



HARRY POTTER: STEERING BEYOND THE STRUGGLE FOR 'GENDER EQUALITY'

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ABSTRACT

Children tend to readily emulate or even imitate the fictional characters and their behavioural pattern, the only prerequisite being the degree to which a narrative or a film succeeds in capturing their imagination. Fantasy books and films, which create a world of its own with the active participation of the readers/viewers ready for willing suspension of disbelief, has a unique power to influence the young minds. As a powerful tool of acculturation, the fantasy literature with its portrayal of an alternative social system can encourage the children/adolescents to form their own value system instead of surrendering to traditional stereotypes while they grow up for the adult world. One such dangerous stereotype is the discriminatory social assignment of gender roles.

It is interesting to observe the portrayal of female characters in children stories or cartoon serials or even films. Most of these seem to promote the traditional gender stereotypes perhaps keeping in mind the acceptability factor. But the phenomenal success of the *Harry Potter* series, both the printed versions as well as the cinematic adaptations, demands an in-depth analysis of the portrayal of female characters and its potential to influence the mind-set and thought processes of young minds. Does *Harry Potter*, as a bildungsroman fantasy book or film series, takes the children beyond the stereotypical gender roles or it just promotes or even join hands with patriarchal forces in furtherance of gender status quo? Amidst the charges of the series being heavily loaded with gender stereotyping and the crudely belittled women characters, even though there are several powerful female personalities, the present paper aims to highlight the impressive and subtle manner in which children are motivated to see beyond the concept of 'gender equality'. They are invited to experience a world of 'gender neutrality' where the traditional role of a mother or a wife is not in conflict with either their intellectual pursuits or capabilities.

Keywords: magic, patriarchy, feminism, bildungsroman, fantasy literature, film, gender equality and gender neutrality

Introduction

And shall we just carelessly allow children to hear any casual tales which may be devised by casual persons, and to receive into their minds ideas for the most part the very opposite of those which we should wish them to have when they are grown up? We cannot! (The Republic 49)

Various studies conducted on the effects of reading 'fairy tales' or bildungsroman in the behavioural pattern of an adult, reach on an agreement that "children's literature can positively influence gender attitudes" (Trepanier-Street and Romatowski 158). Children literature denotes "good quality trade books for children from birth to adolescence, covering topics of relevance and interests to children of those ages, through prose and poetry, fiction and nonfiction" (Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson 2). Children's literature is one of the important but innocuous resources of acculturation as these create an interesting, simplified and idealized world "about socially sanctioned relationship patterns and about social constructs" for youngsters (Wharton 239). Their reach to a child's psyche is enormous and most non-intrusive. "Children encounter some form of children's literature very often and on many places. It is not just a story they listen to before going to bed; they sing while they play with...Fairy tales, stories, nursery rhymes, songs and games form an important part of the lives of children" (Bobulova 13). Furthermore, children's love for exploration ensures their eager participation in the highly imaginative and adventurous set-up of fantasy literature/films. A fiction "evoking wonder and combining a substantial and irreducible element of supernatural or impossible worlds, beings or objects with which the mortal characters of the story or the readers become on, at least partly, familiar terms" (Manlove 16-17) can mould the social perception of young minds. Bobulova is also of the view that "quality fantasy literature is generally considered to be a good exercise of children's imagination and creativity. It also bears a serious deal of morality in itself: the struggle between good and evil, questions of loyalty and devotion to friends, problems of decision-making and personal responsibility are probably the most frequent motives in fantastic stories" (Bobulova 100).

Children love to watch movies, and the readers who love a book enthusiastically watch its movie adaptations or the other way round. In the words of Megan R. Hendershot "Harry Potter, Holes, The Polar Express, The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe, and Curious George are just a few of the Blockbuster hits...If one were to look at just the book sales it would appear that book-based movies generate an interest in the books...There are many benefits from reading. Parents, teachers, and librarians are constantly looking for opportunities to get young people to read" (Hendershot 2-3). Besides their entertainment value, the film adaptations of *Harry Potter* have a unique advantage in terms of their influential power because most of the young movie watchers have already been familiar with the characters and settings beforehand through the gripping narration of Rowling. While watching the film adaptations their intellectual and critical faculty are awakened and various happenings and personal relationships in the world of fantasy become more relatable to the real circumstances around them. In fact, "Cinematic realists propose that films can get at-or show-reality in a way that other art forms can't." (Fiorelli 1). Tiffany L. Walters comments that "[w]hether or not you've read the books or watched the movies, you've probably heard of Harry Potter" (Walters 1) hint at the immense inspirational power of the series in shaping or guiding the thinking process of young generation.

