FANTASY: THE LITERATURE OF REPETITION

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FANTASY: THE LITERATURE OF REPETITION
AN EXAMINATION OF LADY ÉOWYN, HERMIONE GRANGER, AND KELADRY OF
MINDELAN

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Lay Abstract

This thesis examines the ways in which a heteronormative 'legacy code' – exemplified by Lady Éowyn in J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* – has been perpetuated in literature marketed towards young adult readers by Hermione Granger in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series and 'refactored' by Keladry of Mindelan in Tamora Pierce's *Protector of the Small* series. Starting with Rosemary Jackson's analysis of fantasy literature as a genre with subversive potential and with Judith Butler's assertion that gender is performative, this thesis analyses the narrative arcs of Éowyn, Hermione, and Kel and demonstrates how the continual representation of strong female characters finding fulfillment in the roles of lover, wife, and mother is limiting, and highlights the subversive potential in 'refactoring' heteronormative 'legacy code.'

Abstract

  This project explores the narrative arcs of strong female characters in Young Adult (YA) fantasy literature. Taking up Rosemary Jackson's assertion that fantasy literature can 'subvert patriarchal society,' this thesis examines the fantasy 'legacy code' of strong and subversive female characters who settle into a stereotypical performance of gender after finding fulfillment in the heteronormative roles of lover, wife, and mother. This pattern is exemplified by Lady Éowyn of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Two Towers* (1954) and *The Return of the King* (1955), and reproduced by Hermione Granger of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series – consisting of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997), *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (1998), *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (1999), *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (2000), *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (2003), *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (2005), and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2007). In contrast Keladry of Mindelan in Tamora Pierce's *Protector of the Small* series – consisting of *First Test* (1999)*, Page* (2000), *Squire* (2001), *and Lady Knight* (2002) – demonstrates the impact 'refactoring' fantasy 'legacy code' has on the narrative conclusions of female characters. Using Judith Butler's theory on the performative nature of gender and building on Farah Mendlesohn's computer programming analogy of 'legacy code,' this thesis illustrates the ways in which fantasy literature often fails to be the literature of subversion Jackson envisions, and demonstrates how refactoring aspects of a female character's narrative exemplifies subversive narrative conclusions for young adult readers of fantasy literature.

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List of Abbreviations

CC   *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* by J.K. Rowling, Jack Thorne, and John Tiffany

CoS   *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* by J.K. Rowling

DH   *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* by J.K. Rowling

GoF   *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* by J.K. Rowling

HBP   *Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince by J.K. Rowling*

HP   *Harry Potter* series by J.K. Rowling

LOTR   *Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien

OotP   *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* by J.K. Rowling

PoA   *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* by J.K. Rowling

POTS   *Protector of the Small* series by Tamora Pierce

PS   *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* by J.K. Rowling

YA   Young Adult (literature)

Declaration of Academic Achievement

All research and analysis in this thesis, except where otherwise cited and acknowledged, is the sole work of Emily Sattler.

Introduction

After a decade of following the socially and politically conscious Hermione Granger

through an adolescence full of adventure and danger, many readers of the *Harry Potter (HP)*

series (1997-2007) were disappointed to discover that the 'greatest witch of her generation'

married Ron Weasley, a cowardly, intolerant, and unremarkable wizard. J.K. Rowling employs a

well-established fantasy trope when Hermione's narrative concludes in heterosexual marriage

and motherhood. While romantic partnerships and parenthood are not inherently problematic,

when texts continually present these roles as the only fulfilling conclusion to a female character's

narrative, they perpetuate heteronormative discourses that normalize 'lover,' 'wife,' and

'mother' as the roles women should perform. Because J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*

(LOTR) narrative (1954-1955) has served as the intertextual backdrop for much of 20th and 21st

century fantasy fiction[1], Lady Éowyn's fulfilment through heterosexual marriage and

motherhood is a pattern that is traceable throughout many popular fantasy texts[2], including one

of the two fantasy series analysed in this project: Rowling's *HP* series. Both *LOTR* and *HP*

present strong female characters with narrative arcs that end in heterosexual marriage and

motherhood. In contrast, Tamora Pierce's *Protector of the Small (POTS)* series (1999-2002)

challenges the formulaic narrative pattern established in *LOTR* by having the female protagonist

both subvert and reject the stereotypically feminine roles of lover, wife, and mother.

In *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (1981) Rosemary Jackson asserts that the

"fantastic" can be used "to subvert patriarchal society" (103-104). Due to its imaginative nature,

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[1] Well-known texts influenced by *LOTR* include *The Elfstones of Shannara* (1982) by Terry Brooks, *The Wheel of Time* series (1990-2013) by Robert Jordan, and *The Inheritance Cycle* (2001-2011) by Christopher Paolini.
[2] Mercedes Lackey's *Heralds of Valdemar* series (1987-1988), Jordan's *Wheel of Time* series, and Robin Hobb's *The Farseer Trilogy* (1995-1997) all depict subversive female characters fulfilled by heterosexual marriage and motherhood.

fantasy literature allows authors to confront their "dissatisfaction with what 'is'" and re-imagine what 'could be' (18). It is important to interrogate the heteronormative conclusions that Tolkien and Rowling create for their most prominent female characters, as both authors present their strong female character fulfilled by heterosexual romantic partnerships and motherhood even though they are writing within a genre that allows space for subversive performances of gender. Although Rowling's Hermione Granger and Pierce's Keladry of Mindelan both possess ambitious personal goals, namely seeking political change and fighting against social injustices, Hermione's relationship with Ron distracts her from achieving these goals, whereas Kel's relationship does not. In the epilogue of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (*DH*) – the seventh and final novel in the *HP* series – Hermione is a lover, wife, and mother; the text does not refer to Hermione's employment or activist endeavours in the canonical conclusion of her narrative[3]. In contrast, Kel concludes her narrative redefining the role of lover, rejecting the role of wife, and subverting the role of mother; moreover, Pierce ensures readers are aware of Kel's continued employment and activist efforts. Thus Rowling's series retains the traditional pattern of depoliticizing the female hero and relegating her to the private sphere while Pierce's series rejects it.

Fantasy Defined

In *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1973) Tzvetan Todorov explains that on the most basic level, fantasy literature is a Secondary World where "an event [occurs] which cannot be explained by the laws of" our own Primary World[4] (25). Todorov's work builds upon the essay "On Fairy Stories" (1947) by Tolkien; this foundational essay asserts that fantasy stories require the "'willing suspension of disbelief'" by those receiving the story

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[3] Please refer to Chapter 4 for my discussion of Rowling's extra-textual updates on Hermione.
[4] See Todorov for a fuller description of the fantastic as a genre.

(60). In order for this suspension of disbelief to occur, a story-maker must create a "Secondary World" that the story-receiver can enter into imaginatively (60). Whatever the story-maker creates must "accord with the laws of that [fantasy] world" in order for the story-receiver to sustain their suspension of disbelief; the "moment disbelief arises, the spell is broken; the magic, or rather art, has failed. [The reader is] then out in the Primary World again" (60). Therefore, a story-maker can break the laws of the Primary World in a fantasy text, but they cannot break the laws of their Secondary World without breaking the reader's engagement with the story.

Because the successful execution of a fantasy story only depends upon the internal consistency of the Secondary World, the fantasy genre has the potential to be incredibly subversive. In fact, Jackson observes that the fantastic often "traces the unsaid and the unseen of culture: that which has been silenced, made invisible, covered over and made 'absent'" (4). Fantasy as a genre therefore has the potential to 'imagine otherwise' – to escape the confines of the real world. However, as Jackson notes, fantasy authors often fail to use the genre to question and critique the social and political environments that influence their story-making; rather, fantasy texts, more often than not, reproduce the realities of the Primary World. For example, the reproduction of stereotypical performances of gender is consistent throughout fantasy literature[5]. Due to limited space, this project focuses on the representation of three white, able-bodied, cis-gender female characters in three well-known fantasy texts marketed to young adult readers[6]. I use Éowyn's narrative arc to ground my analysis of Hermione and Kel for two reasons: firstly, Éowyn's narrative clearly exemplifies the narrative arc typical of strong female characters in

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[5] Fantasy is also lacking in diverse depictions of many other facets of identity, including race, sexuality, and ability. Unfortunately, it is not within the scope of this project to address the many places in which fantasy literature reproduces dominant ideologies.

[6] According to Lee A. Tally's definition of Young Adult (YA) literature, the target readership of YA is between the ages of twelve and eighteen.

fantasy literature, and secondly, Tolkien's *LOTR* remains a staple within the fantasy genre that has influenced – and will continue to influence – generations of fantasy readers and writers.

The Éowyn Pattern

While many female characters in fantasy literature begin, and remain throughout their narratives, stereotypically feminine, Éowyn is different; she initially appears to be a subversive female character with power and agency in the male-dominated Middle-earth. In *The Two Towers* (1954), Éowyn is the caregiver of her sickly uncle, King Théoden. After Gandalf heals Théoden, the king goes to war and leaves Éowyn in charge of Edoras because she is "fearless and high-hearted" (Tolkien 151). Éowyn is "lord to the Eorlingas" while the men are gone to war (151). The men around her recognize her leadership skills and trust her to rule Edoras while they are away; Éowyn has a considerable amount of power given that she is a woman in a largely patriarchal society. Thus the text sets Éowyn apart from others in Edoras as a respectable and powerful female character.

In *The Return of the King* (1955), Éowyn begs to go to war with Aragorn after Théoden returns to rule Edoras. She "wish[es] to face peril and battle" because she is "a shieldmaiden and not a dry-nurse" (54). Aragorn implies that as a girl her "part is in the house;" but Éowyn knows that she "can ride and wield a blade" and therefore aid her people in battle (55). She later defies Aragorn[7] and goes to war, illustrating her ability to make choices and have agency over her own life. While in battle, Éowyn defends the wounded Théoden from the Witch-king thus proving her skills as a warrior. She beheads the Witch-king's Fell Beast: "A swift stroke she dealt, skilled and deadly. The outstretched neck she clove asunder, and the hewn head fell like a stone" (130). Then "with her last strength she drove her sword between the crown and mantle" of the Witch-

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[7] Her defiance of Aragorn is also a rejection of her medieval princess identity; she is not an object to be won or married off to cement political alliances.

king thereby defeating him (130). Thus the text demonstrates that Éowyn is a subversive female character at the start of her narrative when she enters into the male space of the battlefield as a shieldmaiden and performs physical deeds of bravery and prowess.

Unfortunately, Éowyn falls unconscious due to her battle wounds, and wakes up confined to the Houses of Healing. Outraged that she cannot return to war, Éowyn paces the castle walls; there she encounters Faramir. When Faramir recognizes her sexual desirability and expresses his love "the heart of Éowyn change[s], or else at last she under[stands] it. And suddenly her winter passe[s], and the sun [shines] on her" (292). She declares that she "'will be a shieldmaiden no longer,'" instead, she "'will be a healer, and love all things that grow and are not barren'" (292). The text proclaims that Éowyn is "healed" of her deviance with the decision to embrace the 'feminine' role of lover (292). She marries Faramir and later becomes a mother; this is her happy ending. The text ultimately curbs the subversive potential of Éowyn's flexible performance of gender when it returns her to the roles stereotypically deemed appropriate for women.

The Éowyn Pattern is a 'legacy code' which strong female characters typically reproduce in fantasy literature. The Éowyn Pattern has three distinct parts that recur throughout the narrative arcs of female characters. First, while in the flexible space of girlhood the liminal female character exercises agency and participates in stereotypically masculine activities (alongside 'feminine' activities). Second, the male gaze falls upon the body of the girl and sexualizes her; the sexual objectification of this girlish character causes her to transition out of girlhood and into womanhood. As a woman, society now expects the female character to perform the womanly roles of lover, wife, and mother; consequently, the female character suddenly develops a romantic relationship that distracts her from her previous interests. Third, at the conclusion of her narrative, the female character abandons her goals and ambitions in favor of

performing the heteronormative womanly roles of wife and mother. Throughout this project, I compare the narratives of Hermione and Kel with Éowyn's narrative in order to track the ways in which the *HP* series and the *POTS* series either reproduce or 'refactor' the Éowyn Pattern.

      Chapter 1 unpacks the theoretical material with which I engage throughout my analysis of Hermione and Kel: this includes defining what constitutes a 'strong' female character; defining the terms 'gender performance,' 'girlhood,' 'flexible,' 'liminal,' and 'the male gaze;' examining the parallels between Harlequin Romance novels and YA fantasy literature, and defining my use of the computer programming terms 'legacy code' and 'refactoring' and explaining how these terms serve as a useful analogy for thinking through longstanding fantasy tropes. Chapter 2 establishes Hermione and Kel as strong/feminist female characters while within the space of girlhood; this chapter specifically focuses on the ways in which each fictional society allows these characters the flexibility to perform their gender in a subversive manner while they are girls (and therefore not expected to perform the roles of women). Chapter 3 examines the ways in which the male gaze sexualizes the girlish bodies of Hermione and Kel and shifts the way their societies perceive them. As women, the expectation is that Hermione and Kel will abandon their flexible performances of gender in order to uphold the normative roles of lover, wife, and mother. This chapter also examines the impact of a love interest or romantic partner on the actions and goals of Hermione and Kel in womanhood. Chapter 4 compares the narrative conclusions of Hermione and Kel and highlights the ways in which Éowyn's Pattern serves as a limiting 'legacy code' that results in heteronormative endings. Each chapter of this project tracks the development of Hermione and Kel over the course of their narratives in order to identify moments of 'refactoring' that ultimately result in a subversive narrative conclusion for Kel. In light of Kel's successful subversion of Éowyn's 'legacy code,' the Conclusion of this

project addresses the importance of 'refactoring' fantasy 'legacy codes' for young adult readers

and identifies other problematic fantasy 'legacy codes' in need of 'refactoring.'

Chapter 1 | Foundational Critical Theory

The female and male characters in Tolkien's *LOTR* reproduce heteronormative scripts; in the Introduction I briefly presented the ways Éowyn establishes a heteronormative narrative arc (a fantasy 'legacy code' here referred to as the Éowyn Pattern) despite her initially subversive performance of gender. As a foundational text in fantasy literature, *LOTR* provides a narrative formula for many subsequent fantasy series, including the *HP* series and the *POTS* series. This chapter unpacks the theoretical material and terminology with which I engage throughout my analysis of Rowling's and Pierce's series. I define the terms 'strong female character' and 'agency.' I explain the concepts 'gender performance,' 'girlhood,' 'flexibility,' and 'liminality' as I use them throughout this project. I describe 'the male gaze' and the ways in which I see this term borrowed from film theory applying to literary characters. I also draw upon the research of Linda K. Christian-Smith in order to outline the connections between YA fantasy texts and Harlequin Romance novels – both in terms of target readership and narrative arcs – as she directly compares her study of young readers to the research of Janice Radway in *Reading the Romance*, whose language I draw heavily from in my discussion of heteronormative narrative conclusions. Finally, I touch upon Farah Mendlesohn's use of the computer programming term 'legacy code' and flesh out this term as I use it in my analysis of Hermione and Kel. I explain my inclusion of the term 'refactoring' – a programming term associated with 'legacy code' – and the ways in which 'refactoring' is a useful analogy when discussing how to make changes to longstanding genre tropes.

Defining Key Terminology

'Strong' Female Characters and Agency

What is a 'strong' female character? Because Éowyn, Hermione, and Kel succeed in physically demanding quests, adventures, and battles, it is easy to assume that a 'strong female character' possesses great physical strength. However, there are plenty of physically strong female characters who lack depth or do not possess a full narrative arc[8]. Therefore, when I refer to Éowyn, Hermione, and Kel as 'strong' female characters, what I actually mean is that they are all strongly *written* female characters. Éowyn, Hermione, and Kel all have complex desires and emotions that motivate them to pursue their goals. A strong female character is agentic; she has "the ability to define [her] goals and act upon them" by making legitimate choices (Kabeer 438). I stress the importance of making choices because a choice necessarily "*implies the possibility of alternatives*, the ability to have chosen otherwise" (437 emphasis in original). At the beginning of their narratives Éowyn, Hermione, and Kel all make legitimate choices that propel them towards their goals. Because she has the agency to make choices, a strong female character has flaws; she will encounter problems, make mistakes, and perhaps appear weak or vulnerable. Encountering hardship and expressing emotions reflects her humanness (opposed to her innate femininity). Éowyn, Hermione, and Kel do experience negative consequences from their choices and react emotionally to them; their ability to respond emotionally adds

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[8] For example, Kettricken from *The Farseer Trilogy* by Robin Hobb is a warrior queen-in-waiting who never develops as a character; she remains static as a woman who is ready to sacrifice herself for her people. The hero-story narrative structure of the trilogy means that readers are never privy to Kettricken's motivations or desires; she also lacks agency, as she does not have the ability to have chosen otherwise in her actions and reactions.

richness to their characters. Essentially, a strong female character within the context of

this project refers to characters who possess three-dimensional representation, the ability

to make choices, the opportunity to develop their character over the course of their

narrative, and the drive to 'refactor' patriarchal expectations. By this definition, Éowyn,

Hermione, and Kel are all 'strong female characters' at the start of their narrative arcs.

Gender as Performative and Heteronormativity

In popular discourse, we tend to use the term 'gender' to encompass both

'biological sex' and 'gender identity.' In Westernized societies there are two commonly

acknowledged biological sex categories[9]: female and male. These binaric sex categories

are so closely associated with the gender identities 'woman' and 'man' in popular

imaginations of personhood that 'sex' and 'gender' have become indistinct. Social

systems – such as school, family, and government – condition humans to perform

according to gendered scripts of 'femininity' and 'masculinity' based on their sexual

biology. Carolyn G. Heilbrun succinctly defines stereotypical femininity and masculinity:

"'feminine' equals tender, genteel, intuitive rather than rational, passive, unaggressive,

[and] readily given to submission" and "'masculine' equals forceful, competent,

competitive, controlling, vigorous, unsentimental, and occasionally violent" (xiv). These

are the traits associated with heterosexual women and men. The belief that there are two

distinct and complementary gender identities is part of the heteronormative assumption

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[9] Intersex is a general term that encompasses a variety of circumstances in which a person's sex characteristics (chromosomes, gonads, or genitals) do not fit into binary notions of 'female' and 'male.'

that heterosexuality is 'normal' and 'natural[10].' However, in *Gender Trouble* (1990),

Judith Butler consciously separates 'gender' into 'biological sex' and 'gender identity' as

these are separate facets of human identity. Furthermore, Butler asserts 'femininity' and

'masculinity' (and the associated traits) are social constructions of gender identity,

opposed to innate behaviours linked to biological sex. Put simply, human bodies with

differing biological sexes have no meaning outside of their socially constructed gender

categories; genders are merely a series of actions that society links to certain biology.

By examining the performative nature of gender identity, Butler highlights the

artificiality of our current, heteronormative concepts of gender. She argues that coherence

of identity is enforced both by the individual and society; therefore "words, acts, gestures,

and desire" are performed in order to "produce the effect of an internal core" or a stable

'self' (185). These "acts, gestures, [and] enactments, generally constructed, are

performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to

express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other

discursive means" (185 emphasis in original). Butler describes the performance of gender

via "gendered stylization of the body" (the clothing, hair styling, make-up, and jewellery

that are involved in the visual markers of 'gender') as well as "certain bodily acts" (the

choice of employment, recreational activities, vocabulary, and sexual partner that go into

living as a 'gendered' body) (xv-xvi).

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[10] Heteronormativity assumes that woman-identifying people with female sexual biology (or cis-gender women) will engage in relationships with man-identifying people with male sexual biology (or cis-gender men); this is not always the case.

Butler observes that gender is self-fulfilling: "gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender" (190). In other words, because we continue to deem certain actions appropriate for people with a certain sexual biology, we as a society perpetuate the idea of rigid genders. However, Butler then argues, "without those acts, there would be no gender at all" (190). Essentially, if we as a society were able to separate gender identity and performance from sexual biology, 'gender' as a divisive category would cease to exist. Therefore, Butler brings to light the radical potential in acknowledging that gender is a performative act. If gender is a reality "created through sustained social performances" then choosing to perform "gender configurations outside the restricting frames" that currently exist could be incredibly subversive (192-93). Actively manipulating one's performance of gender challenges the innateness of gender and thus the restrictions of human behaviour gender imposes in a heteronormative society.

