear and greed for the most part, with several devoted disciples willing to go through any lengths to please Voldemort.

This stands in direct opposition with the three main protagonists in the series, each of whom was born into a loving family. Ron has a large family, consisting of caring parents and siblings, and Hermione is a lone child who comes from a supportive family of Mudbloods. Harry appears to be the odd one out of the three, but as his own family is taken away, he seeks out and finds another loving family, or multiple family units, to belong to. The first few books in the series present a surface ideology that a family is a heteronormative, nuclear shape, and should provide protection to the child as well as love and care. Its passive ideology shows that these families do not necessarily adhere to these ideals of family. In later books, the ideology seems to shift, or encompass other forms of family, the more obvious being Harry’s godfather Sirius, but also Neville’s family situation is expanded in the fourth book, where it is revealed he has been brought up by his grandmother because his parents have gone insane.

In conclusion, although Hollindale’s theory accounts for the active and passive ideology, when applied to the *Harry Potter* series as a whole, it reveals that the theory fails to

account change. The series is unique in the sense that it consists of seven books written and published over a span of nine years, in which an author's perspective, skill and boldness change over the course of the books.

Chapter 3:

Gender and the Mother Figure

Female characters in *Harry Potter* “play vital roles in the development of plots” (Pugh and Wallace, 269). Throughout the books, the mother figures are typically beyond reproach whereas the father figures are often heavily flawed. Dumbledore in his younger years was, according to Rowling, contemplating the same thing Voldemort wanted to do; to dominate the Muggles and allow for wizard supremacy (13, Amini). Sirius Black and James Potter were bullies when they were young and frequently broke the rules. The mother figures, however, have been mostly sublime; Lily is talked about with much love by various characters in the book, professors and old friends alike, whereas James Potter is attributed negative character traits, such as bullying Snape when they were younger and Lily considered him arrogant before they eventually fell in love (*Deathly Hallows*). Molly Weasley is beloved by all and does not seem to make any mistakes. That is not to say there are no negative female characters, but rather that where mothers are concerned there are few negative traits shown. However, one could argue that instead of having inherent negative traits, for adult women in the *Harry Potter* series it externalised and focussed into a villain. One of the only overwhelmingly negative female character seems to be Bellatrix LeStrange, and it is telling that it is Molly Weasley who defeats her singlehandedly and not, for example, Sirius Black. Bellatrix seems to be represented as the complete opposite of Molly. Bellatrix was taught from an early age to revere blood purity and resent everyone who does not. She embraced this philosophy whole-heartedly, marrying out of obligation into another pure-blood family. Her version of taking care of family comes from this twisted view; she has tortured and killed people within her own family who showed obvious defiance to her pure-blooded view. Her cousin Sirius Black, who had different ideas about pure-bloods and Muggleborns, and her niece Nymphadora Tonks, who married a werewolf, are both killed by her hand. The only

family member Bellatrix shows affection for is her younger sister Narcissa, who dutifully married into the well-established pure-blood family Malfoy. When asked about her niece by Voldemort, Bellatrix replies that she “is no niece of ours” and that she and her sister Narcissa Malfoy “never set eyes on our sister since she married the Mudblood. This brat has nothing to do with either of us, nor any beast she marries” (*Deathly Hallows*, 14). The physical representation and adulation of the family tree and the morally apprehensive code of pure-bloodedness dictates its corruption and twisted sense of family. People who thought differently were burned out of the family tree. This twisted sense of family arguably influenced her twisted sense of love. Bellatrix had a love for Voldemort that, although unreciprocated, was incredibly strong and perverse in expression, such as eagerly killing and torturing enemies of Voldemort. Her obsession towards Voldemort is shown as she “leaned toward Voldemort, for mere words could not demonstrate her longing for closeness”, and she is one of the few, if not only one, of the Death Eaters to never deny her loyalties towards her master when she was caught (*Deathly Hallows*, 13).