With the bestselling records, read/watched by the majority of millennials around the world, it has attracted the attention of numerous sociologists along with literary critics. It has been credited with rediscovering the pleasure of reading in the generation dangerously enamoured with binary numbers. Having swayed a whole generation to reading, the series has tremendous potential of wielding a strong effect on the social perspective and thinking pattern of children coming of age. Amidst the charges of promoting irrationality like supporting the practice of magic, etc. and hence its unsuitability for children consumption, the *Harry Potter* series has emerged as a powerful medium through which one can learn the essential socio-moral values like family, friendship, bravery and an alive conscience. Alongside the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, we have the world of normal human beings derogatorily referred to as the muggles/mud-blood. The inhabitants of both the worlds interact and they face the real-world issues like racism, class inequality and gender roles, together with the fight between good and evil. The pain and pleasure of an intense feeling of love, the challenge of making a choice between two or more possibilities, the terror of one's threatened life together with the act

of dying or being killed, etc. have been portrayed in such a way that the children easily relate to this fantastic world. The adorable magicians like Harry, Hermione, Ron or Dumbledore and the hateful agents of the dark world like Voldemort have been created in such a way that they cease to be aliens inhabiting in a world of fantasy. They are just like real people living among us except that they have the power of magic and to practice it they also have to work hard to attain expertise. However, the most admiring aspect is its 'invention' of a gender-neutral society where being a man or a woman is not a deciding factor while making a choice and most importantly it does so without challenging the existing social or familial structure.

The story begins with Dumbledore, Professor McGonagall and Rubeus Hagrid going away from a young eponymous "the boy who lived" (HPPS 18); on the doorstep "of number four, Privet Drive" (HPPS 1), belonging to the aunt of the boy and her husband. Harry Potter, with the "lightning scar" (HPPS 89) on the forehead, has been the single wizard who continued to live even after Lord Voldemort's (the antagonist of the series) killing curse. Voldemort is a threat to the world and while attempting to murder one-year-old Harry ends up killing his parents, James and Lily Potter. The ill-treated green-eyed boy named Harry Potter, played by Daniel Radcliffe in the movies who grew up along with the character, is the male protagonist of the series. Harry, an ill-treated boy in the family he resides with, unexpectedly on his eleventh birthday finds his inheritance of being a wizard. And with a touched sympathetic chord the readers are introduced to the world of magic, a world of fantasy inhabited by individuals with identifiable virtues and vices of the real world. It is very interesting to note the erased complexities of the real-world gender dynamics in this world. Very interestingly, the mesmerised children and adolescents encounter neither any furtherance of traditional gender stereotypes nor any conscious effort to question it. There is nothing like typical feminine or masculine identity beyond biological factors instead personal attributes/capabilities are important and there is no implicit or explicit effort at changing or rebuilding the gender dynamics in society even in this world of fantasy. The impressionable readers are invited to imbibe a healthy social perception and enter into the complex adult world without any stereotypical gender role bias.

Ann Oakley, a social scientist in her book *Sex, Gender and Society* states that, "for many people, the terms "gender" and "sex" are used interchangeably, and thus incorrectly. This idea has become so common...that it is rarely questioned. We are born, assigned a sex, and sent out into the world. For many people, this is cause for little, if any, dissonance. Yet biological sex and gender are different; gender is not inherently nor solely connected to one's physical anatomy" (Oakley 16). Frank Taylor convincingly points out that "[g]ender is perhaps the basic dimension through which individuals perceive the social world and their place in it" (Taylor 308). Thus, considering the sociologists the fact remains that any story telling cannot just ignore the existing traditionally gendered social setup and it is here that the role of children's literature becomes significantly crucial. In the words of Delaney Bullinger, "[a]t the start of the Harry Potter series, J.K. Rowling employs traditional gendered thinking in her construction of character roles, but as the series continues, the gender roles are complicated" (Bullinger 1) and of course takes a better turn.

Heather Sammons writes that, "The women in Harry Potter were treated as equals to men in most instances, but have different strengths than other [male] characters. While male characters are often at their best in the heat of battle, female characters often use their wit and logic to get out of dangerous situations and protect those they care about" (Sammons 12). The main female protagonist, Miss Hermione Jean Granger has been played by Emma Watson, who is a feminist activist and is even known for running #HeforShe campaign. She had no fear to stand up for equal rights and opportunities for females. Rowling's remarks are very interesting that while she was young, "she was seen as being extremely bossy and frequently the most splendid one in her class, and those attributes she provided for Hermione" (Gladstein 50). Hermione, was a "Muggle-born" (the term 'muggle' is derogatorily used to indicate non-magical men and women) witch just like Harry's mother Lily Evans.