It is the subversive potential of gender performance outside of the hegemonic scripts that interests me. The 'rules' of fantasy are, as previously defined by Tolkien and Todorov in my Introduction, quite simple; a story-maker must remain internally consistent while working within their Secondary World in order to maintain their story-receiver's suspension of disbelief. Therefore, authors writing within the fantasy genre have the space to be subversive in their depictions of gender provided they are consistent within their own Secondary Worlds. However, popular YA fantasy literature often builds upon the conservative Éowyn Pattern and recreates sexist gender norms. Yet especially within YA literature, subversive performances of gender have the potential to be powerful

in challenging young readers to think differently about gender identity. Challenging tired tropes and presenting readers with subversive female characters as an alternative to tired gender stereotypes is one area in which fantasy literature could begin to challenge socially restrictive and problematic gender scripts in literature.

Girlhood, Liminality, and Flexibility

Chapter 2 focuses on girlhood and the flexibility a liminal position allows female characters in the *HP* series and the *POTS* series. Therefore, understanding popular notions of 'girlhood' – and the freedom society allows prepubescent/pre-sexual females in 'girlhood' – is important for unpacking my analysis of subversive gender performances in Rowling's and Pierce's texts. In her article "Stripping for the Wolf: Rethinking Representations of Gender in Children's Literature," Elizabeth Marshall observes that literature for children often reveals "adult preoccupations about appropriate material for young minds and docile bodies. These anxieties [also] surface in discourses of femininity and masculinity circulating within the texts" intended for young adults (262). Adult anxieties are especially apparent in regards to controlling and regulating young female bodies in literature. Essentially, girlhood in literature for young readers is part of a "larger pedagogical tradition aimed at reproducing and reinventing gendered identities" (262). Recall the consequences of Jo March's subversive performance of gender in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1868). Jo's parents permit her to be flexible in her performance of gender in girlhood. However, after an incident in which Jo's 'masculine' temperament almost results in the death of Amy March, Mrs. March advises Jo to behave in a more

mature and 'womanly' manner, thereby reinforcing the importance of performing gender in a normative manner once one is outside the flexible space of girlhood.

Although I largely focus on the flexibility of gender performance in Chapter 2, I do engage with this concept throughout my analysis of Hermione and Kel; thus it is important to define the terms 'liminal' and 'flexible' as I am using them within this project. I have used 'liminal' and 'flexible,' because the existing terms in the field of feminist theory do not address the specific issues at work with these characters. For instance, 'androgynous' refers to the outward appearance of a human that does not clearly indicate a gender; Éowyn, Hermione, and Kel are not physically androgynous. Often associated with 'androgynous' is the term 'genderqueer;' this is an umbrella term used to refer to people who transgress the boundaries of distinct genders, regardless of how they self-identify. While *I* might label Éowyn, Hermione, and Kel as genderqueer because they appear to identify with neither, both, or a combination of both genders, it feels disingenuous to do so, as these characters very much self-identify as cis-gender women. Likewise, 'gender fluid' – referring to a gender identity that varies over time – is very much about how the individual identifies; the gender identity of Éowyn, Hermione, and Kel does not change throughout their narratives – they are static in their self-identification as 'women.' Similarly, 'gender bending' refers specifically to dressing and/or behaving like the opposite sex. While Éowyn, Hermione, and Kel do occasionally dress and behave in a 'masculine' manner, their strength as characters stems from their combining of the 'feminine' alongside the 'masculine.' To describe them as 'gender bending' implies that

they consciously alter their performance of gender to be stereotypically masculine, which is not the case.

Because 'androgynous,' 'gender fluid,' and 'gender bending,' do not accurately describe the characterization of these three heroines, I describe Éowyn, Hermione, and Kel as 'flexible' due to their 'liminal' status. The term 'liminal' implies an 'in-between-ness' and invokes an image of one straddling the line between two distinctly defined categories. My use of 'liminality' within this project acknowledges the binaric gender identities (woman and man) that exist in all three fantasy worlds, and allows for a 'flexibility' or subversiveness in gender performance. Éowyn, Hermione, and Kel all straddle that threshold and accordingly perform both 'feminine' and 'masculine' characteristics. The term 'flexible' refers to the ability to modify oneself easily in order to respond to altered circumstances; all three female characters perform their gender with flexibility depending on the situation.

Within both the *HP* series and the *POTS* series, girlhood is a space in which liminal characters flexibly perform gender; both the wizarding world and Tortall allow females to behave in a subversive manner while they are prepubescent. Pierce addresses the flexibility of 'girlhood' via Lord Wyldon[11] when he asks Kel to "consider the future. Soon [her] body will change. The things that [she] will want from life will change" as she matures into a young woman (*First Test* 204). Wyldon assumes that as Kel's body matures, her goals in life will shift to be 'womanly;' she will stop 'straddling the threshold' between the 'feminine' and the 'masculine' and settle into the socially

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[11] Lord Wyldon is the training master of pages and squires for the majority of the *POTS* series.

expected performance of 'woman.' Wyldon's assumption implies that Tortallan society is willing to let a girl be flexible in her gender performance, but that it is unacceptable for a woman to behave in a similar manner. Interestingly, the *HP* series perpetuates the assumption that a woman's goals shift towards the stereotypically feminine with sexual maturity, as after Hermione's transition into womanhood in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire (GoF),* much of her dialogue in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix (OotP)* and *Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince (HBP)* centers on gossip or romantic advice.

Note that when Éowyn is the most flexible in her performance of gender, she is "like a morning of pale spring that is not yet come to womanhood" (Tolkien, *Two Towers* 140). Éowyn is also within the space of girlhood when she is most flexible with her performance of gender. Similarly, Hermione and Kel are both prepubescent girls at the start of their narratives – Hermione is eleven and Kel is ten. Because these girls are pre-sexual, they arguably experience more freedom to exercise agency and perform their gender in a subversive manner. That is not to say that girls are not sexual (as I believe that children are not asexual[12]), but rather that society does not expect a female child to perform the sexual roles of a woman (lover, wife, and mother) at this point in her life. It is only once a girl enters into womanhood that society expects her to perform these gendered roles. Because of the ages of Hermione and Kel, their societies do not expect them to perform the roles of lover, wife, or mother yet; they therefore have more freedoms to be liminal and perform flexibly at the start of their narrative arcs.

The Male Gaze, Romance, and Fulfillment

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[12] See Judith Levine's text *Harmful to Minors* (2002) for a bold discussion on children and sexual desire.

Chapter 3 examines the ways Hermione and Kel change as characters once they transition from girlhood into womanhood and develop romantic feelings. Both characters experience a 'transformative' moment that facilitates the shift from girl to woman. For Hermione this transition occurs when Harry first recognizes Hermione as a woman at the Yule Ball; for Kel this transition occurs when she develops breasts and has her first menstrual period. I borrow Laura Mulvey's concept of 'the male gaze' from her essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" in order to discuss this transition into womanhood. Although scholars typically use the term in film theory, the concept of 'the male gaze' is also useful in literary analysis[13]. For Mulvey, the male gaze comes from those behind the camera, the characters in the film, and the audience of the film, all of whom actively objectify a woman's body for heterosexual male pleasure. I argue that these roles – director, film character, and audience – easily transfer to author, literary character, and reader. In both film and literature, the object of the gaze – the woman – is passively looked-at, while the man is the active 'looker.' Essentially the gaze indicates unequal power between the viewer (the bearer of the look) and the viewed (the image). Mulvey notes that in film the "determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. [… W]omen are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*" (Mulvey 47-48 emphasis original). In literature, descriptions of a female character's body or descriptions of a male character's reaction to

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[13] Others have recognized the presence of the male gaze in literature. For example, Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* (1979) provides feminist criticism of the male gaze throughout her collection of short stories.

a female character's body work similarly in positioning the female body as 'to-be-looked-at.' Recall Peeta Mellark in Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* (2008) and the ways in which he shifts the Hunger Games audience's perception of Katniss Everdeen by viewing her as sexually desirable; Peeta's gaze has the power to shift the viewer's perception of Katniss from a dangerous and undesirable game contestant to a beautiful and desirable sex object.

Because the male gaze projects its fantasy onto the woman's body, I argue it facilitates the transition of a female character from girlhood into womanhood within the context of the *LOTR* and the *HP* series – which both reinforce a male/female dichotomy. Therefore, a female character's transition into womanhood is less about the physical maturity of her body (which is something that she would actively observe while looking at her own body) and more about the ways in which a male character perceives her body as either sexually desirable or not. The male gaze can make a child (who is not physically sexually mature) womanly if the male character views her as sexually desirable. Similarly, an adult female character (sexually mature) can remain sexually undesirable (in a state of girlhood) if a man does not look upon her body as a woman's body and project the roles of lover, wife, and mother upon it. The active gaze of a male character determines whether a female character's body is seen as girlish (pre-sexual) or womanly (sexual). Traditionally, the female is passive under the male gaze.

Chapter 3 engages with Janice Radway's analysis of Harlequin Romance novels in *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature* (1984), as the narratives of Éowyn, Hermione, and Kel all contain a romantic subplot. Radway observes

that the Harlequin Romance narrative arc depicts female fulfillment in heterosexual

partnerships, which aligns with Tolkien's Éowyn Pattern. She argues, "each romance is,

in fact, a mythic account of how women *must* achieve fulfillment in patriarchal society"

(17 emphasis in original). Furthermore, the reader is aware of these formulaic conclusions

for female characters, but she "ignore[s] the fact that each story prescribes the same fate

for its heroine and can therefore unconsciously reassure herself that her adoption of the

conventional role, like the heroine's, was the product of chance and choice, not of social

coercion" (17). Linda K. Christian-Smith's "Sweet Dreams: Gender and Desire in Teen

Romance Novels" (1993) supports my assertion that readers of YA literature might

participate in a similar wilful ignorance that all female heroines by 'chance' and 'choice'

find fulfillment in heterosexual partnerships[14]. Furthermore, Radway notes that in

romance narratives:

> all women inevitably end up associating their female identity with the social roles
> of lover, wife, and mother. Even more successfully than the patriarchal society
> within which it was born, the romance [plot] denies women the possibility of
> refusing that purely relational destiny and thus rejects their right to a single, self-
> contained existence. (207)

Romance narratives demonstrate that women are "fated to live out a predetermined

[heteronormative] existence" (207). Thus a heteronormative romance narrative arc, which

is often part of the narrative arc of a female character in YA fantasy literature, works to

jettison any sort of independent life outside of the roles of lover, wife, and mother for

female characters in heterosexual relationships.

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[14] Another possibility is that readers themselves might play with the 'legacy code' of the texts they are
reading by writing fanfiction. I do not have the space within this project to address the thriving fan
communities for all three fantasy series, but it is worth noting that some readers are already thinking outside
of the 'legacy code.'

'Legacy Code' and Subversive Fantasy

Throughout this project – but especially in Chapter 4 – I engage with Farah Mendlesohn's analogy of computer 'legacy code' in order to address fantasy genre patterns[15]. In March 2016 Mendlesohn gave a lecture entitled "The Rhetorics of Fantasy and the Rhetorics of Social Justice" at the Interdisciplinary Graduate Student Conference at UBC. In her speech, Mendlesohn used the computer programming term 'legacy code' to refer to the problematic fantasy tropes she identifies in her text *Rhetorics of Fantasy*[16] (2008). These tropes or legacy codes refer to themes of nationalism, orientalism, imperialism, boundaries and borders, archetypes and stereotypes, nostalgia, destinarianism, and cultural appropriation typically found in fantasy literature (Janet). Mendlesohn argued that problems in fantasy legacy code (genre tropes) pass forward with each new narrative built on the original code; thus in order to create subversive fantasy literature, writers must revisit and rewrite the legacy code on which they build their stories.

In my personal correspondence with Nathan Jervis (Software Architect and President of NVC Software Solution in Hamilton, Ontario), I inquired about the term 'legacy code' and how programmers interact with legacy codes when making new programs. Jervis explained that programmers rarely abandon what they refer to as 'bad

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[15] I use 'legacy code' – opposed to 'literary convention' – for two reasons. First, it is the language used by Farah Mendlesohn, one of the top scholars in fantasy literature at this time. Second, 'legacy code' evokes the visual of physically altering lines of code. Because I plan on turning this project into a YouTube video series, having a strong, simple, and easily manipulated visual built into my analysis is important for me.
[16] In *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, Mendelsohn does refer to the "legacy" of fantasy tropes, but without specifically employing the term 'legacy code' (99). For in depth analysis of problematic genre tropes, please refer to this text.

smelling' (messy or problematic) legacy code in favour of writing a new base code
(which appeared to be what Mendlesohn was challenging fantasy authors to do). Rather
programmers engage in 'refactoring;' this is the term used to describe changing
underlying code (legacy code) for aesthetic or organizational reasons; when a program is
refactored it performs "identically" to how it performed with the legacy code, but
refactoring opens the code for easier future modifications (Personal correspondence).

To clarify: when programmers refactor they are tidying up messy code in existing
programs. A layperson using the program would not detect 'bad smelling' code. Only
programmers attempting to engage with the legacy code (while making updates, for
example) would find and interact with messy legacy code. In the analogy I use throughout
this project, the program equals the fantasy story itself. While the fantasy genre
tropes/legacy code an author chooses to engage with in their story might be
problematic/messy it does not change the fact that the story the reader interacts with still
functions as a story in the fantasy genre. An author who wishes to refactor 'bad smelling'
fantasy genre legacy code is still writing a fantasy story, but in a refactored story the
underlying code is 'cleaned up' to be less problematic. By refactoring the legacy code an
author makes their fantasy narrative less messy, allowing future fantasy authors to
manipulate the legacy code more easily. Thus refactoring a legacy code is a subtle
process that gradually allows for change within the fantasy genre[17].

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[17] Abandoning the legacy code in favour of writing a new base code would be the equivalent of inventing a new literary genre.

The aforementioned Éowyn Pattern is one example of problematic fantasy legacy code that is in need of refactoring. Throughout my analysis of Hermione and Kel, I suggest that *HP* and *POTS* both engage in a certain amount of refactoring of gendered fantasy legacy code. (Although, the *POTS* series arguably succeeds in refactoring Éowyn's legacy code, while the *HP* series eventually perpetuates it.) With these key terms in place, I offer analysis of the narrative arcs of Hermione and Kel – from girlhood at the start of their narratives, to womanhood at the conclusions of their narratives.

Chapter 2 establishes the first part of the Éowyn Pattern: female characters are ambitious and agentic within the flexible space of girlhood. I examine the existing *HP* scholarship that remains conflicted in regards to whether or not Hermione's performance of gender is sexist or feminist. Additionally, I offer my own analysis of the first four *HP* novels in order to establish the ways in which Hermione is a strong female character who flexibly performs her gender at the start of her narrative arc. I then examine Kel in the first two novels of the *POTS* series, which establish her as a strong feminist character. Chapter 2 highlights the surprising similarities between Éowyn, Hermione, and Kel at the start of their narrative arcs and establishes them as strong and liminal female characters while within the space of girlhood.

Chapter 2 | Liminal Girls: the Flexibility of Gender in Girlhood

The narratives of Hermione and Kel both reproduce the first part of the Éowyn Pattern: a liminal female character within the flexible space of girlhood behaves subversively in order to accomplish her goals. A review of gender in Middle-earth, alongside observation of Éowyn's flexibility while within girlhood, is important for illustrating the ways in which female characters can subvert stereotypical femininity in girlhood. Similar to Éowyn, in girlhood Hermione and Kel straddle the boundaries of the 'feminine' and 'masculine' in their performances of gender. Throughout Rowling's texts – *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (PS)*, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets (CoS)*, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban (PoA)* and *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire (GoF)* – Hermione exhibits both stereotypically feminine and masculine behaviours in her flexible and subversive performance of gender. As a liminal character, Hermione combines her emotional reactions to wizard prejudice with her determination and academic knowledge in order to challenge problematic race- and blood-based injustices in the wizarding world. Like Éowyn and Hermione, Kel balances 'feminine' and 'masculine' behaviours throughout *First Test* and *Page*. Her liminal position as an empathetic girl in the male-dominated knight-training program makes Kel a strong female character. Her unique position enables her explicitly feminist campaign to challenge hegemonic structures within the Tortallan education and justice systems.

Lady Éowyn

Gender in Middle-earth

Middle-earth is a patriarchal medieval fantasy setting; gender is binaric and gender roles are rigid and stereotypical following the medieval western European model.

The two main heroes of the *LOTR*, Frodo Baggins and Aragorn, are both male. The series' main antagonist, The Dark Lord Sauron, is also male. Female characters throughout the *LOTR* are few and far between; when a woman does appear she is most often nameless or does not speak for herself as she appears in the stories and songs of male characters. The few named and speaking female characters (such as, Galadriel, Lady Éowyn, and Arwen Undómiel) typically fulfill at least one of the stereotypically feminine roles of lover, wife, and mother. As noted in *Women Among the Inklings* (2001), Éowyn is "the most developed of all of Tolkien's female characters. [She] has more speaking lines and appears in more scenes than any other woman in *The Lord of the Rings*" (Fredrick and McBride 112). However, this means very little considering Éowyn appears only a handful of times throughout the six books[18] that make up the *LOTR*. Thus Éowyn exists in a largely patriarchal world that generally does not allow women to participate in the 'masculine' activities of war or adventure.

Lady Éowyn in Girlhood

For the majority of *LOTR*, the male characters view Éowyn as girlish: she is "like a morning of pale spring that is not yet come to womanhood" (*Two Towers* 140). Because she is not viewed as womanly, the men around Éowyn do not expect her to perform the roles of lover, wife, and mother yet. Éowyn's liminality allows her to perform her gender flexibly; she exhibits 'masculine' character traits – bravery, determination, and leadership – alongside 'feminine' ones. King Théoden makes use of her Éowyn's unique social

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[18] *LOTR* is one narrative consisting of six books; publishers often divide the narrative into three volumes (*The Fellowship of the Ring, The Two Towers*, and *The Return of the King*), with two books per volume.

position when he appoints her "lord to the Eorlingas" while the men are gone to war

(151). When the men finally return from battle in *The Return of the King* (1955), they

relieve Éowyn of her leadership role. With her newfound free time, Éowyn asks to go to

war with Aragorn. She "wish[es] to face peril and battle" because she is "a shieldmaiden

and not a dry-nurse" (54). Éowyn "can ride and wield a blade" and wants to help defend

her home (55). Aragorn does not allow her to accompany his army. However, she defies

Aragorn and marches into battle anyway. While in battle she defends the wounded

Théoden from the Witch-king, proving her skills as a warrior. Thus Éowyn appears as a

subversive female character by performing actively and assertively within the liminal

space of girlhood; her narrative of transgression into the masculine sphere is the legacy

code upon which the *HP* series and the *POTS* series build and refactor.

<div align="center">**Hermione Granger**</div>

Gender in the Wizarding World

Unlike Tolkien's medievalist Middle-earth, the wizarding world appears to be

"fantastically post-feminist" on the surface (Pugh and Wallace 260). Hogwarts is a

coeducational school; it employs witches as professors of 'scientific' magics, such as

Transfiguration and Defense Against the Dark Arts, and there have been several female

Heads of Hogwarts[19]. Similarly, witches appear as department heads at the Ministry of

Magic throughout the series and work as Aurors[20]. Nevertheless, despite the seemingly

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[19] For example, Dilys Derwent (Rowling, *OotP* 415), Dolores Umbridge (*OotP* 550) and Minerva McGonagall (*HBP* 583) have all held the position of Head of Hogwarts.
[20] Aurors are the magical equivalent of Muggle law enforcement; they investigate crimes related to the Dark Arts.

post-feminist setting, the hero-story structure of the *HP* series – much like the *LOTR* – is

dependent on the "alpha-male model of masculinity that systematically marginalizes most

other characters" (Pugh and Wallace 261). Thus femininity is always "subjugated to

masculinity" throughout the *HP* series (269). Women can in theory hold positions of

power, but more often than not, males hold the top positions in government, school and

family. Note that the most important characters in the series – Harry Potter, Albus

Dumbledore and Lord Voldemort – are all male.