This is in direct opposition to Molly’s accepting family, where disagreement does not equal death or exclusion and ideas of pure-bloodedness are refuted. Rowling herself had stated that the final duel between Molly and Bellatrix were to show the clash of two different female energies. She described them as “Molly, who will mother the whole world if she can, and you have Bellatrix, whose idea of love is very perverse and twisted” (“A Conversation with J.K. Rowling”). It is no great stretch to say that Molly’s mothering form of love is portrayed as superior to Bellatrix’ twisted, devoted version, and this final battle shows the strength of Molly. Another reason for this confrontation was to show that being a house-wife does not have to mean that a woman is weak; Bellatrix was described as one of the most talented duellists and torturers under Voldemort’s command. On fighting her four against one, Harry knows that they “were no match for her, even though there were four of them against

one of her: She was a witch, as Harry knew, with prodigious skill and no conscience” (*Deathly Hallows*, 395). To have the ever-loving Molly, who is portrayed for the biggest part, if not for the entirety up to this point, of the story as a mother first and foremost, duel one of the most powerful lieutenants of Voldemort is significant; Molly, whose ideologies of love and protection are in direct conflict with Bellatrix’s unhealthy version, manages to defeat Bellatrix when defending her daughter. This arguably shows conflicting ideologies at work; on one hand, it shows there is more to Molly than just “a domestically minded, worrying mother”, as she shows her aggressive and fierce side. However, she only does this when her daughter is threatened; arguably showing her power comes from being domesticated, and is inaccessible otherwise.

Another prominent female villain would be Dolores Umbridge. Dolores Umbridge is significant in the sense that she is key to the plot in *Order of the Phoenix* as well as ruthless, and the most effective in undermining Dumbledore’s authority (Pugh and Wallace, 269). If Bellatrix is the foil for Molly, then one could argue that Umbridge is the foil for McGonagall. McGonagall has been the mentor for the Gryffindor house, and in a way a nurturing persona towards the people that form house of Gryffindor, a family of its own. Their battle in the *Order of the Phoenix* is one of control, but where Minerva is concerned for her pupils, Umbridge shows utter disdain. She is not above torturing her pupils to get what she wants, as she threatens to cast the Cruciatus Curse on Harry (*Order of the Phoenix*, 731). Minerva, on the other hand, tries to protect her students and fellow colleagues from her influence, and is in attacked by Umbridge in return with such viciousness that she ends up in the hospital. Here, the mothering figure is not triumphant, as she is defeated by the villain, and so the students have to take matters into their own hands. This is the same book that sees the true threat of Voldemort’s return and the death of Sirius Black, Harry’s godfather. Arguably, these events

all collide to transition the children's story to the young adult genre, where responsibility and irreversible failure often play a part.

This change from children's fiction to young adult fiction seems to occur in the fifth book. Not only does the plot involve death and other mature themes, it sees an enormous increase in female characters. So many, in fact, that Heilman and Donaldson speculate that it is "a wilful attempt at gender inclusion", which was lacking in the previous four books (Heilman & Donaldson, 142). They argue that there is a shift in the representation of the female characters, which according to them had previously been exclusively stereotypical and superficial, to more developed and diverse characterisation. Several characters are given new elements to their character; Ginny, for example, shows that she possesses great power and strength of will, even though those were completely absent in previous books (Heilman & Donaldson, 143). Mr. Weasley is shown taking up on domestic tasks, such as chopping vegetables, and Mrs. Weasley takes on a political and active stance when she joins the Order of the Phoenix.

Chapter 4:

Genre and Generic Innovation

Harry Potter combines several genres, most prominently fantasy and school story, and adds new contemporary liberal values to the story. To begin with, we have the school story, where a typically middle-class boy, budding in his adolescence, goes to a boarding school. *Harry Potter* fits this model, and the series adds the concerns and values around gender and family into this literary genre. This may not be as novel as it seems, as Beverly Lyon Clark argues school stories are “so marked by gender that it becomes vital to address questions of both the instability and potency of gender” (11). However, Pugh and Wallace argue that because *Harry Potter* is set in a boarding school of mixed genders and in a fantasy setting where power is evenly distributed amongst the sexes, this version of the school story “challenges regressive constructions of gender and sexuality in its apparent treatment of boys and girls as equals” (260). They go on to argue that, despite the fantastical world the story is set in, the focus remains on a heteronormative ideal, in the sense that there are no same-sex couples depicted in the book nor are there any questions of queer sexuality (263 – 264). The focus seems to lie in the gender equity that plays an important role throughout the rest of the book, given room and acceptance in the fantasy genre, where Rowling has put women and people of colour in positions of power (264). It is important to note that Pugh and Wallace wrote their essays before Rowling’s admission that Dumbledore was gay, though she never included this in the series. He, and his implied lover Grindelwald, would be the only gay characters in the canon. *Harry Potter* also draws heavily from the fantasy genre, as it mixes with the established school story. This allows for the school story to play out in a world where different rules apply, and different ideologies rule. Pennington argues that although *Harry Potter* does draw upon fantasy, it only does so at a superficial level, and that the series seems “unwilling – or unable – to depart from this consensus reality” (66). He continues that the story remains