Delaney Bullinger argues that "[o]ne sees the patriarchal impact of the family paradigm on the novel's central female character Hermione Granger, who defies gender norms in her adeptness in white magic and her heroic partnership with Harry himself, but who ultimately dwindles into a stereotypically feminine role as Ron's wife in the series epilogue" (Bullinger 1). But it must be pointed out that being married or to be someone's wife in itself cannot be said to be a sign of succumbing to the 'patriarchal institutions' as long as the term 'wife' is not considered as a synonym of 'forced subordination'. Hermione's character represents for something not found in

numerous tales (consisting of Barbies and various Disney princess) even in contemporary children writings. Hermione is far different from Lewis Carroll's easily influenced Alice, who in Wonderland, is so obeying that she naively eats or drinks whatsoever cupcakes and potions she discovers. The present generation may not have asked for a better role model or inspiration than her and a large number of girl children do identify with her. In the first book of the series, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, her initial appearance is as a new student headed for Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry- "...the finest school of witchcraft and wizardry in the world" (HPPS 63). In the same book, at the time of her initial encounter with Harry and Ron on the Hogwarts Express, she confidently reveals that none of her parents has anything to do with magic, instead they are dentists:

Nobody in my family's magic at all (HPPS 112).

Further, she is introduced as a brilliant and studious girl who is already familiar with Harry through various books:

I know all about you, of course – I got a few extra books for background reading, and you're in "Modern Magical History" and "The Rise and Fall of the Dark Arts and Great Wizarding Events of the Twentieth Century" (HPPS 113).

Among the three friends, Harry and Ron quickly become friends, but they take time to accept Hermione as a close friend. Initially Ron finds her to be a bit annoying and one of the least preferred individuals. She is classified as a Gryffindor and sincerely follows the rules of Hogwarts. From the earliest days, she emerges as the most intelligent and determined person of the trio quite unlike the traditional image of a female child. She reads extremely quick and nearly all magical spells come effortlessly to her. She can be seen rectifying Ron's effort towards making a feather float:

'Wingardium Leviosa!' he shouted, waving his long arms like a windmill.

'You're saying it wrong,' Harry heard Hermione snap. 'It's Wing-gar-dium Levi-o-sa, make the 'gar' nice and long.'

'You do it, then, if you're so clever,' Ron snarled (HPPS 184).

However, in the first volume of the series, apparently Hermione gets terrorized more easily than other male individuals. For instance, she needs Harry and Ron to rescue her when she spots a troll in the bathroom and crouches down in fright:

'Come on, run, run!' Harry yelled at Hermione, trying to pull her toward the door, but she couldn't move, she was still flat against the wall, her mouth open with terror (HPPS 188).

Among the three, she has to put more effort compared to Harry and Ron to get a chance to use her expertise in any task that involved physical risks. But, when it comes on to the ability of using magic, she is represented as the best of the golden trio or the iconic friendship. She makes efforts to keep the boys well-mannered and is always with them through thick and thin, while chasing for Voldemort's Horcruxes or even while taking part in various battles (e.g., the Battle of the Department of Mysteries, the Battle of the Astronomy and the Battle of the Seven Potters). She has full confidence in her abilities and never depends on male friends, instead it is her voracious reading and grasping abilities that keeps her friends safe. She plays a major part in keeping the Philosopher's Stone safe from Voldemort and it is she who makes it possible for Harry to be alive and prevent his dropping off from his broomstick during the Quidditch sport. She is frequently asked to carry out magical spells that Harry and Ron are unable to perform. In her second year, she prepares Polyjuice Potion (consumption of which enables a person to acquire someone else's appearance for a limited period of time); Harry and Ron utilize it to turn into Crabbe and Goyle to enter into the common room of the Slytherin. She also plays a crucial role in discovering the Chamber of Secrets. She is the one who ruined the Hufflepuff's cup (a Horcrux). Along with the intellectual aid, Hermione also provides emotional and moral support to Harry and Ron quite selflessly. The readers see the sensitive Hermione doing the intense sentimental uplifting, thus offering

Harry as a hero everywhere. The following words succinctly sums up the personality of Hermione in every part of the series:

'Me!' Said Hermione. 'Books! And cleverness! There are more important things-friendship and bravery and- oh Harry- be careful!'(HPPS 308)

Without her, Harry (together with Ron, and almost Neville, also) would not have come alive out of the first book.