Thus the *HP* series takes place in a world that – due to the traditional structure of

a hero-story – values binaric and traditional gender roles. Hermione's prepubescent

performance of gender – her performance of 'feminine' and 'masculine' qualities –

allows her to resist performing the roles that most adult witches traditionally fill in the

patriarchal wizarding world: sex symbol (Fleur Delacour), domestic goddess (Molly

Weasley), groupie (Bellatrix Lestrange) or love interest (Nymphadora Tonks). Much like

Éowyn is free to be subversive within the space of girlhood, Hermione performs her

gender in a subversive manner as a pre-sexual girl.

Hermione Granger in Existing Scholarship

Before I offer an analysis of Hermione and her adherence to the Éowyn Pattern, it

is important to address existing scholarship; the question of whether Hermione is a sexist

or feminist representation of women largely divides *HP* scholars. Those who argue that

Hermione is a character drawn out of sexist ideology tend to focus on her stereotypically

feminine traits. For example, Eliza T. Dresang states that Hermione might meet the

definition of 'empowered female' but "[s]he is not likely ever to be a champion for the

rights of women in the nineteenth- or early-twentieth-century sense of liberal feminism"
(Dresang 241). Dresang asserts that Hermione is not a feminist character because of the
'feminine' "language that Rowling employs to describe" Hermione's "hysterical [and]
whining behavior" (222). In "Blue Wizards and Pink Witches: Representations of Gender
Identity and Power," Elizabeth Heilman states that Hermione ultimately falls short
because she is a "token" female character who functions as the "enabler of Harry and
Ron's adventures" (222). In "From Sexist to (sort-of) Feminist: Representations of
Gender in the Harry Potter Series," Heilman and Trevor Donaldson state that the first four
HP books "feature females in secondary positions of power" and replicate "some of the
most familiar cultural stereotypes for both males and females" (139). Last but not least,
Meredith Cherland highlights Rowling's use of the stereotypical "discourse of
irrationality to mark [Hermione] as foolish," especially in regards to her involvement in
S.P.E.W. (the Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare) (275). Because Hermione
does not refrain from stereotypically feminine behaviour or have an explicitly feminist
agenda, these scholars feel that we cannot view Hermione as a feminist character.

In contrast, *HP* scholars who focus on the nuances of Hermione's gender
performance argue that she is a strong and/or feminist female character. For instance,
Christopher E. Bell notes that Hermione "repeatedly proves herself (and her own agency)
throughout the series" (6). He also reminds readers that scholars like Heilman and
Dresang are "often operating under their own personal definition of 'feminism,' which
may or may not mean the same thing to everyone" (Bell 7-8). For example, Dresang
defines feminism as a movement that works to eliminate inequality for everyone; she later

claims that Hermione is "not a feminist role model" because she spends all of her time

with boys and does not foster any sort of sisterhood (Dresang 241). 'Feminism-as-

sisterhood' is a limited definition of what feminism currently encompasses. Moreover,

Atje Gercama argues that in her choice to nurture Harry, Ron, and the House-elves,

Hermione is "feminist because her ethical reasoning resonates with many of the elements

of feminist ethics" (34). Agency and ethical reasoning are both aspects of feminist theory

and activism. Additionally, Sarah Zettel argues that while the *HP* series may not be

feminist – depending on your definition – Hermione is at least a strong female character:

> Hermione publically and unashamedly pursues the course she knows to be right,
> even when it costs her friends or the regard of male authority figures. She is not
> deterred by the prevailing opinion of society. If she is not initially effective, she
> tries other methods to achieve her right ends. She is, in the main, highly confident
> in her own understanding, and that confidence frequently pays off. (95)

Zettel feels that Hermione's subversive and agentic actions as an individual within a

sexist and patriarchal society are worth noting even if she does not do them in the name

of feminism.

In researching, I found myself agreeing with points from both opposing and

defending *HP* scholars because Hermione is a liminal character at the beginning of her

narrative. As noted by Roberta Seelinger Trites, a strong female character "often subverts

traditional gender roles, playing on stereotypes and stretching their limits by

incorporating characteristics that are typically associated with both genders into her

actions" (11). The scholarly debate over whether or not Hermione is a sexist or feminist

representation stems from her subversive performance of gender in girlhood. Hermione

reappropriates the traditionally 'feminine' traits and appropriates the 'masculine' traits

resulting in a liminal quality to her character that makes her difficult to define. As

mentioned in Chapter 1, Hermione is prepubescent within the first four *HP* books – thus

her body cannot perform the functions of an adult woman; her status as a girl arguably

plays a role in Hermione's ability to perform her gender in a subversive manner. By

examining the ways in which Hermione's liminality allows her to flexibly perform her

gender and thereby refactor certain aspects of the traditional legacy code, I illustrate the

strength and subversive potential of Hermione's character while within the space of

girlhood.

Hermione Granger in Girlhood

Hermione Granger in *the Philosopher's Stone*

In our first encounter with Hermione we see her 'feminine' compassion appear

alongside her 'masculine' wit. When we first meet Hermione she is helping Neville

Longbottom search the Hogwarts Express for his missing pet toad (*PS* 79-80). Hermione

is a Muggle-born witch[21], meaning that she has never met any of her year-mates; she is

not friends with Neville. Yet she volunteers her time to help a complete stranger find his

pet; this selfless and compassionate act highlights her 'feminine' traits and, if considered

in isolation, paints Hermione as motherly. However, instantly after establishing

Hermione's femininity, the text states that Hermione has successfully performed simple

spells "just for practice" before even attending Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and

Wizardry (79). Her ability to perform simple spells is significant, as Hermione's Muggle

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[21] A 'Muggle-born' is a witch born from non-magical (Muggle) parents. A derogatory term for Muggle-borns is 'Mudblood,' as pure-blood elitist wizards view those with Muggle ancestry as having 'dirty' blood.

parents cannot teach her magic, and therefore the spells that she does perform are entirely

self-taught. The ability to self-teach the subtle combination of wand movement and

pronunciation required in order to perform magic successfully indicates that Hermione is

both intelligent and determined – both 'masculine' character traits. Thus this first

encounter highlights the difficulty *HP* scholars have in categorizing Hermione as a sexist

or feminist representation of women. What this first encounter highlights for me is that

Hermione performs both 'feminine' and 'masculine' character traits, supporting my

assertion that Hermione is a liminal character who flexibly performs her gender in

girlhood.

Another instance that highlights Hermione's liminal status is when she teaches

Ron how to perform a Levitation charm properly; here her 'masculine' intelligence

combined with her 'feminine' compassion, motivate her to assist her peer. It is a "very

difficult" spell that the first-years are working on (126). Hermione is the only student to

achieve success: "'Everyone see her, Miss Granger's done it!'" (127). But Hermione is

not only able to perform the spell, she understands the mechanics of the spell; this

understanding enables her to teach Ron how to Levitate objects. However, Ron – having

had his masculinity threatened – loudly observes that Hermione has "'no friends'"

because she is a "nightmare" to work with; this causes Hermione to leave Charms class

"in tears" (127). Her 'feminine' emotionality is reinforced when she does not "turn up for

the next class and [is not] seen all afternoon" because she is "crying in the girls' toilets"

(127). Crying for hours is a stereotypically feminine reaction to unkind words. Thus this

incident frames Hermione as both highly intelligent and emotionally fragile.

Our earliest encounters with Hermione therefore establish her as a liminal female character; that is, she is neither entirely 'feminine' nor 'masculine' in her performance of gender, rather she straddles the threshold between these two categories. Occupying a space in between both genders is not only what results in conflicting scholarly opinions on her character, but also what makes Hermione stand out from other female characters in the *HP* series. Her unique positioning is what enables her to sympathize with others who occupy in between spaces in the wizarding world; we see her unique position result in activist endeavours as she develops over the course of the first four books in the *HP* series.

<div align="center">Hermione Granger in the Chamber of Secrets</div>

CoS continues to emphasize the combination of 'feminine' and 'masculine' traits in Hermione's gender performance. Despite her exclusion from two key moments in the quest to stop the heir of Slytherin from purging Hogwarts of Muggle-born students, Hermione maintains her agency and subversive performance of gender. One of the moments opposing *HP* scholars frequently cite as proof that Hermione is a stereotypical female character is her exclusion from the interrogation of the suspected heir due to a Polyjuice Potion[22] error. However, we must acknowledge the magical skill Hermione possesses in only her second year at Hogwarts. In Hermione's sixth year of education, Professor Slughorn shows his class several advanced potions; he informs them "'[t]hese are the kinds of [potions students] ought to be able to make after completing [their]

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[22] The Polyjuice Potion allows the drinker to take on the appearance of another human for about an hour. It requires a piece of the person one wishes to transform into (for example, hair). Humans should not use it to turn into an animal.

N.E.W.T.s[23]'" (*HBP* 175). One of the potions included in Slughorn's demonstration is the Polyjuice Potion. The Polyjuice Potion is an advanced piece of magic; not all students who have completed all seven years at Hogwarts are able to brew it correctly. Yet Hermione is able to brew the potion without the guidance of a teacher in her second year. Her successful brewing of the potion therefore reinforces Hermione's logical and intelligent nature (as established in *PS*) and highlights her attention to detail.

While Heilman and Donaldson acknowledge Hermione's magical skill, they are critical of Hermione's motive for brewing the Potion: "Hermione's advanced knowledge of magic shows potential beyond other students, but she has only exercised her gifts to aid Harry's quest" (145). However, the quest to stop the heir of Slytherin is Hermione's quest too. Hermione is motivated both personally and emotionally to brew the potion, as the heir of Slytherin has threatened the safety of Muggle-born students. As a Muggle-born, she feels both fear for her own safety and empathy for the other Muggle-born students in the school. Her emotional reaction motivates her to break "over fifty school rules" in order to protect Muggle-born students (*CoS* 120). Thus her decision to brew the Polyjuice Potion reminds readers that Hermione is a powerful witch, while also demonstrating her growth as a character; she has tempered her competitive nature with empathy and concern for the community. Her elimination from the interrogation of the suspected heir of Slytherin due to a mistake made in adding cat hair (opposed to human hair) to her vial of Polyjuice Potion arguably reminds readers that Hermione is twelve years old and not

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[23] N.E.W.T.s stands for Nastily Exhausting Wizarding Test; it is an examination that students at Hogwarts must complete in their seventh (and final) year of education in order to qualify for employment in the wizarding world.

immune to making mistakes[24]; moreover, strongly written female characters have the

agency to make choices with unforeseen consequences and may appear vulnerable at

times.

The second incident that scholars frequently cite in order to argue that Hermione

is a stereotypical female character is her Petrification and elimination from the final

stages of the quest to stop the heir of Slytherin. It is important to note that, while

Hermione is absent from the climax of *CoS* for medical reasons, Ron is absent from the

climax of *PoA*, also for medical reasons. Rowling does not consistently eliminate

Hermione from the climaxes of *HP* novels. Rather, Rowling eliminates her from the

climax as often as she eliminates Ron; Harry, as the 'Chosen One,' often completes the

'quest' without either of his companions (as required by the aforementioned hero-story

structure of the *HP* novels). Thus Hermione's exclusion from the climax of *CoS* does not

appear to be gender-based. Moreover, even when Petrified, Hermione communicates with

Harry and Ron. After going on her own quest for knowledge, Hermione realizes that the

heir is releasing a Basilisk from the Chamber of Secrets. Knowing that she might

encounter the Basilisk, Hermione travels through the school with "a piece of paper […]

scrunched inside her fist" (214). Hermione has written 'pipes' on the paper, in order to

indicate that the Basilisk is using the school's plumbing to attack students. Despite being

unable to speak conventionally, Hermione still has a voice and directs Harry and Ron

towards confronting the Basilisk and stopping the heir of Slytherin. Petrification does not

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[24] Note that Harry and Ron also make age-appropriate mistakes in *CoS*, such as stealing an enchanted car
and flying it over Muggle towns on their way to school.

silence her. Thus the narrative of *CoS* develops Hermione into a more complex character as we see her refactor the legacy code of passive female characters by infusing her flexible gender performance with agency. While it might appear that Hermione is a stereotypical 'damsel' – especially when she is Petrified while unaccompanied by her male companions – her subversive gender performance allows for nuanced and agentic actions while on her quest to stop the heir of Slytherin and keep the Muggle-born students of Hogwarts safe.

<center>Hermione Granger in *the Prisoner of Azkaban*</center>

PoA further highlights Hermione's flexible performance of gender when it places her in a situation where her 'masculine' hunger for knowledge melds with her 'feminine' emotional reactions to stress. In her pursuit for knowledge, Hermione overloads her timetable and therefore must use a Time Turner to travel back in time to attend simultaneous lessons. Hermione's impossible timetable results in her overworking herself; she is physically and mentally exhausted throughout the majority of her third year. Rowling subsequently depicts Hermione as hysterical and constantly on the verge of tears (180, 186, 195, 196, and 232). Recall that Hermione's use of stereotypically 'feminine' language and frequent displays of emotion leads opposing scholars to argue that Hermione cannot be a feminist character: "Rowling allows Hermione to lose sight of her own strength and revert to stereotypic behaviour" (Dresang 223). But Hermione's emotional response to being exhausted is a human reaction, not specifically a female reaction. Throughout the series, Harry also experiences emotional breakdowns when he is exhausted. In fact, Harry has numerous emotional outburst throughout the *HP* series: in

PS Harry cries after learning about his mother's sacrifice (216-217); in *PoA* Harry cries

when he recalls witnessing his parents' murders (178); in *GoF* Harry cries while

recounting Cedric Diggory's death and Voldemort's return (604, 606 and 619-620). After

witnessing Cedric's murder, Harry exhibits the symptoms of post-traumatic stress

disorder throughout most of *OotP* as indicated by his volatile emotional reactions to

mundane conversations with his friends and peers.

Additionally, when Harry realizes that his emotionally motivated actions result in

the death of his godfather Sirius Black at the end of *OotP*, the emotional pain Harry

experiences is "unbearable" (723). When Dumbledore attempts to speak with him, Harry

responds by screaming "so loudly that he felt his throat might tear" (726). Harry then

destroys Dumbledore's office to make Dumbledore "feel some tiny part of the horror

inside himself" (726). Harry's breathing is "quick and shallow" so that "he [can]not get

the words out properly" (733). By definition, 'hysteria' is any exaggerated or

uncontrollable emotional response. We can therefore describe Harry's emotional response

following the loss of his godfather (and possession by Voldemort) as hysterical. However,

as Dumbledore points out, responding emotionally in times of stress is "part of being

human" (726 emphasis mine). Where the exploration of emotions makes the text

subversive is in its extension to the male characters: it is not just female characters who

experience extreme emotions throughout the *HP* series, but male characters as well. The

HP series' exploration of emotions refactors the legacy code of stereotypical gendered

behaviours and allows us to reframe Hermione's emotions as part of what makes her truly

liminal.

Furthermore, Hermione's emotionally motivated use of physical violence against Draco Malfoy also reinforces the flexibility of her gender performance, as her response is similar to Harry's emotionally motivated use of physical violence following the death of Sirius. After the Committee for the Disposal of Dangerous Creatures decides to execute Buckbeak[25], school bully Draco Malfoy calls Professor Hagrid "pathetic" for being upset (*PoA* 216). Harry and Ron both make "furious moves" in Draco's direction, but Hermione gets there first: "SMACK!" (216). Hermione "slap[s] Malfoy around the face with all the strength she [can] muster" (216). Engaging in physical violence is a stereotypically masculine behaviour. Everyone stands "flabbergasted" as Hermione then verbalizes her feelings about Draco's behaviour; stereotypically, verbal disagreements are feminine (216). Her subversive actions in this instance illustrate her liminal status.

Then Hermione pulls out her wand preparing to confront Draco with magic; this action causes Draco to behave unusually and "step backwards" away from the confrontation (216). Draco's retreat is unexpected because he typically engages in magical duels with Harry and Ron; his behaviour invites two possible readings. First, as the most talented witch of her generation, Hermione presents as an actual threat to Draco; he recognizes her power when he retreats from her challenge. Secondly, Draco's retreat indicates ingrained sexism in the wizarding society. Draco's refusal to engage in a fight with Hermione, despite his normally violent nature, indicates that he believes it is

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[25] Buckbeak is a Hippogriff. Part eagle and part horse, Hippogriffs are incredibly intelligent magical creatures (Rowling, *Fantastic Beasts* 21). I refer to animal-like creatures unique to the wizarding world – for example, Hippogriffs, Pixies, and Dragons – as 'magical creatures.' I refer to sentient beings who possess magical abilities (but wizards forbid the use of wands) – such as House-elves, Centaurs, and Merpeople – as 'non-human magical beings.'

'wrong' to fight a girl. Hermione's liminality as an active powerful young witch is outside of Draco's understanding of the way witches 'should' behave; thus he retreats because she does not fit into his idea of 'female.' Hermione's violent reactions while physically and emotionally exhausted are in part what develop the nuances of her character. Thus *PoA* continues to demonstrate the flexibility of Hermione's liminal gender performance. The text presents readers with a powerful and emotional female character who garners respect from her male peers.

<div align="center">Hermione Granger in *the Goblet of Fire*</div>

GoF marks the halfway point in the *HP* series and the turning point in Hermione's character; it is also the first time the series explores the politics of the wizarding world through questioning the enslavement of House-elves. Although readers encountered wizard prejudice in *CoS* via the Malfoy family's abuse of Dobby the House-elf and in *PoA* via Buckbeak's unfair trial, the systemic issues within the wizarding world that allow for the mistreatment of non-wizards – Muggles, non-human magical beings, and magical creatures – remained unaddressed. It is only when *GoF* unpacks what it means for the House-elves to be enslaved that readers receive real criticism of the wizarding world. The resistance Hermione encounters from wizards refusing to acknowledge that House-elves deserve fair treatment inspires her to create a House-elf rights activist group (Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare or S.P.E.W.). While there are clear flaws in the creation of this activist group – namely the parallels to problematic first wave, white feminist groups that presumed to speak for all women – S.P.E.W. is ultimately feminist in its goal

to secure equal rights for House-elves (because the intersectional feminism popular today

is largely concerned with securing equal rights for all).

   Hermione is unsettled when Barty Crouch[26] treats Winky the House-elf poorly at

the Quidditch World Cup and none of the adult wizards who bear witness expresses

concern about his behaviour. In questioning why those who witness Winky's abuse do not

"'*do* something about it,'" Hermione realizes that wizards do not see that their treatment

of these non-human magical beings is unacceptable (112 emphasis in original). Ron, a

pure-blooded wizard raised in a fairly liberal wizarding home, represents the general

wizarding mentality about the rights of non-human magical beings; he believes that "the

elves are happy" being enslaved and like "being bossed around" by wizards (112). If Ron

– a 'liberal' wizard – feels that slavery is acceptable, then we can infer that the majority

of the wizarding population also does not question the racist systems within the wizarding

world that allow for the mistreatment and abuse of non-human magical beings, such as

House-elves.

   Throughout the series Hermione is the character who provides clarity by

repeatedly repairing Harry's glasses[27]; because Harry is the reader's point of access to the

wizarding world, when Hermione enables Harry to see, she enables readers to see. Thus

Hermione's role in *GoF* is to allow readers to view the wizarding world more critically.

For instance, after Ron explains that the subordinate status of House-elves is because

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[26]The former Head of Magical Law Enforcement.

[27] In *PoA* Hermione enchants Harry's glasses so that they repel water and he can see clearly during a Quidditch match (132-133). The film adaptations (which are out of the scope of this project) make Hermione's role as the one who provides clarity even more obvious. In Christopher Columbus' film adaptation, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (2001), Hermione repairs Harry's glasses when she first meets him on the Hogwarts Express.

elves enjoy being enslaved[28] Hermione states: "'It's people like you, Ron […] who prop up rotten and unjust systems'" (112). Here Ron attempts to reassert the wizarding world as the post-feminist world we may have been lulled into accepting, but Hermione denies us this reading. Because of the hero-story structure and Harry's quest to destroy Voldemort, it is easy to believe that the dramatic good-versus-evil conflict is the only problem in the wizarding world. Hermione removes the rose-coloured glasses that tint the wizarding world for the majority of the *HP* novels and forces readers to acknowledge that the wizarding world – full of talking paintings, hopping Chocolate Frogs, and unicorns – is not as idyllic as we might wish to believe. In questioning the treatment of House-elves Hermione illuminates deeply rooted wizarding prejudices; furthermore, in confronting Ron (who thinks of himself as a 'good' pure-blood wizard) on his problematic beliefs, she reminds readers that being complicit in an unjust system is just as problematic as actually enacting violence.