“prefigured in mundane reality” and relies too explicitly on the world it tries to escape from (67). However, this idea of various worlds, including a version of the real or mundane world, is prevalent in many other books that are considered fantasy, such as the *Chronicles of Narnia* or the *His Dark Materials* trilogy. Furthermore, although the magical world has many parallels with the real world, it does create a version of rules and life that do not exist in this world. Pugh and Wallace, for example, argue that the world of *Harry Potter*, and most notably the magical world which is free from the limits of this world, has placed the school story in a post-feminist world where “gender is no longer an issue that needs much attention” (269).

Another element often encountered in children’s literature which resurfaces in the *Harry Potter* series is the return to home, which is as previously argued connected with the family. Alston argues, the return to home is “crucial as it ensures that the child characters and therefore the child readers recognise and internalise the importance of returning home” (71 – 72). This, according to Nodelman, is because the parents exert power and hold complete control at home (Nodelman, 31). As Jon Stott and Doyle Francis argue, most of children’s literature contains the journey of the child from “a setting which is ‘not home’ to one which is ‘home’” (223). Interestingly enough, *Harry Potter* starts in a hostile home that does not conform to the traditional elements that would constitute an arguably good home. According to Alston, “[c]hildren’s literature insists that the home, like the family, should be a place of love, benevolence and warmth” (76). In the *Harry Potter* series, one could argue this same ideology is prevalent, though perhaps not immediately visible. The Dursleys illustrate the opposite of what would constitute as a home. As such, their place is not a home to stay, but the ‘not home’ setting, a start of a journey to a better place or home. For Harry, it is the “quest for a real home” (Alston, 76). Hogwarts, Hagrid and the Weasleys can be seen as the home setting Harry is on a quest for. Nikolejeva argues that the domestic elements, or houses, are

generally portrayed in a utopian way, creating a micro-society that is safe, happy and secure and where there are no outside threats (41). This would contradict the idea that Hogwarts is an ideal home for Harry, as it is there that each year he faces a threat; Hogwarts is presented as a home, but it does not conform to the traditional domestic elements as presented by Nikolejeva. In the *Harry Potter* series, the Weasley family become a kind of surrogate family to Harry, and their Burrow becomes for him a home. For the majority of the story, the Burrow provides exactly what the utopian family situation would; there are no threats, and the household lives a relatively happy and peaceful life. The idea of a home and its direct opposition to his home with the Dursleys is invoked by Harry's description of life with the Weasleys as "different as possible from life on Privet Drive" (*Chamber of Secrets*). This changes when the Burrow comes under attack in the last book, here there is a direct attack and confrontation on Harry's newfound family and house. The Death Eaters literally break the protective enchantments of the house, shattering the perceived safety and security of Harry's surrogate home (*Deathly Hallows*).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the element of family plays a crucial part in the *Harry Potter* series. Home and the family are often at odds, and it takes Harry until the end of the seventh book to truly find home, although he creates several family units throughout the series, starting in the first book. Furthermore, the ideologies surrounding the family evolve as the series continues, and although Hollindale's theory approaches ideology in children's literature from a useful angle, it fails to take into account the change a series, rather than a single book, goes through. The mostly passive ideology in the first few books are drawn further to the surface and become the active ideology, most notably in the fifth book where there is a significant increase in female characters and attention to their diversity. The element of gender heavily influences the family as well, mother figures are prominent and given much space in the books, although they are mostly presented as perfectly domesticated. Their possible negative traits are concentrated in the female villains shown later in the series, and provide important drive for the plot as well as showcase different aspects of the mother figures in the story. Lastly, there are several genres incorporated in the *Harry Potter* series, most evidently fantasy and school story. These genres are fused to create space where different kinds of family can be easily created and accepted as well as gender norms and interpretation which would feel strange if set in the mundane world. In all, the *Harry Potter* series could be seen as a story in search of family, and what exactly it means to be family. The reader, alongside Harry, is introduced to various different families as the series progresses, and comes to see the shapes and sizes families can take according to the ideology embedded in the text.

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