The problem of racial discrimination of the real world gets reflected in Hermione, a child of non-magic parents, being called a "filthy little Mudblood" (HPCS 117) by the likes of the Malfoy group, Lord Voldemort, and Bellatrix Lestrange, etc. She counters such issues in an admirable manner and interestingly, she happens to be one of the most intelligent students in her class and Severus Snape even calls her "insufferable know-it-all" (HPPA 181) a notion strengthened by her persistent correct replies. She has also been acknowledged as "the cleverest witch" (HPPA 377) of her age. In fact, the series gets the name after Harry Potter but Hermione is no less important than its 'hero'. Her sensitivity to social issues and her courage of conviction is exemplified in the way she takes up the cause of house elves who are treated as slaves who themselves find it absolutely agreeable to be another's property. Mattson remarkably observes that

...Hermione (who is always leagues ahead of Harry in her emotional maturity and her commitment to social justice) creates the organization S. P. E. W. (Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare), Harry is at first almost completely indifferent to the cause. However, as he becomes more attuned to the way many wizards mistreat house-elves by witnessing the experiences of Dobby, Winky, and Kreacher, Harry, too, begins to stand up for their rights and promote their welfare (Mattson 332-333).

The cause of house-elves has been so close to her heart that she is beyond herself in excitement when Ron expresses his serious concern for their welfare and is able to win her heart, whom she eventually marries.

'No,' said Ron seriously, 'I mean we should tell them to get out. We don't want any more Dobbies, do we? We can't order them to die for us -'

There was a clatter as the Basilisk fangs cascaded out of Hermione's arms. Running at Ron, she flung them around his neck and kissed him full on the mouth. Ron threw away the fangs and broomstick he was holding and responded with such enthusiasm that he lifted Hermione off her feet (HPDH 502-503).

She enjoys a multi-faceted personality; instead of being a seeker of adventures in her own right, she is for the most part a facilitator of Harry's and Ron's adventures with her learning as well as risk taking capacity. She is the one who handles the creation of "Dumbledore's Army" (HSOP 363), though awfully enough its credit goes to Harry. She becomes involved in the Triwizard Tournament and the Quidditch match, involving both physical and mental alertness, wherein the students, no matter whether they are female or male, take part with each other and in opposition to one another revealing equality among male and female in this world of fantasy. Dumbledore, along with other professors, recognises her as the most accountable of the golden trio:

"I am afraid I counted on Miss Granger to slow you up, Harry. I was afraid that your hot head might dominate your good heart"(HPDH 589).

An important critic, Elizabeth E. Heilman, has pinpointed the so called 'sexual prejudices' in the *Harry Potter* series with such claims as "Males are represented more often, but they are also depicted as wiser, bravery, more powerful, and more fun than females. It is not simply who is present, but, also, how characters are portrayed and what they do that matters. Most of the girls are depicted as anti-intellectual and most keenly interested in the low-status magic of the Divination class" (Heilman 146). But the point to be noted is that though there is under-representation of women characters in this series, the fact remains that some of the most powerful warriors in its world like Bellatrix and McGonagall are females. In fact, the realistic portrayal of contemporary gender equations goes beyond the assertive feminist approach. These powerful female characters are more inspiring for children to aspire for a world free from imposed gender role stereotypes.

Quite apparently, witches possess a more desirable place in the magical world of Harry Potter as compared to the muggle females. Mr Weasley and Mr Dursley, the two men exist as jobholders or providers of the family, wedded to homemakers. Just as Eccleshare points: "...Hogwarts allows for [gender] equality and Rowling gives every impression that that is her intention" (Eccleshare 84). Though being a lady of the house and very fond of knitting, Mrs Molly Weasley, the mother of Ron, is less than no one in the series; she is a witch having extraordinary power. In fact, her caring nature and love towards her family makes her the most frightening opponent anyone might at any time confront.