Later Hermione learns that Hogwarts participates in systemic violence by enslaving House-elves to do the cooking and cleaning. Hermione, who has never seen a House-elf at the school, is shocked that her school could be complicit in this system. She learns that the House-elves do not get holidays, sick leave, pensions, or wages (161). Thus all of the homey comforts at Hogwarts are a product of invisible slave labour; just as Hermione literally enables Harry to see, she enables readers to see social and political issues within the wizarding world. The invisibility of House-elves, the work that they do,

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[28] Please refer to *Master Narratives, Identities, and the Stories of Former Slaves* by Jonathan Clifton and Dorien Van De Mieroop for more information on the 'happy slave' narrative.

and the conditions under which they work, motivates Hermione to develop S.P.E.W. After researching the history of elf enslavement, Hermione develops a short term plan in order to "'secure House-elves fair wages and working conditions'" (198). In the long term she wants to "'chang[e] the law about non-wand-use, and […] get an elf into the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures'" because elves are "'shockingly under-represented'" in wizarding government (198). Once again, Ron, standing in for the wizarding community, argues that the elves "'*like* being enslaved'" (198 emphasis in original). The fact that Ron is not concerned about the issues that Hermione raises reveals much about the value (or lack thereof) the wizarding community places upon lives that are non-human. Consider that there are laws in place to protect Muggles from wizards; Arthur Weasley works in the Misuse of Muggle Artefacts Office at the Ministry of Magic and throughout the series prevents dangerously enchanted items from hurting Muggles (non-magical humans). But the texts do not indicate that there are any laws in place that ensure the safety of any non-human magical beings. While Hermione's actions seem 'foolish' to Ron, the ways in which the text presents Ron as a defender of slavery makes it clear to readers that Ron (and the average wizard) is flawed in defending the subjugated status of non-human magical beings.

However, it is also important to acknowledge that S.P.E.W. does disregard the wishes of the House-elves. When Hermione meets the Hogwarts House-elves, she learns that only Dobby the Free Elf "'wants paying now'" (329). The other elves are uncomfortable with the idea of being paid for their labour; they edge "away from Dobby, as though he was carry something contagious" because they have internalized their

oppression (329). The House-elves' rejection of S.P.E.W. positions the activist group as colonialist, forcing its ideologies onto the House-elf population against their wishes. S.P.E.W. informs the House-elves of their oppressions and offers a 'solution' from an outsider's perspective. Hermione does not behave like a good ally in her creation of S.P.E.W.'s activist objectives as she does not engage in dialogue with the House-elves in order to support their concerns. Because Hermione has not listened to the voices of the House-elves, she has effectively silenced them and contributed to their continued oppression under the dominant wizarding group. While Hermione's attempt at securing equal rights and representation for a marginalized group, S.P.E.W. is feminist (at least in terms of the first wave feminist movement), it is misguided and oppressive in its logic.

Setting the misguided nature of S.P.E.W. aside, the goals of the organization ultimately speak to the central conflict of the *HP* series: racial purity. Lord Voldemort wants to keep the wizarding community elitist and pure-blooded; it is this conflict that motivates the First and Second Wizarding Wars. Hermione's attempts to challenge the dominant narrative of wizard superiority by illuminating racist structures within the wizarding community therefore go beyond the issue of House-elf rights. Her own experiences with prejudice as a Muggle-born reveal a flaw in the supposedly democratic and civilized wizarding society. Her demand that wizards reflect on their treatment of non-human magical beings, as well as their own unearned privileges, is thus a first step towards equality in the wizarding community. For a fourteen year-old, social reform is an ambitious project. Hermione's subversive performance of gender – the combination of the 'feminine' and the 'masculine' – puts her in a unique position to question the dominant

narratives within the wizarding world. By refactoring female and male gender roles, Hermione is able to act with agency and fight for change within her community.

The first four *HP* novels establish Hermione as a subversive female character who flexibly performs her gender. While within the space of girlhood Hermione – like Éowyn – is able to refactor the gendered legacy code of passive female characters in fantasy literature. It is precisely the combination of 'feminine' and 'masculine' qualities that make her a strong female character. Her liminal positioning as a Muggle-born, her flexible gender performance, and her girlhood allow Hermione to recognize injustices in the wizarding community and in turn, challenge dominant problematic views. Her girlhood arguably allows for the flexibility of her gender performance, as she is not yet a woman and therefore the gendered roles of lover, wife and mother prescribed to female characters by the fantasy legacy code are not yet obligatory. Similarly, Keladry of Mindelan from Tamora Pierce's *POTS* series experiences the flexibility of gender performance in girlhood. A comparison of Hermione and Kel in girlhood is valuable for establishing girlhood as a liminal space in which female characters experience the freedoms to act with agency in patriarchal societies.

<div align="center">

Keladry of Mindelan
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Gender in Tortall

The flexibility of gender performance in Tamora Pierce's novels is somewhat surprising given the medievalist setting of Tortall[29]. In her first novel set ten years prior to

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[29] In feminist theory, we often talk about 'repetition with a difference.' Pierce returning to a medievalist setting – an historical period with strict gender divisions – to explore issues of gender, allows this repetition with a difference to occur. It also stands in stark contrast to the 'modern' setting in the *HP* series.

Kel's story, Pierce establishes Tortall's traditional and binaric gender roles via the

Trebond twins, Alanna and Thom. Alanna is to be a noble woman; Thom is to be a knight

(*Alanna* 1). The roles of 'noble woman' and 'knight' are the normative roles for noble

girls and boys in Tortall. In an act of defiance, Alanna becomes "the sole woman knight

in the realm of Tortall" after concealing her sex in order to earn her shield (*Woman Who*

Rides 1). After Alanna reveals her true sex, King Jonathan proclaims, "girls might

[openly] attempt a page's training" (*First Test* 1). Thus the Tortall we see in *POTS* is a

society in flux. While a large majority of the Tortallan population still feels that women

cannot or should not occupy the traditionally male role of the knight, the accepted roles

for women and men are in the process of changing and Kel herself is actively refactoring

the patriarchal legacy code of all-male knighthood.

It is interesting to compare the settings of Rowling's *HP* series and Pierce's *POTS*

series. The *HP* series has a contemporary and superficially post-feminist setting; because

of its contemporary fantasy setting, we might expect nuanced and subversive

performances of gender throughout the wizarding world. However, despite Hermione's

subversive performance of gender, in general the stereotypical roles for women and men

are still quite rigid. In contrast, Pierce's medievalist Tortall setting – which we expect to

be a more rigid society in terms of gender roles simply because it has its roots in

medievalist traditions – is surprisingly subversive. While knighthood is one aspect of

Tortallan society still largely associated with men, women in Tortall are beginning to

occupy some positions of power[30].

Kel in Girlhood

Gender in Tortall is such a fascinating issue because *POTS* is a consciously

feminist Young Adult fantasy series. On her website, Pierce discusses her interest in

writing strong and feminist female characters:

> [M]y English teacher […] introduced me to *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy by J.R.R. Tolkien. I got hooked on fantasy, and then on science fiction, and both made their way into my stories. I tried to write the kind of thing I was reading, with one difference: the books I loved were missing teenaged girl warriors. I couldn't understand this lapse of attention on the part of the writers I loved, so until I could talk them into correcting this small problem, I wrote about those girls, the fearless, bold, athletic creatures that I was not, but wanted so badly to be. (Pierce, "Biography")

Wanting to see herself reflected in the material she was reading, Pierce intentionally

writes nuanced female characters taking on the roles typically reserved for male

characters in fantasy literature. Hence throughout Pierce's body of works we see female

rulers, warriors, teachers, assassins, mages, diplomats, and legendary heroes. Kel's quest

for knighthood is part of Pierce's desire to see diverse representations of women in YA

fantasy literature.

Unfortunately, *POTS* has not received scholarly attention at the time of writing

this project. The following is my analysis of Pierce's series. By comparing Pierce's

feminist fantasy series to that of Rowling's much-studied fantasy series, I illustrate the

ways in which Pierce's text refactors fantasy tropes and stereotypes in order to present

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[30] See Chapter 4 for a full discussion of the powerful female characters in *POTS* that serve as role models for Kel.

young adult readers with an alternative performance of gender from a female character.

Unlike Hermione, Kel is a conscious of her liminality. While Hermione possesses

'feminine' and 'masculine' attributes, the *HP* series does not indicate that Hermione is

aware of her liminality or the performative nature of gender. However, *POTS* signals

Kel's awareness of gender's performative nature when she chooses to perform in a

'feminine' manner every evening at dinner. While Kel originally plans to wear men's

clothing in order to blend in with her peers, she ultimately decides to wear a dress to

remind the boys that "[s]he [is] a girl; she [has] nothing to be ashamed of" (*First Test* 29).

Kel's awareness of her liminal position between the 'feminine' and 'masculine' realms,

coupled with the flexibility allowed by her liminality, is what makes her such a strong

female character in her girlhood. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Kel is prepubescent – thus

her body cannot perform the functions of an adult woman's body; Wyldon only allows

Kel the flexibility of performing her gender in a subversive manner in page-training

because he thinks she will 'outgrow' her desire for knighthood.

<center>Kel in *First Test*</center>

Like Hermione, Kel has clear academic ambitions. She continually goes beyond

the work of her peers. For example, when Kel discovers that her lance is too heavy for

her, she decides she "ha[s] to train harder" and asks her instructor for extra "exercises for

the arms" which she performs every morning before classes (*First Test* 112-113).

Furthermore, so that she does not lose her Yamani weapons training[31] from her

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[31] Noble women in the Yamani Islands use the glaive – a sword-like weapon – for self-defence. It is a
beautiful weapon, often used in pattern dances, but also a deadly weapon.

childhood, she reviews "her schedule" and "decide[s] she [can] fit in a pattern dance before supper, and another before she [goes] to bed" (144). These exercises become "a permanent addition to her routine" (144). While her peers sleep in and spend their evenings recuperating from a day of training, Kel works diligently to improve her athletic abilities. Kel's extra practice is similar to Hermione's memorizing and practicing of spells in order to keep up with her peers from magical homes. As a Muggle-born, Hermione is at a disadvantage; similarly, Kel is also an 'underdog' as she has not received the basic Tortallan weapons training that sons of noble men typically receive. Both girls use their spare time in order to perfect their skills and keep up with their peers in the academic setting. For both Hermione and Kel, the hard work pays off: Hermione is the top of her class; as is Kel. Note that the training masters pair Kel "with older pages" as she begins to surpass her year-mates in strength and skill (144).

Throughout *First Test*, Pierce establishes Kel as socially conscious (similar to the ways in which Rowling establishes Hermione as socially conscious in *CoS*, *PoA* and *GoF*). Kel consistently treats lower-class people, such as palace servants, with kindness. For instance, when Kel's peers ransack her room, she begins to clean up by herself (27). Kel acknowledges that this kind of cleaning goes beyond the regular duties of a palace servant. Furthermore, Kel shows the servant Gower common curtesy when she wishes him a "cheerful good morning" and thanks him for performing his duties (44-45). Kel never takes the actions of the palace employees for granted. She shows respect and appreciation in a place where most nobles disregard the value of the servant's work and, arguably, the humanity of common folk. Her acknowledgement of the humanity of palace

servants is comparable to Hermione's acknowledgement of the humanity of House-elves at Hogwarts. Both girls are conscious of social inequality, as they witness the ways in which their social systems work to place them at a disadvantage. For Kel, her sex automatically places her at a disadvantage in the largely patriarchal Tortallan systems; for Hermione, her 'dirty' blood places her at a disadvantage in the overwhelmingly elitist wizarding world. Because both girls are at a disadvantage in their societies, they are both aware of their own unearned privileges. Kel is conscious of the privilege her nobility allows; Hermione is conscious of the privilege that her humanness allows in a society that denies non-human magical beings equal access to fair wages, safe working conditions, and representation in the government. Both girls work towards social equality because they have experienced a small taste of inequality due to social prejudice.

Due to her own experiences with prejudiced people who view her as inferior based on her gender, Kel views the hazing of first-year pages as counterintuitive. Hazing is a practice that encourages hierarchies and feeds existing social prejudices. While most of the upper-year pages are not abusive, the 'earn-your-way' custom allows abusive behavior to fall under the guise of 'tradition.' Kel confronts the bullies, Joren, Vinson and Zahir. She verbalizes her demand: "'I want […] you to stop pushing the first-years around'" (120). This verbalization is important because she is female (and thus stereotypically silent) and she is younger than the group of boys she is challenging. Custom dictates that as a first-year, Kel should obey the upper-year pages. Her refusal to comply is a challenge to the authority of these bullies as well as to the custom. After her initial confrontation with Joren and company, Kel engages in nightly patrols after a day of

lessons, in order to challenge their inappropriate and abusive actions towards the younger

boys.

Kel's friend Neal mocks her "'hero's quest to get rid of bullies'" (149). But Kel

does not back down; she knows that someone has to challenge this abusive tradition

because it encourages would-be-knights to perpetuate the inequities of the social

hierarchy. She argues:

> 'this custom leads to worse things […] If we take this as pages, what about when
> we are knights? Do we say, Oh, now I'm going to be nice to the weak and the
> small? Or do we do as we learned when we were pages? […] when I see anyone
> big pick on someone small, well, there's going to be a fight.' (150)

While Kel's language of "big" and "small" is rather simplistic, what she highlights are

learned social behaviours that allow for systemic violence. She sees the ways in which the

training for knighthood enables noble men to feel entitled to behave as if they are

'superior' to anyone deemed socially beneath them. While challenging customs might

seem insignificant, Kel problematizes the ways knight-training socializes noble males to

interact with other humans. Kel risks losing her friends – who defend this custom – by

challenging their own complicity in upholding a system that allows for the unjust

treatment of fellow humans. Standing up for her conviction that this tradition is ultimately

harmful for the development of healthy, justice-seeking knights is an incredibly powerful

moment in Kel's narrative.

Thus within *First Test*, Pierce establishes Kel as a character who is conscious of

her ability to flexibly perform gender. Her liminal position gives her a unique perspective

that motivates her to challenge harmful customs. But Kel's liminal position is unlike

Hermione's; Hermione does not appear to cultivate her flexible performance of gender,

whereas Kel is always aware of her performance of gender. Whether conscious or unconscious of their liminality, both girls subvert gender expectations and combine 'feminine' and 'masculine' traits for a nuanced performance of gender. Kel's transgression into the masculine world of knight-training, combined with her feminist sense of justice, provides the foundation for Kel as a strong female character.

<div align="center">Kel in Page</div>

Kel performs her gender in a flexible manner when she combines her feminist ethics with the skills she has learned in knight training. After Kel hires Lalasa – a physically abused maid – she sees the faults of the Tortallan justice system. Lalasa refuses to report her abusers because King Jonathan "'is not everywhere, and others will make [her] life a misery'" (10). Ultimately, it is a common-born maid's word "'against that of an upper servant or noble'" (10). When Kel learns that reporting abuse will lead to Lalasa being unemployable within Corus[32], she begins to see the flaws within the supposedly just and civilized Tortallan social structures. Kel takes the contract between herself and Lalasa very seriously and thus teaches her maid self-defence in order to ensure that Lalasa can protect herself from abusive men (63-65). Kel has Lalasa practice the self-defence techniques on herself until Lalasa can execute them perfectly. Kel willingly exposes herself to extra cuts and bruises in order to ensure that Lalasa is physically able to defend herself.

Unlike Hermione who attempts to use her witch privilege to force House-elves into the empowered role of free citizens (paradoxically disempowering the elves by

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[32] Corus is the capital city of Tortall.

removing their choice over their own status), Kel focuses on facilitating her student's empowerment[33]. Kel could use her position as a noble to protect Lalasa, but she realizes that it is more valuable to teach Lalasa the skills necessary to protect herself. Lalasa then empowers herself by choosing to learn and master the skills necessary to have agency over her own body; with Kel's training, Lalasa transforms from a timid girl into a confident young woman. Readers witness this drastic change in Lalasa when she assists Kel in tutoring younger pages in staff practice (162). Later on, as an empowered young woman, Lalasa shares her knowledge with others by teaching self-defence classes to lower-class women in Corus.

Like Hermione, Kel identifies a systemic issue in her society: women's voices are not valued and men feel entitled to women's bodies. Unlike Hermione with S.P.E.W., Kel listens to Lalasa. While Kel initially wants to report the abusive men to the authorities, she learns that the justice system regularly fails the Tortallan lower classes. Rather than doing the 'right thing' and reporting these men, Kel offers Lalasa another solution. If reporting perpetrators will not solve the problem, being able to defend oneself from perpetrators is a step in the 'right' direction. Kel hears the concerns of Lalasa and works with her in order to help lower-class women gain agency over their safety. This action is feminist, in that Kel is as a 'good ally' when she offers her services as a teacher to help lower-class women to empower themselves.

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[33] According to Naila Kabeer's definition, an empowered person is one who began in a position of disempowerment, but now has the ability to make choices and act with agency. Please refer to Kabeer's article "Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment" for her full discussion of the interconnected terms 'empowerment,' 'choice,' and 'agency.'

In addition to demonstrating Kel's dedication to equality and justice for lower-class women, *Page* highlights Kel's skills as a leader. Fantasy literature typically depicts women as followers, often to their own detriment. For example, Amberle in Terry Brook's *The Elfstones of Shannara* (1982) follows a male Druid's orders which result in her inadvertently sacrificing her life as an elf in order to live out the rest of her days as a tree[34]. In contrast, neither Hermione nor Kel are stereotypical female followers. Hermione often plays a leading role in the adventures of the *HP* series; recall that Hermione sees the trapdoor the three-headed dog is guarding in *PS* and leads Harry to pursue the quest to protect the Philosopher's Stone from Voldemort. Like Hermione, Kel is a leader; Kel demonstrates her leadership skills when a band of raiders attacks her and her peers. Faleron, an upper-year page, is in charge of the group; under pressure he freezes. Kel quickly takes charge of the group. After the battle, her peers praise her leadership skills. Faleron even acknowledges Kel's "'cool head'" and resourcefulness (116). Note that even after being attacked by the raiders, Kel understands their desperate and violent actions as a side effect of poverty (119). In an intersectional feminist approach, Kel is able to see the larger systemic issues that force lower-class people to resort to thieving and violence (118). One of Kel's greatest strengths is her ability to empathize; and it is her ability to empathize and feel compassion for others – peers and 'enemies' alike – that makes her a compelling leader.

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[34] Other female followers: Harry in Robin McKinley's *The Blue Sword* (1982) is kidnapped by a male tribal leader and follows his instructions to become the King's Rider; Talia in Mercedes Lackey's *Arrow's Flight* (1987) follows her male superior's directions to control her Herald's Gift; Denna in Patrick Rothfuss' *The Name of the Wind* (2007) follows a mysterious male benefactor in order to sustain life in the city; Celaena in Sarah J. Maas' *Heir of Fire* (2014) follows Rowan's instructions in order to relearn her innate magical ability to shapeshift.

By positioning Kel on the threshold between 'feminine' and 'masculine,' *POTS* presents readers with a liminal character who is not only consciously subversive in terms of gender expression, but consciously subversive in her critique of corrupt and hierarchal systems that benefit the privileged. *Page* highlights the ways in which Kel's liminal status allows her to be an effective leader of social change by combining the lived experience of a female in a patriarchal society with the skills taught in the 'masculine' world of knighthood. Furthermore, her girlhood contributes to the flexibility of her gender performance; because she is pre-sexual, her peers do not objectify her or treat her the way they treat the 'feminine' females they encounter. Being outside of 'womanhood' allows Kel certain freedoms Tortallan society denies adult females.

Concluding Thoughts

This chapter illustrates the ways in which *HP* and *POTS* present readers with female characters whose strength lies in the flexibility a liminal position allows. By straddling the realms of the 'feminine' and 'masculine' both girls embody qualities that make them uniquely qualified as agents of social change. Hermione combines kindness and empathy with intelligence and logic in order to challenge the unjust treatment of Muggle-borns and non-human magical beings within the wizarding community. Similarly, Kel combines compassion and empathy with academic skill and determination in order to challenge traditional systems of power that allow for the abuse of social subordinates, the lower classes, and women. It is the performance of both 'feminine' and 'masculine' character traits that establish Hermione and Kel as nuanced characters with explicitly feminist agendas.

Similar to Tolkien's Lady Éowyn, both Hermione and Kel are active agents of change while they are prepubescent girls who do not have romantic interests. Tolkien initially depicts Éowyn as a 'girlish' young woman who is determined to play an active role in the fate of her people during the war; she is an active participant in battle. Similarly, Hermione and Kel are both determined to make changes to the unjust systems of power they encounter as girls. They both have clear academic goals, as well as clear emotionally-motivated goals in terms of social justice. Building on this character study, Chapter 3 explores the ways in which these goals change as each character transitions from girlhood into womanhood and develops romantic interests.

Chapter 3 | Romance Legacy Code in Fantasy Literature

Éowyn, Hermione, and Kel are all within the pre-sexual space of girlhood at the start of their narratives. In girlhood these characters have the flexibility to perform in subversive ways. Nevertheless, over the course of her narrative, each character experiences a transitional moment in which her girlhood ends and she enters into womanhood. For Éowyn and Hermione, the transition into womanhood occurs passively when the male gaze falls upon her body – a body society previously perceived as sexless – and consequently views her as sexually desirable. In response, Éowyn and Hermione immediately abandon their subversive actions and ambitions in favour of stereotypically female interests and behaviours. Specifically both seek to perform the role of lover – this of course is the first step in the lover-wife-mother transition typical of female characters in fantasy literature. In contrast, Kel's transition into womanhood denies the male gaze; in refactoring the transition into womanhood, Kel plays with the performance of the roles of lover, wife, and mother. By continuing to refactor her gender performance in womanhood, Kel maintains a role that is still liminal and subversive. In fact, the introduction of a heterosexual romance into her narrative only serves to complicate her character and increase her subversive-ness.

Unpacking both Éowyn's and Hermione's transitions into womanhood is necessary for understanding the role that genre patterns play in the narrative arcs of female characters; specifically in traditional fantasy literature, the legacy code of a romance plot often influences the narratives of female characters. As the male gaze is part of the romance legacy code, an examination of the ways in which it facilitates a

superficial or passive transition into womanhood is an important starting point for my

analysis of conservative and heteronormative patterns of female fulfillment in fantasy

literature. Contrasting Éowyn's and Hermione's passive transitions into womanhood with

Kel's refactored active transition reveals the ways in which small alterations to literary

patterns can have a positive impact on the representation of a female character. By

examining passive and active transitions into womanhood, alongside the effects that the

status of womanhood has on a character's behaviours and ambitions, I argue that in

fantasy literature womanhood is a space where gender performance is rigid. It is with the

transition to womanhood that strong, liminal girls have their autonomy taken away,

forcing them to conform to the stereotypical roles of lover, wife, and mother – a

conventional ending that denies the subversive potential of the fantasy genre.

Transitions from Girlhood to Womanhood

Chapter 2 illustrated the ways in which girlhood functions as a flexible space that

allows female characters – such as the liminal Hermione and Kel – to perform their

gender in a subversive manner. This chapter explores the external factors that arbitrarily

define the distinction between girlhood and womanhood in fantasy literature; one external

factor is the male gaze. Once the gaze of a male character falls on a female character and

views her as sexually desirable, she 'becomes' a woman. Laura Mulvey states that the

"male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure" (47); therefore, when a male

character projects his desire upon the body of a female character, her body becomes a

sexual object expected to perform the womanly roles of lover, wife, and mother. Because

the male gaze imposes womanhood on young characters, – Éowyn and Hermione

included – it often has little to do with sexual maturity. Monique Wittig plays with

Simone de Beauvoir's assertion that society creates women[35] when she acknowledges the

role the male gaze plays in determining womanhood: certain bodies are "seen as *women*,

therefore, they *are* women" (546 emphasis in original). To be clear, the male gaze can

sexualize the female body at any time; a pre-sexual girl's body can be viewed as sexual

and treated as womanly (and vice versa: a sexual woman's body can be viewed as pre-

sexual and treated as girlish).

George R. R. Martin illustrates the power of the male gaze when he makes the

distinction between the sexual maturity and sexual desirability of Sansa Stark. Fourteen-

year-old Sansa is technically sexually mature when she starts to menstruate. In fact,

Martin states that menstruation marks "'the seal of [her] womanhood'" (*Clash of Kings*

759). However, when she is married off to Tyrion Lannister, her husband – almost twice

her age – views her as a "child" – therefore pre-sexual – and refuses to "touch [her] until

[she] want[s him] to" (*Storm of Swords* 392-394). Despite including other sexual taboos[36]

throughout the *Song of Ice and Fire* series Martin does not allow for the sexual

desirability of a character perceived as a child by an adult to take place. The role of lover

is incongruous with the status of 'child,' even in Martin's often-perverse fantasy world.

Thus we see that male characters in mainstream fantasy objectify girlish female

characters because it is necessary to establish them as 'womanly' (sexual) before they can

assume their sex-based roles as a lover, wife, and mother.

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[35] In *The Second Sex* Simone de Beauvoir states: "One is not born a woman, but rather becomes, a woman" (330).

[36] For example, the sexual relationship between the twins Cersi and Jamie Lannister, which results in three children, is a sexual taboo Martin has no qualms exploring.

Éowyn

A brief examination of Éowyn's passive transition from girlhood into womanhood is necessary for establishing the legacy code, which the *HP* series emulates, and the *POTS* series refactors. When we first encounter Éowyn, Tolkien describes her as very beautiful but "like a morning of pale spring that is not yet come to womanhood" (*Two Towers* 140). As she is in the 'spring' of her life, she appears to be in a pre-sexual girlhood; despite being beautiful, the men she encounters do not view her as sexually desirable and do not expect her to perform the roles of lover, wife, or mother. In fact, Aragorn – who is significantly older than Éowyn – outright rejects her affections because he does not view her as an adult woman. Then Faramir recognizes Éowyn's beauty as greater than any "flower" or "lady" he has ever seen in Gondor (*Return of the King* 286). In seeing only her 'feminine' physical appearance, Faramir deems her a sexually desirable object via his gaze. In this legacy code, *LOTR* affirms Wittig's observation that the transition from pre-sexual girlhood into sexual womanhood occurs passively via the perception of the (male) viewer; when a male sees a female as a woman, she *becomes* a woman. A male must acknowledge the female as sexually desirable in this pattern.

Hermione

Like Faramir determining Éowyn's womanhood, Harry's gaze marks Hermione's passive transition into womanhood in *GoF*. It is Harry who initially describes Hermione as less than desirable – she is rodent-like with large front teeth and bushy brown hair; once again, it is Harry who describes Hermione's Cinderellaesque transformation at the

Yule Ball. In seeing Hermione as a woman, Harry becomes fully aware of Hermione's

sex and sexual desirability:

> [Harry's] eyes fell instead on the girl next to [Viktor] Krum[37]. His jaw dropped. It
> was Hermione. But she didn't look like Hermione at all. She had done something
> with her hair; it was no longer bushy, but sleek and shiny, and twisted up into an
> elegant knot at the back of her head. She was wearing robes made of floaty,
> periwinkle-blue material, and she was holding herself differently, somehow – or
> maybe it was merely the absence of the twenty or so books she usually had slung
> over her back. She was also smiling – rather nervously, it was true – but the
> [magical] reduction in the size of her teeth was more noticeable than ever. Harry
> couldn't understand how he hadn't spotted it before. (360)

Throughout *PS, CoS* and *PoA* Hermione always combines the stereotypically feminine

and masculine in her flexible performance of gender; here Hermione actively performs

her gender in a stereotypically feminine manner by dressing up for the Yule Ball[38]. Harry

barely recognizes one of his best friends due to her performance of femininity; she is no

longer a liminal girl over which his gaze skims. When Harry sees Hermione as

fundamentally different in how she holds and dresses her body, he stops seeing her as

another sexless, uniform-clad peer and starts seeing her as a woman. Once Harry's gaze

sexualizes Hermione, then Ron views Hermione as a sexually desirable woman too[39].

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[37] Note that Krum's gaze plays a role in Harry perceiving Hermione as sexually desirable at the Yule Ball;
as an outsider, Krum has a fresh perspective on Hermione's physical appearance. (He asks her to the ball
without ever having spoken to her, thus her physical appearance captured his attention.) It is Krum's gaze
that sparks Hermione's performance of femininity at the ball, which in turn, causes Harry's gaze to fall
upon Hermione and objectify her for readers.

[38] Note that Hermione's determining of her own womanhood probably occurs on a personal level, but the
text denies this perspective. Because readers see only what Harry sees, we do not see Hermione as a woman
until Harry recognizes her as such. Hermione probably has developed breasts and has had her period by age
fourteen, but she is not sharing this information with Harry and the narrator does not relate this information
to readers.

[39] The passive transition from pre-sexual girlhood to sexual womanhood is exemplified in Andy Fickman's
film *She's the Man* (2006). When Sebastian Hasting's gaze falls upon Eunice Bates (a dorky and
unconventionally attractive girl) and deems her 'dateable,' she becomes a woman that other male characters
view as sexually desirable.

Kel

Unlike Éowyn and Hermione, both of whom transition into womanhood passively via the male gaze, Kel subverts sexist fantasy legacy code with an agentic and self-reported transition. Kel views herself as a woman after her breasts develop and she begins to menstruate. Note that she refers to her breasts as "badges of womanhood," thus acknowledging that she is no longer a girl (*Page* 58). Furthermore, readers learn that Kel's body is sexually mature when she has her first menstrual period (94). Her transition into womanhood is therefore personal, as it is dependent on her own shifting view of her body. Kel chooses to acknowledge her newfound womanhood with her closest female companions: her maid, Lalasa and her mother, Ilane of Mindelan.

In contrast, Kel's male peers are not privy to the fact that her body has matured as she hides her breasts from her them with breast bands and baggy clothing. Owen, one of Kel's close friends, eventually notices that Kel's body has matured into that of a woman's:

> Kel rose and bowed, trying not to grin at Owen's tumbling chatter. When she straightened, she was startled to see his eyes bulge.
> 'Mithros's spear, Kel!' he exclaimed. 'When did you turn into a real girl?' […]
> 'I've been a girl for a while, Owen,' Kel informed him.
> 'I never realized,' her too-outspoken friend replied. 'It's not like you've got melons or anything, they're just noticeable.' (*Page* 122-123)

Those who overhear Owen's discussion of Kel's 'womanly' body, advise him to stop objectifying Kel (123). While Kel's peers do eventually become aware that Kel is a woman, they do not facilitate this transition with the power of their gazes. The text acknowledges the existence male gaze via Owen's observation of Kel's body and then rejects it by denying Owen the space to discuss it; in doing so, *POTS* denies Kel's male

peers the ability to project their fantasy of womanhood onto her body. Therefore, Kel remains active in determining her transition into womanhood; her womanhood occurs independently of the male gaze.

<div align="center">**Enter: Love Interest**</div>

Éowyn as Lover

The transition from girlhood into womanhood means that society now expects the female character to perform the roles of lover, wife, and mother. Once Faramir negates Éowyn's girlhood by viewing her body as sexually desirable her goals change and the strengths of her character begin to fade. The development of a romantic interest causes "the heart of Éowyn to chang[e]" and she vows solely to "love" (Tolkien, *Return of the King* 292). Fulfilling the role of lover shifts Éowyn's interests and affects her behaviours. For example, her brother begs her to join him at the field of Cormallen to celebrate a victorious battle – something girlish Éowyn would love to do – but womanly "Éowyn [does] not go" because she has feelings for Faramir that are far more exciting (290). Additionally, Éowyn seeks Faramir's protection when she is frightened. Considering that Éowyn has bravely marched into battle where she fought valiantly and defeated the Witch-king, her seeking protection seems out of character and very stereotypically feminine.

Hermione as Lover

There is a similar shift in interests alongside newfound womanhood in Hermione's narrative. In *GoF* Hermione's transition into womanhood coincides with the romantic attention from Viktor Krum, which distracts Hermione from her campaign for House-elf rights. For example, Hermione clearly prioritizes socializing with her date over

her activism at the Yule Ball. The Yule Ball involves an elaborate feast and Hogwarts

develops a complex magical menu and ordering system for this event:

> Harry glanced up at Hermione to see how she felt about this new and more
> complicated method of dining – surely it meant plenty of extra work for the
> house-elves? – but, for once, Hermione didn't seem to be thinking about S.P.E.W.
> She was deep in talk with Viktor Krum, and hardly seemed to notice what she was
> eating. (362)

Almost immediately after Harry recognizes Hermione's womanhood, the text depicts

Hermione disengaged from her goal of achieving House-elf rights[40] – a major concern of

hers throughout *GoF* – in favour of having fun with her date. The fact that she "hardly

seem[s] to notice" the increased labour required for the food production at the Yule Ball

undermines Hermione's position as the provider of clarity; if the character who is most

critical of the wizarding world closes her eyes, who is going to prompt readers to question

race- and blood-purity-based injustices?[41]

     Once Hermione leaves her pre-sexual girlhood behind, she develops romantic

feelings and desires to perform the womanly role of lover much like Éowyn in *LOTR*.

Unlike Éowyn (and Kel), Hermione's romantic feelings for Ron are unrequited

throughout *OotP* and *HBP*. Hermione seeks fulfillment in the womanly role of lover and

quickly dissolves into female stereotypes as she becomes increasingly jealous and

unreasonable. For example, in *HBP* she becomes cold and distant after Lavender Brown

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[40] At least based on what Harry witnesses, Hermione does not seem interested in House-elf rights. Because
Harry's influence over the narrative limits what readers can know, it is hard to say what Hermione is
working on outside of Harry's view. Nevertheless, readers see less of Hermione's activist interests from this
point forward (and we can only work with the information the text provides).
[41] Remember in earlier books that Hermione enables Harry to see (both literally and metaphorically). When
Harry/the narrator stops mentioning examples of Hermione providing social criticism, it means that
Hermione has stopped engaging Harry in conversations that get him to questions social structures within the
wizarding world.

smiles at Ron (210) and she is jealous that Ron looks at an attractive barmaid (232-233).

But Hermione never makes her feelings for Ron explicit; she almost admits to having

feelings for Ron when she invites him to be her guest to a Christmas party, but she never

directly tells Ron that she is interested in him (263-264). When Ron begins dating

Lavender, Hermione's hurt and angry reactions seem somewhat unreasonable and in turn

support scholarly arguments that Hermione is stereotypically feminine in her 'hysterical'

emotional outbreaks

For example, Hermione's use of her intelligence to plot revenge against Ron

reduces her to a female stereotype: the scorned woman. She invites Cormac McLaggen to

the aforementioned Christmas party and then discusses her date in Ron's presence.

Hermione actually explains to Harry that she only asked Cormac because she knew that

he would annoy Ron the most (296-298). She uses Cormac to make Ron jealous; she has

no interest in spending time with Cormac and spends most of her evening hiding from

him. Hermione's immature actions leave Harry to ponder the "depths to which girls [will]

sink to get revenge" (294). Unfortunately, this revenge scheme is one of Hermione's

largest plot points in *HBP*, and it works only to paint her as petty and unreasonable. At

this point in the *HP* series, it becomes difficult to disagree with the scholars I argued

against in Chapter 2. While I firmly believe that Hermione is a strong and feminist female

character in the earlier *HP* novels[42], after Hermione makes the transition into

womanhood, her position on the threshold between the 'feminine' and 'masculine' comes

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[42] Keep in mind that a large majority of *HP* scholarship on gender was written when only the first four
novels were published.

to an end, and she develops much more stereotypically feminine interests and plotlines

thereby losing much of her depth and nuance.

Disintegration into Stereotype

Once the text establishes Hermione as a lover (in the sense that she loves Ron and

wants to be his lover), her interests shift focus and become stereotypically feminine. For

example, Hermione's involvement in S.P.E.W. is minimal and passive; her 'activism' in

HBP involves knitting hats and hiding them around the Gryffindor common room in

hopes of accidentally freeing House-elves opposed to actively working with Dobby – a

free elf in favor of elf-rights – to make changes. There are three major problems with

Hermione's knitting-as-activism[43]. First, tricking the Hogwarts House-elves into

accepting clothing is blatantly ignoring the voices of the elves; in *GoF* the elves are proud

to work at Hogwarts. Additionally, she fails to consider the effects of freeing (and making

homeless) hundreds of House-elves. Finally, it is impossible for Hermione to free the

House-elves by giving them clothing because she does not enslave them. In *CoS* Harry

was unable to free Dobby from the Malfoy family; Lucius Malfoy had to give Dobby

clothing in order to set him free. Logically only Dumbledore – Head of Hogwarts –

should be able to free the Hogwarts House-elves. For Hermione to forget or ignore the

basic premise of breaking a House-elf's enslavement indicates her distractedness from her

activist endeavours.

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[43] Hermione's knitting-as-activism can be read as a parody of Amnesty International's campaign which encouraged women to knit or crochet a uterus and send it to their Member of Parliament along with a letter asking them to support the International Conference on Population and Development – a conference that works nationally and internationally to support women's rights to control their own bodies. However, Hermione's knitting never reaches the Ministry of Magic and therefore does not have a political dimension.

Furthermore, *OotP* and *HBP* both downplay Hermione's academic interests now that she is a young woman. In *OotP*, Hermione forms a Defense Against the Dark Arts club that Harry leads – despite Hermione's obvious qualifications to teach magic[44] as the top student in all of her classes – and in *HBP* Professor Slughorn fails to recognize Hermione for her genuine achievements in Potions class because Harry is cheating to achieve top marks. Thus throughout *OotP* and *HBP* readers rarely see Hermione succeed in her academic endeavours, but are repeatedly reminded of her continual status as 'second best' to our male hero. Later on, in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows (DH),* Hermione uses magic successfully to decorate for a birthday party, enchant the ultimate 'mom bag,' and make a sympathy wreath to place on the tombstone of Harry's parents.

On top of Hermione's lack of academic acknowledgement, much of Hermione's dialogue post-*GoF* focuses on gossip, romantic advice, and matchmaking. In *OotP* Hermione sees Harry acting strangely and infers that Harry and Cho have kissed; she is also able to sense that Harry really likes Cho (404-407); she explains to a baffled Harry why Cho still cries about her deceased ex-boyfriend (504-505); and she observes that Harry and Cho had a fight by reading Harry's body language (574-575). In *HBP* Hermione discuss her hatred of Fleur Delacour with Ginny Weasley (90); she explains that Harry is now sexually attractive to other girls at the school because he is a celebrity and has gotten taller (206-207); and Hermione infers that Harry has a crush on Ginny because of the way Harry behaves whenever someone mentions her in conversation

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[44] Recall that in *GoF,* Hermione spends hours working with Harry so that he would be able to perform a Summoning Charm for his first task in the Triwizard Tournament. For the third task, Hermione teaches Harry spells that might be useful for maneuvering in a giant maze.

(397). In womanhood, Hermione suddenly spends much of her time making social observations about the love lives of her peers while real-world issues of racism and blood-purity increase in relevance alongside Lord Voldemort's continuing rise to power.

Rowling also compares Hermione directly to Molly Weasley. Molly is a hyperbolic example of stereotypical motherhood: she is a stay-at-home witch (though for ten months of the year her children live at a boarding school), a mother to seven children, she cooks amazing meals and makes homemade sweets, and she spends time knitting[45] her children (and their friends) Christmas jumpers. One of the most explicit moments where Hermione is compared to Molly is in *OotP* when Harry wants to break into Professor Umbridge's office[46]; Hermione feels that this is a foolish idea and appeals to Ron: "'What do you think about this?' Hermione demanded of Ron, and Harry was reminded irresistibly of Mrs. Weasley appealing to her husband during Harry's first dinner at Grimmauld Place" (580). It is bizarre to see Hermione defer to Ron for his opinion on anything, as Ron does not make major contributions to any plan or quest upon which the trio embarks. Hermione then spends the following day hounding Harry; she makes "almost continual attempts to dissuade him from" breaking into Professor Umbridge's office (581). Harry avoids Hermione at dinner because he does not want to listen to her "nagging him again" (583). The text depicts Hermione as very stereotypically feminine when it describes her concern for Harry as 'nagging.' Thus once Hermione

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[45] Note that Hermione also takes up the 'domestic art' of knitting in womanhood. She knits hats for the House-elves throughout *OotP*.
[46] Hermione is also compared to Molly Weasley when she reminds Sirius Black of the risk involved in using the Floo Network to speak with Harry in Gryffindor common room, as the Ministry now monitors all fireplaces connected to the Network and Black is a wanted criminal (*OotP* 270-273).

enters into womanhood, she begins to prioritize personal and social interactions over her prior interests in school, activism, and social justice. In fact, the text pays little attention to her interest in the rights of non-human magical beings[47] despite the fact that the need for radial social change in the wizarding world becomes more and more relevant with the rise of Voldemort.