Heilman counts that there are twenty-nine girls and thirty-five boys amid the total number of students named in the first four books at Hogwarts (Heilman 141). Male heroes and villains, to a vast extent surpass in number, their female counterparts. Thus, numerically Rowling has undoubtedly created more male individuals compared to females, but no bias is betrayed while assigning them qualities. There is no doubt that beginning with the title of the books, making "HARRY POTTER: THE CHOSEN ONE" (HPHBP 32), the actual hero, males are clearly given the task to lead, with females merely as their followers. Not just the hero is a male but the counterpart of Harry or his nemesis- Tom Marvolo Riddle (later known as Lord Voldemort) the main antagonist, too is a male; even when the female villains like Bellatrix Lestrange and Madam Undersecretary Professor Dolores Jane Umbridge are extra menacing. These two female evil characters are brought in the fifth book of the series and as a result, their participation is limited to only the last three books of the series. Bellatrix Lestrange and Dolores Umbridge are presented without having any common womanly features. Nevertheless, we see Voldemort taking pride in being the son of his mother, Merope Gaunt, who is a successor of Salazar Slytherin:

'...You think I was going to use my filthy Muggle father's name for ever? I, in whose veins runs the blood of Salazar Slytherin himself, through my mother's side? I, keep the name of a foul, common Muggle, who abandoned me even before I was born, just because he found out his wife was a witch? No, Harry. I fashioned myself a new name, a name I knew wizards everywhere would one day fear to speak, when I had become the greatest sorcerer in the world!' (HPCS 331)

Voldemort is one of the most notorious and evil bloodthirsty wizards ever known but Bellatrix Lestrange (born Bellatrix Black, an English pure-blood Dark witch), played by Helena Bonham in the films- is also one of the most feared and injurious Death Eaters. She is introduced for the first time in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* as an expert of black magic. Apart from being a complex character with cruel laughing manner, she has been notoriously successful with the Avada Kedavra and Cruciatius Curses. Though married to a pure-blood wizard, she still appears to be romantically obsessed with Lord Voldemort and bears with his ugly taunts while remaining genuinely loyal. She is the most dangerous Death Eater, just like her Lord, and has no complaints in being a mere follower of Voldemort:

'Potter, you cannot win against me!' she cried.

...'I was and am the Dark Lord's most loyal servant. I learned the Dark Arts from him, and I know spells of such power that you, pathetic little boy, can never hope to compete' (HPOP 746).

But the plot never hints that this subordination is because of her being a female and thus stereotypically mild or less capable. She is a strong personality who has completely accepted Voldemort's system of ideas, and would perform all possible tricks to make sure that his dream is fulfilled. She is so brutal that she kills her own cousin, Sirius Black, who dies with a smile resting on his face. Earlier she had refused to accept the disappearance of Lord Voldemort and in the process of searching him out, tortures Neville's parents Frank and Alice Longbottom to insanity. A thoroughly negative character, she does finally collapse in the Battle of Hogwarts.

Another profoundly immoral and wicked villain can be found in Professor Dolores Jane Umbridge, played by Imelda Staunton in the movies. She is Orford Umbridge's oldest child and the only daughter. Harry's negative feelings about Dolores Umbridge has been described as:

When they entered the Defence Against the Dark Arts classroom, they found Professor Umbridge already seated at the teacher's desk, wearing the fluffy pink cardigan of the night before and the black velvet bow

on top of her head. Harry was again reminded forcibly of a large fly perched unwisely on top of an even larger toad (HPOP 221).

She apparently brings infinite number of difficulties for the students studying at Hogwarts. "Dolores Umbridge is one of the most hated characters in the Harry Potter series" (Griffeth 1). She performs duties as the Senior Undersecretary to the leader, Cornelius Fudge, of the Ministry of Magic. She has been assigned the sensitive task of surveillance of Hogwarts. Her negativity is further highlighted when, as a teacher of defensive spells, Fudge does not bother to teach her subject in class room and curiously enough never allows students to practice any defence magic. She is insulting to several members of the faculty and eventually she gets the position of Dumbledore, the Headmaster. She is capable of inflicting cruelty on the target at the slightest pretext. Harry Potter is forced to pierce the phrase "I must not tell lies" (HPOP 247) on to his hand:

'You haven't given me any ink,' he said.

'Oh, you won't need ink,' said Professor Umbridge, with the merest suggestion of a laugh in her voice.

Harry placed the point of the quill on the paper and wrote:

I must not tell lies.

He let out a gasp of pain. The words had appeared on the parchment in what appeared to be shining red ink. At the same time, the words had appeared on the back of Harry's right hand, cut into his skin as though traced there by a scalpel - yet even as he stared at the shining cut, the skin healed over again, leaving the place where it had been slightly redder than before but quite smooth.

Harry looked around at Umbridge. She was watching him, her wide, toad like mouth stretched in a smile.

'Yes?'

'Nothing,' said Harry quietly (HPOP 247).