Kel as Refactored Lover

Like Hermione, Kel has also left her pre-sexual girlhood behind. Just as in the later parts of the *HP* series, Hermione develops a crush on her best friend Ron, so in *Page* Kel develops a crush on her best friend Neal. Pierce introduces Kel's childish infatuation abruptly and briefly: "Neal looked at her, eyes filled with mischief. Something – something odd – filled Kel's chest for a moment. Why did she feel giddy?" (Pierce 63). Unlike Hermione, whose crush dramatically affects her performance of gender, Kel's romantic feelings only minimally affect her behaviour. In fact, when Neal swings "an arm around her shoulders" in a friendly manner, Kel "peel[s] his arm away" because she knows that she does not want to encourage or act upon her feelings for her closest friend (167). Furthermore, when Neal gushes to Kel about his feelings for a noble woman she feels "her heart sink" but tries "to sound as boyish as possible" in her response because she wants her friend to be happy and she does not want to alter their friendship (84). Kel's crush on Neal exists, but it does not change Kel fundamentally as a character and it does not affect the plot of the novel in any way.

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[47] While issues of werewolf prejudice and House-elf rights briefly appear, there is no serious space devoted to political activism after *GoF* and Hermione's transition into womanhood.

While Kel tries her best to appear sexless to her male peers, she does actually have a romantic relationship within her narrative. Readers know Cleon has had unrequited feelings for Kel since *Page*, but because Kel is in training to become a knight – not to find a partner – she does not notice (167). It is only in *Squire* when Cleon kisses Kel for "Midwinter luck" that Kel realizes that Cleon is actually serious when he flirts with her using flowery and inflated ballad-language (175). Following this Midwinter kiss, seeing Cleon smile at her makes "her feel odd, warm and shivery at the same time" indicating Kel's sexual desire (190). The two have a frank conversation about their feelings for each other and then start casually dating (214-216). Unlike Hermione's unrequited crush on Ron – which does not advance the main plot of the series and moves Hermione's character away from her strong and liminal identity – Kel's romantic relationship with Cleon serves to develop the nuances of her character and offers Kel options that are not found in the conventional legacy code. With Kel's romantic relationship *POTS* has the opportunity to explore sexual desire and the ways in which women can perform the sexual role of lover outside of wifehood or motherhood.

Most "young noblewomen don't have [Kel's] freedom" because they are destined for noble marriage (220). But Kel has "decided against a noble marriage, [so she] may bed whoever [she] like[s]," whenever she likes (221). Kel asserts that she does not "want to be distracted" from her career, but that she is happy to "just kiss" Cleon for the pleasure of kissing (221). Furthermore, Kel gets "a charm to keep [her] from pregnancy" so that if she decides to have sex with Cleon, she can do so freely (222). Kel wears the charm "as a declaration that she [can] decide some things for herself" (293); the

pregnancy charm allows Kel the freedom to be sexual (to perform the role of lover)

without becoming pregnant and having to perform the role of mother.

In contrast to Kel – who clearly experiences sexual desire and engages in sexual

activity purely for pleasure – the *HP* texts make no indication that Hermione has sexual

desire[48]. But Rowling does depict Harry and Ron having sexual desire for their romantic

partners. For instance, after Harry and Ginny kiss publically, they leave the common

room for a "long walk in the grounds […] during which – *if they had time* – they might

discuss the [Quidditch] match" (Rowling, *HBP* 499 emphasis mine). The text implies that

Harry and Ginny will not be talking much on this private outdoor walk. The two feel

comfortable kissing in the public space of the common room; therefore seeking a private

space indicates that they wish to be more intimate than the common room allows. Thus

Harry has and acts upon his sexual desire.

Similarly, Rowling depicts Ron having sexual desire in his public displays of

affection with his girlfriend Lavender:

> There, in full view of the whole room, stood Ron wrapped so closely around
> Lavender Brown it was hard to tell whose hands were whose.
> 'It looks like he's eating her face, doesn't it?' said Ginny dispassionately. 'But I
> suppose he's got to refine his technique somehow.' (281)

Note that Ron is using Lavender to 'refine his technique,' indicating that Ron is engaging

in casual sexual activity for practice (as well as pleasure). Shortly thereafter, Ron and

Lavender seek an empty classroom for more privacy (282). Here the text implies that Ron

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[48] Hermione's lack of sexual desire might, in part, be due to her stereotypical performance of gender at this point in the series. Because social norms stereotypically frown upon women having or acting upon their sexual desires, it makes sense for the text to deny Hermione sexual agency. Hermione's lack of sexual activity and pleasure works with the disintegration of her character, as prescribed by the Éowyn Pattern.

and Lavender are not 'just' kissing – they frequently kiss in the common room and in the dining hall – because they are seeking a private space in which to be more intimate than the aforementioned public spaces allow. Ron thus has and acts upon his sexual desires.

Although Harry speculates that Hermione probably did kiss Viktor Krum, there is no textual evidence in *GoF* to support this. Furthermore, there are only two moments of intimate in-text physical contact between Hermione and Ron: at Dumbledore's funeral – a very unsexy time – Ron holds the grief-stricken Hermione (*HBP* 602) and at the Battle of Hogwarts – a life-and-death situation – the two kiss desperately because "'it's now or never, isn't it?'" (*DH* 502-503). Neither intimate moment is equal to the sexual desire and activity of Harry or Ron, as one moment is intimate without sexual desire and the other moment is indicative of an incredibly tense situation. Therefore the *HP* series perpetuates conservative, heteronormative ideas of sexual desire amongst its main characters[49], as only males have and act upon sexual desire. Despite much of Hermione's plotline in *HBP* centering on her feelings for Ron, Hermione's narrative is oddly devoid of sexual desire and pleasure. The text does not indicate that Hermione is motivated to perform the role of lover by sexual desire; in doing so, it positions Hermione as a woman wanting to be a 'lover,' while simultaneously denying her the freedom to be sexually intimate with Ron.

Interestingly, Pierce counters this conservative legacy code of denying female sexual desire and pleasure outside of marriage. Kel enjoys engaging in sexual activity

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[49] Arguably, Lavender and Ginny both have sexual desire, as they are also a part of the implied sexual interactions with their partners examined above. However, neither female character is a main character (thus not part of the 'Holy Trinity' allegory some scholars have read into the series) and Ron 'slut shames' Ginny for having multiple partners throughout the series (so readers know that having 'too many' partners is not 'acceptable').

with her partner; it is Cleon who is hesitant to have sex with Kel because "he mean[s] to marry her as people of their station married, with the bride a virgin" (*Squire* 245). But Kel is "nearly seventeen and not planning to marry" and questions, "Why shouldn't they go to bed?" (293). Cleon explains upholding the custom of a virginal bride is important to him. But the thought of marriage frightens Kel: "'I'm not ready,' she whispered. […] 'I want my shield'" (296). Shortly thereafter Kel sees Cleon interacting with a group of children; Cleon looks up "from the knot of children to see Kel watching. His eyes filled with longing, so much that Kel had to go. He was thinking of the children they could have. She shivered. She didn't want to consider that at all" (305). Pierce's series presents readers with an agentic, liminal woman with sexual desire, who seeks sexual pleasure outside of heterosexual marriage, thus refactoring the traditional legacy code in which women only experience sexual pleasure while performing the role of wife.

Unaffected

Unlike Hermione, who conforms to feminine stereotype once she develops romantic feelings for Ron, Kel never sacrifices her ambitions and goals in order to have a romantic relationship. For instance, in addition to having a romantic relationship with Cleon, Kel attends the trial of the men who kidnapped Lalasa in *Page* and endeavours to change the Tortallan legal system. The verdict of Lalasa's trial is as harsh as the current laws of Tortall allow and still the proposed 'punishment' for the perpetrators is inadequate (*Squire* 147-148). In response to the court's decision Kel speaks to King Jonathan and demands that he change the law; after hearing her explanation, the king agrees to begin the process of changing Tortall's laws (155, 158-162). Thus her romantic

interests do not affect Kel's activist efforts to end gender- and class-based injustices. Kel still wants to change the ways that Tortallan society treats women and commoners; her actions support her political interests.

Furthermore, while Hermione mentions the vague career of doing "'some good in the world'" (*DH* 105), Kel has a clear career in mind and works towards accomplishing her goal of earning her shield and knighthood. While the *HP* texts eliminate Hermione from many of Harry's later quests where she might gain leadership experience, Kel finds opportunities to participate in quests and develop her leadership skills. Throughout *Squire* Raoul of Goldenlake, Commander of the King's Own, grooms Kel to be a commander. Raoul states: "'You've shown flashes of being a commander. I've seen it. So has Qasim [her co-worker], your friend Neal, even [Lord] Wyldon" (114). For instance, Kel participates in a battle in which her squad leader is shot and thus unable to command. Raoul puts Kel in charge of commanding this squad for the remainder of the battle (341). Working as Raoul's squire, gaining leadership experience, and learning effective command techniques, helps Kel to secure employment as a knight-commander. It is interesting to consider the ways in which Kel's position as the commander of a refugee camp both allows her to challenge Tortallan social systems and the ways in which readers understand the role of lover in fantasy literature.

For Hermione 'lover' refers to her desire for a heterosexual relationship with Ron (eros love[50]), for Kel 'lover' applies a little differently, as she performs agape love[51].

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[50] Eros love is romantic or passionate love.
[51] Agape love is unconditional love; it is closely associated with charity and service in its Biblical usage.

Unlike Hermione who finds fulfillment in the role of eros lover, for Kel performing the

role of eros lover with Cleon is not satisfying in and of itself. By broadening 'lover' to

encompass the compassion and empathy that Kel feels for the lower-classes, we can see

her further refactor this 'womanly' role out of its stereotypical place in heterosexual

relationships and into the social and political world via agape love. If we view Kel as an

unconditional lover of all – as in she strives to treat all creatures[52] and people fairly –

then we can view her interactions with the refugees in *Lady Knight* as added complexity

in her refactored performance of lover. In fact, Lord Wyldon gives Kel the hardest

command assignment during the Scanran War because he sees the agape love she has for

all people and trusts her to do the job properly. Her unique position as a youngest child, a

victim of bullying, and a woman in the 'man's world' of knighthood, means that Kel

understands what it is like to be treated unfairly by prejudiced people: "Kel knew her

world. Her respect for common blood was a rarity" amongst the Tortallan upper classes

(*Lady Knight* 71-72). Pierce exemplifies Kel-as-agape-lover after a band of Scanrans raid

Haven, slaughtering and capturing the refugees under her care. When Kel returns to the

ruined refugee camp "she recognize[s] everyone she s[ees];" she recalls names,

anecdotes, and personal details about each of the deceased people she encounters, proving

that Kel genuinely cared about her charges (237). Furthermore, when she realizes that the

raiders took a large group of her people alive, she commits treason – knowingly forfeiting

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[52] In *Squire,* Kel rescues a baby griffin stolen from its nest by poachers who wish to pluck its valuable feathers and sell them for the fletching on arrows. While Daine the Wild Mage searches for his parents, Kel endures scratches and bites that result from caring for her angry charge. Despite the griffin's lack of appreciation or cooperation, Kel still attempts to provide him with the best possible care: feeding him, grooming him, and performing exercises with him in order to strengthen his wings.

her newly won shield and her career[53] – in order to save the lives of the common people that she has grown to love: "she was about to destroy all she had worked for to recapture her people" (258-259). But for Kel, saving the lives of her people is worth losing her shield; when Kel rescues a group of refugee children, they rush to hug her and she "kiss[es] the heads of any she [can] reach and trade[s] handclasps with the rest" (373-374). Thus we see Kel refactor 'lover' when she extends the role beyond a heterosexual partnership.

Unlike Hermione, who easily puts her 'love' for non-human magical beings on the backburner in exchange for fulfilling the role of romantic partner with Ron, Kel extends her love beyond her romantic feelings to include her feelings of compassion, comradery, and friendship with the common people she serves. When Kel demonstrates her love for commoners, we see her refactoring the traditional role of lover to include her activist interests; with her loving treatment of people of all genders and social classes, Kel practices what she preaches throughout *First Test, Page,* and *Squire*. Kel's development of romantic feelings and her performance of the role of eros lover do not interfere with her knight-training. Raoul and Wyldon recognize her unique skills and accomplishments, and reward Kel with resume-building experience and promotion. For Kel, her romantic interests and sexual desire add to the depth of her character; when she refactors the stereotypical role of lover to include agape love, Kel also proves that it is possible to perform the role of lover outside of heterosexual relationships.

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[53] Lord Wyldon later pardons Kel's treasonous act and puts her in charge of building a new refugee camp. (Her heroic and self-sacrificing action does not actually result in the loss of her shield or employment, although she was fully prepared to make this sacrifice.)

Concluding Thoughts

In *GoF* – the midway point in the *HP* series – Hermione transitions passively from girlhood into womanhood by means of the male gaze; male onlookers establish her womanhood when they recognize her adult body as sexually desirable. Throughout the final half of the *HP* series, the once subversive girl becomes a stereotypical young woman. She adopts the role of lover, but does not have the freedom to act upon her sexual desire (although her male peers are engaging in sexual activity and thus acting upon their sexual desires). Her preoccupation with her feelings for Ron combined with her newfound interest in gossip and matchmaking result in Hermione paying very little attention to her activist endeavours.

In contrast, Kel's transition from girlhood into womanhood occurs via the sexual maturation of her body. Kel's transition is not dependent on the male gaze seeing her body as sexually desirable, and she explores her sexual desire outside of heterosexual marriage. *POTS* offers a critique of the Harlequin Romance legacy code that dictates that women find fulfillment in marriage and children. Kel's romantic feelings do not affect her interactions with her peers, her studies, or her overall plotline. *POTS* treats sexuality, sexual desire, and sex as a natural aspect of womanhood. Thus the transition from girlhood – a space in which subversion is acceptable – into womanhood – a space in which gender traditionally becomes rigid and stereotypical – negatively affects Hermione. Hermione's character directly follows the Éowyn Pattern, in which the adult woman becomes distracted from her previously subversive goals in favour of stereotypically feminine romantic interests. Where Hermione had nuance and depth in girlhood, she

becomes shallow and stereotypical in womanhood. However, *POTS* proves that it is possible to subvert this legacy code by having an adult female character – a 'womanly' character – reject the feminine roles of wife and mother that Radway notes are the only way a female character feels fulfilled. Kel adopts and subverts the womanly role of lover while continuing to remain liminal and subversive in her actions; her performance of the role of lover only adds to her depth and complexity.

Chapter 4 focuses on the narrative conclusions of Éowyn, Hermione and Kel by examining the ways Éowyn's legacy code follows the Harlequin Romance conclusion in which a woman is fulfilled with heterosexual marriage and motherhood and the ways in which Rowling perpetuates this ideology in the *DH* epilogue. In contrast an examination of Kel's narrative conclusion in *Lady Knight* reveals the extent to which fantasy texts can refactor foundational legacy code in order to offer readers of YA fantasy literature a subversive model of gender performance.

Chapter 4 | Narrative Ends

Chapter 3 examined the noticeable decline of subversive behaviours in female characters after they transition out of girlhood and into womanhood. I discussed the ways in which Hermione follows Éowyn's narrative pattern, adopting the 'feminine' role of lover after passively transitioning into womanhood. The adoption of 'lover' results in Hermione losing the interests and character traits that made her a strong female character in *PS, CoS, PoA*, and the first half of *GoF*. I then compared Hermione's narrative to Kel's, and reflected on the ways *POTS* refactors Éowyn's limiting legacy code in order to maintain Kel's subversive gender performance in womanhood. This chapter examines the narrative conclusions of Hermione and Kel in order to illustrate the ways in which subversive female characters often meet heteronormative ends thereby maintaining stereotypical gender roles in fantasy literature. By comparing Hermione's narrative conclusion to Kel's, I demonstrate the noticeably different outcome for a strong female character when texts take small steps to refactor fantasy legacy code.

As discussed in Chapter 1, female characters "inevitably end up associating their female identity with the social roles of lover, wife, and mother" when a romance is introduced into their plotlines (Radway 207). The Éowyn Pattern aligns with Radway's observation that female characters often find fulfillment in these traditionally feminine roles, as Éowyn abandons her goal of working as a shieldmaiden in exchange for performing the roles of lover, wife, and mother. Furthermore, Jane Tolmie supports Radway's observation on female fulfillment in her article "Medievalism and the Fantasy Heroine" which examines the romance narratives in fantasy series that feature strong

female characters. Tolmie states fantasy novels present "their heroines as active

participants in forging their own 'destinies,'" including when they enter into romantic

relationships (146). However, Tolmie argues that heroines – like Éowyn and Hermione –

are not really making choices[54] because "they [the heroines] act within power structures

oriented towards the systematic disenfranchisement of women" (146). Because heroines

act within patriarchal power structures, they almost always "settle happily into

heterosexual complementarity, and inherit what is rightfully theirs:" the legacy of

heterosexual wifehood and motherhood (146). When a heroine challenges or 'refactors'

the patriarchal power structures – as Kel does over the course of her narrative – she does

not have to 'choose' wifehood and motherhood as her 'destiny;' she has the agency to

choose otherwise and deviate from the heteronormative fantasy legacy code. Recall

Butler's assertion that subversive performances of gender have radical effects on the ways

a society constructs gender. Texts that deviate from the foundational legacy code of

female narratives (as *POTS* does) provide a 'new normal' for gender and challenge

patriarchal systems in the Secondary World.

By comparing the narrative conclusions of Hermione and Kel, I illustrate the

potential for radical change to the Éowyn Pattern – and the patriarchal systems often

present in fantastic Secondary Worlds – when fantasy texts refactor sexist expectations

for female characters. Because Éowyn's legacy code provides the narrative formula for

strong female characters, it is unsurprising that Hermione's narrative also concludes with

her finding fulfillment in heterosexual marriage and motherhood. In contrast, Pierce's

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[54] Recall in Chapter 1, I defined 'choice' as having the ability to choose from all legitimate options.

consciously feminist series refactors Éowyn's legacy code allowing for a subversive

narrative conclusion in which Kel rejects the role of wife and subverts the role of mother.

By examining the narratives of Hermione and Kel, I demonstrate that it is possible to

deviate from the legacy code of female fulfillment while still writing a believable

conclusion to a fantasy series. Additionally, I highlight the importance of refactoring

traditional narrative conclusions for female characters in order to present young readers

with alternative examples of fulfilling activities for females in adulthood.

Heteronormative Narrative Conclusions

Éowyn as Wife and Mother

At the start of her narrative Éowyn wishes to "ride to war like her brother"

(Tolkien, *Return of the King* 285). Then Faramir deems her sexually desirable and

expresses his love for her, causing "the heart of Éowyn [to] change;" she declares she

"'will be a shieldmaiden no longer'" (292). The text states that Éowyn is "healed" of her

deviance with the decision to adopt wholeheartedly the 'feminine' role of lover (292). She

then marries Faramir (307-308) and becomes a mother[55]. The *LOTR* curbs the subversive

potential of Éowyn's character when it returns her to a heteronormative role (even though

it appears to counter her determined and adventurous personality established at the start

of her narrative), thus leaving the patriarchal structures of Middle-earth intact.

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[55] Éowyn and Faramir have one child, Elboron. Tolkien mentions this son in a family tree in *The Histories of Middle Earth* vol. 12 in "The Heirs of Elendil."

Hermione as Wife and Mother

Éowyn's legacy code of fulfillment in marriage and motherhood is one that carries

forward into much of contemporary fantasy literature; Rowling's *HP* series is no

exception. At the conclusion of her narrative arc – as shown in the epilogue of *DH*[56] –

Hermione is married to Ron, has two children, and is without a career in the canonical *HP*

material. Furthermore, there is no mention of changes to the wizarding world since the

Battle of Hogwarts and the fall of Voldemort. Race- and blood-based prejudices enabled

Voldemort to secure supporters within the wizarding community, and yet the text remains

silent in regards to whether or not Hermione has done "something really worthwhile" like

taking S.P.E.W. further or challenging wizard prejudice (*OotP* 206). Because of the ways

the *HP* series positions witches in the wizarding world, the text denies Hermione the

ability to perform activist work as a career. Given that sane and living witches are either

married stay-at-home mothers[57] or single career women[58], readers must assume that

because Hermione is a sane/living wife and mother, she does not have a career.

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[56] A brief summary of the epilogue is necessary to remind readers what is canonical information about the adult lives of the trio. The epilogue takes place nineteen years after the Battle of Hogwarts. Harry and his wife Ginny take their three children to board the train to Hogwarts. The Potters meet Ron, Hermione, and their two children. Ron jokes about how the four former-Gryffindors will disinherit their children if they are in Slytherin and encourages a rivalry between his child and Draco's child. Hermione and Ginny then speak in unison, attempting to counter Ron's statement; they no longer speak as individual women, their voices have become one. Harry reassures his youngest son that it does not matter to him if he is in Slytherin. The parents watch as the train pulls away: "All was well" (Rowling, *DH* 607). Note that Hermione, an influential character throughout the *HP* series, is a one-dimensional character in the epilogue; she lacks any defining character traits, action, or dialogue at the conclusion of her narrative.

[57] Molly Weasley is a stereotypical stay-at-home mother.

[58] Minerva McGonagall (professor) and Rita Skeeter (journalist) are examples of career women. They are also both quite liminal as adult women, supporting the idea that they are not 'complete women' because the male gaze does not recognize them as sexual; they cannot fulfill the roles of lover, wife, and mother. Also worth noting is that Rowling queer codes Rita; with her "heavy-jawed face," "thick fingers," and "surprisingly strong grip" Rita can be read as a transgender woman (*GoF* 266). Reading Rita as transgender adds a layer of complexity to her status as a single woman within the *HP* series that I do not have the space

The Schlubby Hubby

Before I unpack the ways in which Hermione's narrative conclusion aligns with a heteronormative and limiting legacy code, it is important to examine Hermione's choice of partner. Hermione marries Ron, an unremarkable, prejudiced, and pure-blooded wizard. J. Jack Halberstam notes a recent trend in romance narratives where "abundantly competent women and totally incompetent men" enter into romantic partnerships (*Gaga Feminism* 18-19). While Halberstam offers analysis of this trend in films like *Knocked Up* (2007) and *Bridesmaids* (2011), there is a similar trend in YA literature[59]. These texts declare that 'true love' allows an ambitious and successful woman "to see the charm of a crusty loser:"

> [T]rue love lets losers win… as long as they are male. There is no possibility of the reverse situation becoming the foundation of romance – no lady nerds without jobs or good looks can expect Prince Charming to show up any time soon. And while women in these [narratives …] pad their resumes with good works, yoga classes, advanced degrees, high salaries, and lots of know-how, their schlubby partners-to-be rest secure in the knowledge that they may not have a job, they may have no prospects of a job any time soon, they may lack good hygiene, tell few jokes, show little to no initiative, but, heterosexual love being what it is, and given the market's tilt toward male eligibility, as long as the guy has a semifunctional penis, and sometimes even if he doesn't, he will get laid! (20)

These romance narratives justify "a new form of parasitical masculinity" in which an unexceptional man attaches himself to a successful woman in order to reap the benefits of her labour (21). Arguably, the description of the 'schlubby hubby' is befitting of Ron. He

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to unpack in this project. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the male gaze does not sexualize Rita and therefore excludes her from performing the roles of lover, wife, and mother.

[59] More examples of schlubby hubbies (or partners) include Xander Harris in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1996-2003) by Joss Whedon (see episode "Once More, with Feeling"), Miles 'Pudge' Halter in *Looking for Alaska* (2005) by John Green, and Greg Gains in *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* (2012) by Jesse Andrews.

is an unexceptional wizard: he contributes very little to the quests throughout the *HP* series[60], he never develops plans or solutions to his friends' problems, he is unmotivated, and he frequently shirks his responsibilities in favour of leisure activities. Other than the affections of Hermione and the loyalty of Harry, Ron has very little going for him.

Due to Ron's schlubby hubby status, we might assume that Hermione is the breadwinner in her family, but based on the examples of marriage and motherhood in the wizarding world, we *must* assume that Hermione is a stay-at-home mother. When the text fails to indicate clearly what has become of Hermione (other than her wifehood and motherhood), it paints an entirely unpromising picture in which Ron is an ineffectual breadwinner and Hermione – the greatest witch of her year – is a magically talented domestic goddess. The text's combination of the new schlubby hubby masculinity with the traditional breadwinner masculinity, and the effects this relationship has on Hermione's ability to make career choices, epitomizes the flaws of a legacy code that requires female characters to find fulfillment in wifehood and motherhood.

<div align="center">Wife</div>

In the *DH* epilogue, Hermione – once a socially conscious activist – is Ron's wife. Ron – who often expressed conservative and problematic views on the treatment of non-wizarding folks – has not changed. In fact, in the epilogue we learn that Ron performed a Confundus Charm on a Muggle driving instructor in order to pass his driving test (*DH* 604). First, this makes Hermione look foolish as she proudly praises Ron for earning his

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[60] Ron actually abandons Harry's quest in *DH* after being a whiney, grumpy, unhelpful brat for several weeks.

driver's licence; she has bought Ron's lie. Second, it indicates that Ron has not grown as

a character[61]; his willingness to abuse a Muggle by magically confusing him (as well as

disregarding the Muggle regulation of a driver's licence) indicates that his view of non-

wizards has not changed as he has matured. While Ron may represent the 'liberal' wizard,

he still views Muggles as lesser[62]. Thus readers can infer that Hermione is the wife of

someone who represents the continued inequalities in the wizarding world, even after

Harry has defeated Voldemort; this choice in partnership undermines the interest

Hermione once had in social justice.

     Because we only get a snippet of Hermione and Ron's marriage in the epilogue, I

reflect on their performances of their Prefect duties throughout *OotP* and *HBP* as

episodes foreshadowing the nature of their marriage. As Gryffindor Prefects, Hermione

and Ron are responsible for both guiding and disciplining their fellow students; their

partnership gives them an opportunity to 'play house,' as the role of Prefect is somewhat

parental in nature. Throughout their Prefect partnership, Hermione does all of the labour

required of the role; in contrast, Ron repeatedly fails both to perform his role as a Prefect

and to support Hermione in her actions. For example, Hermione must remind Ron that

they are responsible for guiding new Gryffindors to their dormitories and providing them

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[61] Cheating on a test is something that teenaged Ron would do, as we see throughout the series when Ron copies Hermione's schoolwork in order to pass his assignments: "'Shall we do Snape's stuff first?' said Ron […] He underlined the title then looked expectantly at Hermione. 'So what are the properties of moonstone and its uses in potion making?'" (*OotP* 228).

[62] Using the Confundus Charm on the Muggle examiner aligns Ron with the Ministry of Magic, which repeatedly Oblivated a Muggle park ranger during the Quidditch World Cup (*GoF* 72). It also aligns Ron with the Death Eaters, who magically terrorize a Muggle family for their own amusement (108). *GoF* criticizes the casual abuse of Muggles via the non-consensual use of magic; yet Ron's abuse of a Muggle driving examiner is something that he shares as a humorous anecdote, indicating that his respect for non-wizards has not changed in the past nineteen years.

with a tour of the school; once reminded, Ron refers to the first-year Gryffindors as
"[m]idgets" and ineffectually shouts at them in an attempt to gather them together (*OotP*
194). In the end, Hermione actually gathers and guides the new students. Additionally,
Hermione endeavours to discipline Fred and George Weasley numerous times throughout
OotP. First, she removes their advertisement seeking test subjects for their magical joke
products (200-201). Then, after witnessing the twins making notes over the body of an
unconscious first-year, Hermione confronts Fred and George about their inappropriate
product testing (229). Instead of supporting Hermione, Ron "sink[s] as low in his chair as
his lanky frame permit[s]" and states that she has "'it under control'" (229). Ron actively
chooses to leave Hermione to discipline two of Hogwarts' most notorious rule-breakers
by herself. Worse than actively abandoning Hermione is when Ron acts in ways that
deliberately undermine her authority. For instance, in *HBP* Hermione stops a student with
a Fanged Frisbee: "'Fanged Frisbees are banned, hand it over,' she [tells] him sternly"
(164). Ron waits for the student to leave and "then tug[s] the Frisbee from Hermione's
grip" stating: "'Excellent, I've always wanted one of these'" (164). When students see
Hermione's partner breaking the rules that she attempts to enforce, it sends the message
that they need not respect her authority either.

The Prefect partnership of Hermione and Ron parallels the marriage of Molly and
Arthur Weasley. The text often compares Hermione to Molly (as discussed in Chapter 3).
Molly is a domestic goddess, responsible for disciplining her children; Arthur – one of the
most prominent models of conventional fatherhood – is a schlubby hubby breadwinner,
who often undermines Molly's authority. For example, in *CoS* Fred, George, and Ron fly

an enchanted car across London and free Harry from the Dursleys' house. When the boys

return to the Burrow, Molly punishes them for their actions; when Arthur arrives home

from work Molly seeks the support of her husband in underscoring the dangerous and

illegal actions of their children:

> '*Your sons flew that car to Harry's house and back last night!*' shouted Mrs.
> Weasley. 'What have you got to say about that, eh?'
> 'Did you really?' said Mr. Weasley eagerly. Did it go all right? I-I mean,' he
> faltered, as sparks flew from Mrs. Weasley's eyes 'that-that was very wrong boys
> – very wrong indeed…' (*CoS* 34-35)

Rather than supporting his wife, Arthur is excited that his children broke wizarding law

and flew the Muggle car he secretly enchanted (34). Worse still, Arthur works in the

Misuse of Muggle Artefacts Department and "made sure there was a loophole when [he]

wrote the law" about enchanting Muggle artefacts: as long as a wizard is not intending to

use the enchanted Muggle artefact, it is "quite within the law" to do so (*CoS* 34). His half-

hearted attempt to remind his children that tampering with Muggle artefacts is dangerous

and illegal (if used) does little to support his wife's assertion that flying the car across

London was incredibly risky and foolish. Thus Ron mirrors his father's performance of

'husband' and 'father' in his own performance as Hermione's Prefect partner. Both Ron

and Arthur neglect their responsibilities, undermine the authority of their partner, and

abuse their position of power for their own pleasure.

If Hermione and Ron's Prefect partnership – and its parallels to the partnership of

Molly and Arthur Weasley – is any indication of their partnership as a married couple

with children, we can infer that Hermione would perform the domestic labour of running

a household and raising children. Meanwhile Ron would shirk his responsibilities, abuse

his position of authority as head-of-the-house, and perform the role of father only when it benefited him. Examining their partnership as Prefects indicates exactly how imbalanced Hermione and Ron's relationship is; because there is no indication that Ron has changed as a person, we can assume that Ron would perform the roles of husband and father just as poorly as he performed the role of Prefect, and leave Hermione to bear the responsibility of raising children and running a household alone. Hermione following Éowyn's legacy code into marriage illustrates the ways in which the expectation of finding fulfillment in heterosexual marriage (to a schlubby hubby no less) is limiting for ambitious female characters.

<div align="center">Mother</div>

In the epilogue of *DH*, readers learn that Hermione and Ron have two biological children (604). While there is nothing inherently problematic about a woman choosing to perform the role of mother, when texts continually present motherhood as the ultimate way female characters find fulfillment[63] it leads to unsettling heteronormative narrative conclusions for previously strong female characters. First, Hermione's motherhood occurs in conjunction with her unequal partnership with Ron; I have already discussed the relationship dynamics of this couple that would result in Hermione performing all of the domestic labour while Ron shirks his responsibilities. Second, the examples of motherhood in the *HP* series are very traditional. The most prominent mothers are Petunia Dursley and Molly Weasley; both women are stay-at-home mothers who are part of

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[63] Motherhood ultimately fulfills women in this legacy code because it is the final step in the lover-wife-mother progression for female characters.

nuclear families in which the husband is the head of the household and the sole financial provider for their family. As discussed in Chapter 3, the text often compares Hermione to Molly Weasley in temperament, behaviour, and interests after she transitions into womanhood; this continual comparison aligns Hermione's performance of motherhood with Molly's performance of motherhood, as the series has established many similarities between these two characters.

Furthermore, in the *HP* series generally single women have careers. Nymphadora Tonks is one of the few female characters to have a career while being a wife and mother. In *DH*, Tonks is the wife of Remus Lupin and the mother of Teddy Lupin. After fulfilling the roles of lover, wife, and mother, Tonks returns to work as an Auror for the Order of the Phoenix[64] and promptly dies in the Second Wizarding War. When Tonks dies while trying to subvert the categories of married stay-at-home mother and single career woman[65], leaving these dichotomous categories intact at the conclusion of the *HP* series. Because the series presents these polarized representations of women (either fulfilled in wifehood and motherhood or single with a career), and Hermione is alive as a wife and mother in the epilogue, we are left to assume that Hermione must be a stay-at-home mother despite all of her previous political and career ambitions[66].

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[64] A secret organization, created by Albus Dumbledore, devoted to the destruction of Voldemort and his Death Eaters.

[65] For further proof that motherhood and careers should not mix in the wizarding world see Alice Longbottom. After giving birth to Neville, she continued her work as an Auror for the Order of the Phoenix. She was tortured to insanity, and now lives in St Mungo's Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries permanently while her mother-in-law raises her son Neville (*OotP* 454-455).

[66] I am aware that Rowling has stated Hermione's employment via social media. However, Rowling is infamous for her continual tweaking of the *HP* world and characters via her social media sites. Since the publication of *DH* in 2007, she has provided conflicting information on Hermione's employment. I do not consider Rowling's extra-textual information as canonical. I am only interested in the information published in the *HP* texts. In addition, Rowling has recently co-authored a stage play (*Harry Potter and the Cursed*

Furthermore, Hermione as a stay-at-home mother is not too outlandish an idea, as Melanie J. Cordova illustrates when she highlights the ways in which Rowling applies a "motherly layer to Hermione" throughout *DH*. Because readers have seen her as motherly, it is easy to imagine Hermione performing the role of mother fulltime (24). Specifically, Cordova highlights Hermione's magical beaded bag[67]; Hermione's preparation of a getaway bag in *DH* presents her as "someone who provides for others when they are perhaps not thinking far enough ahead, like a parent packing lunch for school" (24). For me, the beaded bag evokes a similarly maternal image with its parallels[68] to Mary Poppins' magical carpetbag (Travers, *Marry Poppins* 10-12). Mary Poppins – nanny to the Banks children – is a quintessential motherly figure in fantastical children's literature. The comparison to Marry Poppins when Hermione pulls items such as a tent, clothing, and library out of her tiny beaded bag is undeniable. Just like Mary Poppins provides care to her charges, Hermione provides care for Harry and Ron. It is not difficult to imagine Hermione as a fulltime mother, spending her days continuing the caregiving work she often did in the last half of the *HP* series.

Child [2016]) with Jack Thorne and John Tiffany. Once again, I am disregarding any updated information in this project. First, a play is a different medium; it does not target the same demographic as Rowling's middle-grade and YA *HP* novels. Should anything in the play redeem Hermione as a subversive fantasy character, it will most likely not reach a large portion of those who actually read the *HP* series. Second, even if Rowling does provide information that redeems Hermione as a strong female character, this will be an afterthought. While authors are free to consider feedback from readers (and I would be happy to see Rowling incorporate feedback on Hermione in the play), it remains that at the time of the publication of *DH* Rowling did not feel it was important to include information on Hermione's career or activism.

[67] Hermione enchants a small beaded clutch to compactly and weightlessly carry anything and everything the trio might need while hunting Horcruxes in *DH*.

[68] Given Rowling's borrowing from other fantasy literature for children and young adults, such as Jane Yolen's *Wizard's Hall* (1991) and Eva Ibbotson's *The Secret of Platform 13* (1994), it would not surprise me if the works of P.L. Travers in her fantastical *Marry Poppins* series (1934-1988) inspired Hermione's beaded bag.

Thus Hermione – a character who began her narrative as a subversive girl – conforms to stereotypical heteronormativity at the conclusion of her narrative. While the roles of wife and mother are not necessarily problematic, when fantasy texts continually present these roles as the only path to fulfillment for female characters we see how this legacy code limits the possibilities imagined for women. Especially in fantastical worlds where literally anything is possible, it is frustrating to encounter texts with the same narrative arc Tolkien provided Éowyn in the 1950s. However, based on the presence of the Éowyn Pattern in the *HP* series, it appears that it is difficult to deviate from such a prominent and long-standing legacy code.

<div align="center">**A Refactored Narrative Conclusion**</div>

Kel as Single and Adoptive Mother

In light of Hermione's formulaic narrative arc, Kel's refactoring of Éowyn's legacy code in *Lady Knight* becomes especially noteworthy. Published alongside the *HP* series[69], the *POTS* series appeared in a market demanding fantasy literature[70] for children and young adults; Rowling and Pierce were both writing for a similar demographic (young readers) and playing with the same legacy code presented in the evergreen *LOTR*. One major difference between the *HP* series and the *POTS* series is that Pierce wrote a consciously feminist fantasy series. Because *POTS* succeeded in a fantasy market

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[69] The *Harry Potter* series was published between 1997 and 2007. The *Protector of the Small* series was published between 1999 and 2002. *Prisoner of Azkaban* (1999) and *First Test* (1999), and *Goblet of Fire* (2000) and *Page* (2000) hit the shelves in the same year.

[70] The first *HP* novel was published "at a time when fantasy for children had been considered unfashionable" (Mendlesohn and James 172). Realism was "considered to be what children wanted" making it hard to publish fantasy texts. Therefore, when the *HP* series arrived on the market in 1997, "there was very little fantasy for children" available; the success of the *HP* series resulted in an explosion of fantasy literature for children (174). The *POTS* series is part of that 'explosion.'

saturated with traditional fantasy texts, readers clearly are willing to support texts that do not reproduce the genre tropes expected of YA fantasy literature. Where Hermione finds fulfillment in the stereotypical roles of wife and mother, Kel refactors these roles, challenges Tolkien's sexist legacy code, and presents readers with a subversive conclusion to the narrative arc of a strong female character.

<div align="center">Rejection of 'Wife'</div>

While Hermione's narrative conclusion includes marrying her childhood sweetheart, Kel concludes her narrative single[71]. At the beginning of *Lady Knight*, Kel ends her relationship with Cleon. She is eighteen and "not ready to marry;" she has "so much to do before she [can] think about settling down" (25). She does not want Cleon as a lover "of that she [is] sure" because "there [is] work to be done" in Tortall (51). Kel prioritizes her career and her activist goals. Furthermore, she is glad that she does not have the stress of maintaining a romantic relationship: "Lovers, Kel thought, rolling her eyes [at Neal impatiently waiting to reunite with his betrothed]. At least there was one headache she *didn't* have" to deal with (409 emphasis in original). Kel is able to travel to the borders of Tortall as a knight-commander because she does not have the feelings of a partner to factor into her career decisions; furthermore, she is aware that being single allows her the freedom to pursue her activist and political interests, as she does not have a family or household to support emotionally or financially.

Compared to Hermione who appears to find fulfillment in wifehood, Kel finds fulfillment in pursuing her career goals. She labours for her shield and her position as a

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[71] In *Trickster's Choice* (2003), set two years after *Lady Knight*, Kel is still single (325-327).

knight-commander; she cannot fathom abandoning this life to perform the stereotypical

roles of wife and mother. Kel finds her career as a knight so fulfilling that she would

"love" to take on her own squire when she is in a position to do so financially and teach

young people her trade (148). Kel's interest in pursuing the role of knight-master has the

potential to create change in Tortall; as a knight-master Kel would influence a new

generation of knights and challenge them to rethink their privileges as nobles. *POTS*

leaves this possible future open for Kel when she refuses to marry Cleon and instead finds

fulfillment in her career as a knight-commander.