There is no trace of any so-called 'womanly' attributes in these female witches. The Death Eaters, the enthusiastic supporters of Voldemort, exist as a constant threat to wizards and witches, even when he himself was lacking the power to perform. In the words of Professor Dumbledore:

This group had a kind of dark glamour within the castle. They were a motley collection; a mixture of the weak seeking protection, the ambitious seeking some shared glory, and the thuggish gravitating toward a leader who could show them more refined forms of cruelty (HPHBP 301).

It is true that in comparison to important male Death Eaters like Snape, Lucius Malfoy, Pettigrew and many others, just two female Death Eaters, Bellatrix Lestrange and Alecto Carrow have been given importance.

The set of Faculty at Hogwarts too gives an impression of being somewhat discriminatory when it comes to male and female number of professors. Compared to the number of male professors like Albus Dumbledore (Headmaster), Remus Lupin, Alastor "Mad-Eye" (HPGF 135) Moody, Filius Flitwick, Horace Slughorn, Rubeus Hagrid, Severus Snape, Firenze, Cuthbert Binns, Quirinus Quirrell, Gilderoy Lockhart, there are very few female professors in Hogwarts, like- Minerva McGonagall, Pomona Sprout, Dolores Umbridge and Sybill Trelawney. But the fact remains that these female professors are presented as very powerful personalities, whether positive or negative. If Albus Dumbledore is an exceptional wizard in the world, Professor McGonagall is also comparable in every way. Dumbledore is in charge of the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry and before being the Headmaster of Hogwarts, Albus Dumbledore is a professor and is believed to be excellent at Transfiguration. He takes all important decisions with respect to the safety and protection of Hogwarts. His being partial towards Harry Potter and providing him with special treatment appears to be objectionable; but this is not the case with Professor McGonagall Minerva. A student of Hogwarts herself, she is the Deputy Headmistress of Hogwarts. She is a Scottish half-blood witch, capable of transforming herself into a cat. She was not just fierce but very reliable, and also the most excellent professor; having no individual life (unlike other witches who have small concern towards life at home as well). Throughout the entire series, she acts as the head of Gryffindor house; having a sharp tongue. One tends to agree with the words of Einar Christopher Wong about Professor McGonagall being:

"... older, much more strict, and an expert in her field of knowledge" (Wong 18). Having great power at Hogwarts, following Dumbledore's death, she walked up to qualify as the new Head of Hogwarts. In *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, she can also be seen summoning the suits of armour before the Battle of Hogwarts:

'Hogwarts is threatened!' shouted Professor McGonagall. ' Man the boundaries, protect us, do your duty to our school!' (HPDH 491)

Another, not so important but a jolly character is a British witch Pomona Sprout; who is the Herbology female professor, while Dolores Umbridge happens to be extra menacing and quite comparable with Voldemort. Sybill (or Sibyll) Patricia Trelawney was among the quirkiest female witch Professor of the Divination, best known for her famous prophecy which she makes in fifth book of the series:

'The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches...born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies...and the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not...and either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives...the one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the seventh month dies...' (HPOP 774).

In *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* her strictness and trust in her area, that is, transfiguration is visible in her first and foremost lecture to the first year itself; when she provides basic explanation of her field:

'Transfiguration is some of the most complex and dangerous magic you will learn at Hogwarts,' she said. 'Anyone messing around in my class will leave and not come back. You have been warned' (HPPS 143).

To conclude, it may be objected, from the feminist perspective, that Hermione has been shown to have far greater intelligence than that of the Hero, Harry Potter, yet she never gets the titular status. But it is the artistic compulsion of the writer to follow certain design, especially when it is a fantasy literature with lots of supernatural incidents involved. The credit goes to Rowling that she has created such a powerful personality as Hermione without whose active support and courage of conviction Harry Potter would have never achieved the status he enjoys throughout the series. Very Significantly, at the end of the series, we see Hermione as the wife of Ron Weasley, who has never been presented as superior to Hermione in the series. Rowling simply does not subscribe to the stereotypical patriarchal expectation of an ideal couple. Traditional gender roles prescribed by society is simply irrelevant; in Rowling's world the readers are not expected to consider any person as a male or a female, the question of superior or inferior status defined by biological sex does not exist. All individuals are unique and have certain biological differences along with other personality traits. The traditional function of being a homemaker has been associated with neither helplessness, physical or intellectual, nor having a lower status. The mothers of Harry Potter and Ron or Hermione herself are obvious examples. Social roles are supposed to be matter of individual choice and not something to be imposed upon or fought for in this fantastic world.

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