Kel's refusal to settle into heterosexual marriage is perhaps due to the myriad of

strong female role models in her life. Unlike Hermione, who has only two oppositional

examples of womanhood modelled in the wizarding world, Kel has numerous

performances of womanhood upon which to model her own performance of gender. The

following women are diverse in their adoption and performance of the roles of lover,

wife, and mother; all are strong female characters (as defined in Chapter 1). The woman

who most influences Kel's performance of gender is her mother Ilane of Mindelan. Ilane

is a wife and mother of nine children; however, in addition to performing these

stereotypical roles, she is a Tortallan diplomat who travelled to the Yamani Islands to

treat with the Emperor. As a small child, Kel witnessed the heroic actions of Ilane during

a pirate raid in the Yamani Islands; Ilane used her glaive (a Yamani weapon that is similar

to a sword) and saved the God's Swords by single-handedly slaughtering a band of pirates

in the Yamani palace (*First Test* 19-22). She is a highly renowned and respected political

figure in both the Yamani Islands and Tortall. Thus Kel grew up watching her politically

active mother make connections and foster peace with the Yamani people; she also

witnessed the strength and bravery of her warrior mother. Ilane presents Kel with an

alternative performance of womanhood upon which to model her own performance of

gender.

Kel also grew up familiar with the heroic actions of Lady Alanna of Pirate's

Swoop and Olau (also known as the Lioness) (*First Test* 39). Alanna is the first female

knight in centuries and a powerful mage; she is renowned for finding the Dominion

Jewel[72] and saving Tortall from a treasonous mage. Alanna is a wife and a mother; due to

the travel involved in her career as a knight, her househusband George of Pirate Swoop

raises their children. As the first female knight in centuries, Alanna is the person who

inspires Kel's quest for knighthood; she is the warrior after whom Kel models her own

career (*Squire* 21).

Other notable strong female characters in Kel's life include Queen Thayet of

Conté, the wife of King Jonathan and the equal co-ruler of Tortall throughout *POTS*

(*Squire* 160). Thayet is a mother and the founder of a co-educational group of warriors

called the Queen's Riders; before the Immortals War, Thayet was the acting commander

of the Riders (*First Test* 36). Buri (Buriram) Tourakom is the current commander of the

Queen's Riders (*Squire* 63). She is one of the few characters of colour in a position of

power in the largely white Tortallan society. She eventually marries Raoul of Goldenlake

(the commander of the King's Own and Kel's knight-master) while still maintaining her

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[72] A legendary magical object used to prevent Roger of Conté – King Jonathan of Conté's cousin – from taking the throne in *Lioness Rampant* (1988).

career. Kel also knows Daine (Veralidaine) Salmalin (also known as the Wild Mage).

Daine is married to Numair Salmalin and the adoptive mother of a baby dragon called

Kit; she works for Tortall as a warrior, wild mage, and spy while raising Kit (*First Test*

81-90). These highly respected and powerful female figures in Tortallan society provide

Kel with examples of women in positions of power; Kel can look to these women –

lovers, wives, mothers, and leaders – when performing her own identity as a young

woman who wants to inspire change in Tortallan society.

        Finally, Eda Bell (also known as the Shang Wildcat) is an unmarried, elderly

warrior who trains the pages in hand-to-hand combat; Eda is the female warrior with

whom Kel spends the most time in her four years as a page (*First Test* 47, 174).

Arguably, Eda is the woman whom Kel mirrors in her own performance of gender. Both

characters find fulfillment as single career women who lead and teach others in their

male-dominated professions. Thus numerous strong women in Kel's life serve as role

models for her own subversive gender performance. Unlike Hermione, whose female role

models indicate that she must choose between being a stay-at-home wife/mother or a

single career woman (or suffer the consequences – insanity or death – for attempting to

bridge these categories), Kel has a myriad of female role models who demonstrate diverse

performances of fulfilling womanhood.

<div align="center">Adoptive Mother</div>

        While Hermione follows Éowyn's legacy code into biological motherhood, Kel

subversively performs the role of mother when she adopts a servant child. After

witnessing Tobeis Boon's employer abuse him, Kel buys Tobe's contract and hires him to

look after her horses (26-36). Kel takes Tobe to a healer, provides him with new clothes, a nourishing meal, and a clean bed. When she learns that Tobe cannot read[73], Kel vows to teach him (40-42). The more time Kel spends with Tobe, the more she thinks of him as a member of her family. I argue that Kel's adoptive motherhood occurs after Tobe escapes the Scanran raid on Haven and rides to meet Kel; it is at this point that Kel's view of Tobe shifts from servant to son. He greets her by "wrapp[ing] his arms around her waist and bur[ying] his face in her nightshirt" (231). In response, Kel "hug[s] *her* boy" as "[s]obs [shake] his frame" and she soothes him (231 emphasis mine). In this instance Kel's language indicates a possessiveness over Tobe; she refers to Tobe as if he is her own child thus making him part of her family. It is interesting that Kel does perform the role of mother, but in an unconventional manner. Unlike Hermione who becomes the biological mother of her husband's children, Kel does not have a partner and she does not give birth to her child. Her adoption of a child subverts the traditional image of motherhood that Éowyn's legacy code provides. For Kel the role of caregiver happens to align with her social and political interests: she hates the mistreatment of those marginalized in Tortallan society and adopts a servant child into her family because she feels that everyone deserves kind treatment[74]. It is not Kel's 'dream' to become a biological mother; she does not need to become pregnant in order to feel fulfilled as a woman. However, her role as an adoptive mother gives her the opportunity to take care of

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[73] In part, the master is able to neglect Tobe because he knows that Tobe cannot read his own contract; the contract does state that Tobe is to be well cared for (provided with appropriate food, shelter, and clothing). By teaching Tobe to read, Kel enables Tobe to have more control over his future employment situations; he will be able to read and negotiate future contracts.

[74] With their parent-child relationship, Kel and Tobe subvert the expected class-based, employer-employee relationship.

a child – thus refactoring traditional motherhood – without sacrificing her career as the

knight-commander of a refugee camp; battlefields and refugee camps are not ideal places

for women to be pregnant or raise children[75]. Thus in performing the role of adoptive

mother Kel refactors the legacy code of fantasy literature that depicts motherhood as a

solely biological role; adopting an older child – Tobe is old enough for Kel to train him to

defend himself[76] – allows Kel to form her unconventional family and fulfill her knightly

duties without encountering the 'punishments' female characters who transgress

boundaries typically experience in fantasy literature.

Kel's friends eventually nickname her 'Mother' because of the care that she puts

into her work as a commander (229-230); Tobe also calls Kel 'Mother,' which she finds

flattering (230). While referring to a female commander as 'Mother' might appear

condescending on the surface, Pierce is careful to have this title come out of the mouths

of Kel's closest friends and family. Those who refer to Kel as 'Mother' know, love, and

respect her[77]. Furthermore, the text states that Kel is "flattered" that people might view

her performance of gender as 'motherly' (230). In recognizing a powerful, respected, and

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[75] Queen-in-Waiting Kettricken from Robin Hobb's *Royal Assassin* (1996), is the only pregnant warrior I have encountered in fantasy literature. In girlhood, Kettricken is an active member of her society; after marrying for a political alliance her husband forbids her to do ironwork or defend her people in battle. In defiance of her husband, she rides into battle against the Redship Raiders. Soldiers discover that Kettricken is pregnant while riding to this battle, as she cannot hide her morning sickness. The people of Buckkeep disapprove of a pregnant Queen-in-Waiting putting her life, and the life of her unborn child, at risk. It is worth noting in *Assassin's Quest* (1997) we learn that Kettricken's child is stillborn; the death of her child reads as a 'punishment' for Kettricken's transgression of the binaric roles adult women are allowed to perform in fantasy literature.

[76] Kel guesses Tobe is about nine or ten, which is old enough to begin page training if he were a noble.

[77] The only other character in Pierce's Tortallan universe referred to simply as 'Mother' is the Great Mother Goddess (Queen of the Gods in the Tortallan pantheon). She is a very powerful and widely worshipped female goddess whose temples provide sanctuary for abused women. Given that Kel has used her privilege as a noble woman to provide sanctuary for Lalasa and Tobe (both victims of abuse), when her friends call her 'Mother' the association with the Great Mother Goddess is undeniable.

subversive female figure as a mother *POTS* offers a refactored definition of 'mother' and 'motherhood.' Where Hermione's performance of 'mother' perpetuates stereotypical understanding of the role, Kel brings into question what the role of mother entails and the ways in which female characters can perform motherhood in fantasy literature. Kel proves that it is possible for women to be *both* mothers and career women, and not be 'punished' for transgressing the typical categories of 'married with children' or 'single with a career' that traditional fantasy literature offers.

Thus Kel is a character who remains subversive throughout her narrative arc. Unlike Hermione who fizzles into heteronormativity and stereotypical femininity, Kel maintains her subversive performance of gender throughout girlhood and into womanhood; Kel concludes her narrative employed in her field of study, unmarried, and an adoptive mother. *POTS* demonstrates that it is possible to deviate from Éowyn's legacy code and still have a believable[78] narrative conclusion for a female character; by refactoring aspects of the legacy code that Rowling perpetuates, Pierce's text demonstrates the subversive potential in deviating from fantasy legacy code and the effects that these deviations can have on providing new possibilities for female fulfillment outside of the roles of wife and mother.

Concluding Thoughts

Hermione and Kel both began their narratives as ambitious and agentic girls. It is interesting that these two very similar characters have such oppositional narrative

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[78] I use the word 'believable' here because the ending stays true to Kel's character as established by the rest of the *POTS* series.

conclusions. Where Hermione reproduces the legacy code of wife and mother, and finds fulfillment in these roles (much like the stereotypical Harlequin Romance heroine), Kel refactors the legacy code of mother, while outright rejecting the role of wife. Comparing the narrative conclusions of Hermione and Kel demonstrates the ways in which subverting some elements in a female character's narrative can have radical effects on her narrative conclusion. While the *HP* series terminates Hermione's subversive potential by limiting her to fulfillment in Éowyn's sexist and formulaic conclusion, *POTS'* narrative ensures that Kel never stops being subversive. At the conclusion of her narrative Kel is single, employed in her field, an adoptive mother, and very much alive and well. Kel defies the dichotomous possibilities for female characters that the *HP* series perpetuates.

Pierce's *POTS* series proves that it is possible to refactor conservative fantasy legacy code while still writing within the fantasy genre. Evidently, publishers are willing and able to recognize and sell subversive texts within the fantasy genre[79] (as capitalist enterprises, publishing companies do not agree to publish texts that they do not believe will sell). Because Random House Inc. published *POTS* in the same YA fantasy market as the *HP* series, publishers clearly thought that readers would support a YA fantasy series with a feminist message. Furthermore, the cult popularity of *POTS* and the active online fan community[80] indicates that young adult readers are supportive of feminist content in YA fantasy novels.

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[79] Before publishing *POTS*, Pierce had successfully published several other YA fantasy series that chronicle the adventures of subversive female characters: *The Song of the Lioness* series (1983-1988) and *The Immortals* series (1992-1996).

[80] Please refer to John Lennard's "A Note on *Protector of the Small* Fanfiction" in *Reading Tamora Pierce: The Protector of the Small* for more information on the online fan community.

The Conclusion discusses why formulaic and sexist legacy code matters for young adult readers. I suggest places where the legacy code of gender needs further refactoring by discussing the lack of diversity in the performance of masculinity in male fantasy heroes. I also comment briefly on other legacy codes in fantasy literature that are in desperate need of refactoring – such as race, sexuality, gender, and ability – and where available highlight fantasy texts that have begun refactoring these problematic legacy codes in order to provide readers of this project with more examples of subversive fantasy literature.

Conclusion

Why Does This Matter?

When young readers continually see strong female characters find fulfillment in the stereotypical roles of lover, wife, and mother it does not challenge the patriarchal discourses that work to disadvantage women by positioning them as 'naturally inclined' to fulfill these nurturing roles. Contemporary Western society still expects women to perform the stereotypical roles of lover, wife, and mother; Éowyn's literary legacy code is grounded in the reality of women's lives. All dominant textual media (such as books, television/films, and digital) depict females finding fulfillment in the performance of the roles of lover, wife, and mother. The woman-as-caregiver is still our dominant narrative in patriarchal societies. Fantasy literature should be a space to imagine and explore alternative possibilities beyond the limitations of our heteronormative Primary World; fantastic Secondary Worlds provide endless opportunities to imagine differently gendered roles and performances. Strong female characters in YA fantasy literature can provide role models for readers and challenge them to think differently about their own assumptions about gender performance and gender roles.

In "Conclusion: Women Are Making a Difference," Colin Latchem, Asha Kanwar, and Frances Ferrerira argue that in order for changes to be made to our social and political spheres girls "need to be helped in envisioning their future" outside of the traditionally 'feminine' roles that patriarchal systems too often depict as fulfilling (168). Consider the real-world impact that Brown University graduate and actress-turned-activist, Emma Watson, is having on girls and young women around the world. Watson

uses social media – such as *twitter*, where she has 22.6 million followers – to introduce

her fans and followers to feminist ideologies. Watson's equality-seeking 'HeForShe'

campaign – part of her work with United Nations Women – has reached over three

hundred thousand people on *twitter*. Watson has also recently started a feminist book

club on *Goodreads* in hopes of sparking discussion around gender-based inequality

amongst her followers. Performing a Google search of 'Emma Watson' reveals the extent

to which girls and young women view Watson as a role model; many websites are

devoted to discussing the inspiration girls and young women draw from her speech and

actions.

Because of the observable influence strong and subversive female role models –

such as Emma Watson – have on their supporters' abilities to imagine alternatives, it is

important for young readers to see themselves represented in positive and diverse ways in

the literature they read. Fantasy is a literary genre that allows authors the freedom to

imagine beyond the real; it is the space to provide readers with strong and subversive

fictional role models. Recall Butler's assertion that subversive performances of gender

would have radical consequences for the social construction of identity and the politics

that are bound up in identity; being able to see subversive performances of gender

modelled in literature is one way to encourage young readers to imagine alternative

possibilities for performing their identity outside of the dominant heteronormative

performances. Pierce's text illustrates that it is possible to find fulfillment outside of the

heteronormative roles of lover, wife, and mother and that subversive performances of

'female' can be fulfilling. Imagine what subversive fantasy role models could do for

challenging dominant discourses on masculinity (a topic I have touched upon throughout this project, but did not have the space to unpack further), the roles of people of colour, LGBTQIA+ people, or people with disabilities[81].

Where Do We Go From Here?

While Pierce's text is subversive in terms of the roles that it allows white cis-gender women to perform, it does little to subvert the dominant narratives of numerous other identities, such as cis-gender men, people of colour, queer people, transgender/gender non-binary folks, or people with disabilities. However, what *POTS* does do is provide authors with a new legacy code on which to build their subversive fantasy narratives; authors can continue to refactor Kel's narrative in order to work towards a fantasy literature that truly lives up to the subversive potential fantastic Secondary Worlds offer. The following are legacy codes within the fantasy genre that need refactoring and some examples of fantasy texts that are working to refactor dominant narratives.

First, performances of masculinity are still largely stereotypical. While we do have many authors writing strong female characters as heroes, I am hard-pressed to think of a male hero who is liminal and flexible in his performance of masculinity. In fact, the only liminal male hero with which I am familiar is from a children's fantasy television

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[81] I am aware that within activist groups that focus on ability some individuals prefer the term 'person with a disability' as it prioritizes the 'personhood' of an individual who happens to have a body that is differently-abled, while others prefer 'disabled person' as it brings 'disability' to the forefront of an individual's identity, reclaiming, highlighting, or celebrating what has historically othered and marginalized differently-abled individuals. Currently Canada considers it 'politically correct' to refer to individuals who are 'differently abled' as 'people with disabilities' and – as a person who is outside of this identity group – I have chosen to make use of the terminology considered 'politically correct' within this project.

series: Doug Langdale's *Dave the Barbarian* (2004-2005). Dave is an unnaturally strong male whose physical body positions him as the stereotypical male hero to the viewer; however, Dave is subversive in that he enjoys cooking, cleaning, and knitting, and hates to fight or use his physical strength. He often saves the day in unconventional ways, proving there are ways to be heroic without using violence and brute strength. *Dave the Barbarian* is a comedic fantasy show intended for children; while Dave is subversive in his performance of masculinity, much of his 'sissy' performances are intended to have comedic effect. I have yet to encounter a sissy heroic male treated with similar respect as a 'tomboyish' female character. Thus refactoring male hero-narratives to include liminal male characters that flexibly perform their gender is something that needs to happen in fantasy literature.

Another legacy code that requires refactoring is the overwhelming whiteness of heroes in fantasy literature. We see the refactoring of this racist legacy code in N. K. Jemisin's *Inheritance* trilogy. As a woman of colour, she writes to refactor the fantasy hero. Her texts focus on coloured and queer characters in non-western settings. Jemisin is forging new legacy codes within the fantasy genre. However, her books are not marketed towards young adult readers; I hope that children's and YA fantasy writers are able to build upon Jemisin's foundation and play with her new legacy codes in order to create more diverse fantasy literature with more authentic and inclusive fictional role models for younger readers.

There has also been a recent influx of queer characters in popular YA fantasy literature, which is very exciting. My two favorites are *The Raven Cycle* by Maggie

Stiefvater and *Carry On* by Rainbow Rowell. *The Raven Cycle* is an urban fantasy series that follows four main characters who attend a private boarding school (much like Hogwarts). The raven boys have a very homosocial friendship group and one of the characters is canonically gay. Similarly, *Carry On* is essentially *HP* fanfiction that focuses on Simon/Harry and Baz/Draco exploring their romantic feelings for one another; it heavily borrows from Rowling's narrative and refactors the heteronormative fantasy legacy code with its queer romance. Seeing queer characters appear in YA fantasy texts that are clearly rooted in *HP* legacy code is encouraging; Stiefvater and Rowell are both playing with the legacy code of the popular *HP* series and queering aspects of this narrative.

In addition, we need to see transgender heroes represented in fantasy literature. The untitled anthology of speculative fiction[82] published by Topside Press and edited by Casey Plett and Cat Fitzpatrick has collected short stories written entirely by transgender authors. Plett states: "so many of us [transgender people are] seeking art that escapes what is real – and how that's a function of dealing with a world that doesn't want us to exist, that doesn't believe we exist – the spec-fic is the next interesting thing for trans fiction" (Cross, *bitch* 30). Fitzpatrick followed Plett's statement with: "I mean, who needs to imagine a different world? Us, definitely" (30). In speculative fiction (and fantasy) authors are constructing fantastic Secondary Worlds from scratch, so authorial decisions when world building – such as which contemporary narratives to reproduce and which to

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[82] The anticipated release date for this anthology is the fall of 2016, although publication dates are subject to change.

subvert – therefore "entails obvious political choices" (31). Transgender authors are in a unique position to subvert and refactor fantasy legacy code in order to shift the traditional straight, white, cis-gender authors' fantasy tropes. This anthology is incredibly important because canonical transgender characters are largely absent from (fantasy) literature for young adults (although villainous characters – like Rowling's Rita Skeeter – are often coded as transgender). I am excited to see how these transgender writers refactor fantasy tropes, using the subversive potential of the fantasy genre to its fullest.

Within fantasy literature we also need to see heroes with disabilities. Authors often depict villains as disabled[83] and use physical disability to indicate the 'monstrosity' of antagonists' character to readers; this trope needs refactoring. Furthermore, whenever an author depicts a hero as disabled she or he always encounters the Magical Cure trope. This is a problematic trope in which magic cures the hero of their disability, allowing them to find the heteronormative happy ending previously denied to them. Alison Goodman's *Dragoneye* duology is a prime example of the Magical Cure trope. Eona (who suffers from chronic pain and mobility issues) becomes able-bodied when she unites with her magic dragon. Once her body is 'healed,' she is sexually desirable and *two* male characters begin to fight for her affection. The Magical Cure trope is problematic in that it erases difference and in doing so sends the message that different bodies are undesirable and in need of treatment. A hero with a disability who triumphs and finds fulfillment in her or his narrative arc is a narrative fantasy literature needs and, because of the fantastical potential in Secondary Worlds, could easily be accomplished without a

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[83] Recall Captain Hook in J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, who is both physically disabled and queer-coded.

magical cure if authors begin to question and refactor the ableist discourses that inform our current 'happy endings.'

My examination of the influence of the Éowyn Pattern throughout my comparison of Hermione and Kel illustrates how taking small steps to refactor gender in fantasy literature can have radical results in regards to the narrative conclusions of female characters. However, we as readers need to demand and support the production of fantasy literature that is truly able to think beyond the legacy codes that dominate the genre. Fantasy literature is the literature of subversion – the literature where literally anything is possible provided it is internally consistent within the fantastic Secondary World. Especially within fantasy literature marketed towards young adult readers, who are still finding their identities, it is important to provide strongly written diverse and subversive characters as role models.

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