

ABSTRACT

Harry Potter and the Search for a Church: Spiritual Community and Sacrificial Love in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* Series

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Examining the *Harry Potter* series through the lens of late Baptist theologian Stanley Grenz and his theories on community as it reflects the triune God, the themes of love and sacrifice in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series are seen in new light. By placing Harry not as a member of an independently-acting community, but as one connected to a much higher calling—love, even over and above magic—I find that the author's emphasis on community and family are crucial for understanding fully the sacrifice that Harry makes, and the redemption extended to Lord Voldemort. Understanding Hogwarts and the wizarding world as a church body reflecting a higher power of love, the ostracizing of Voldemort and Harry's experience of sacrifice and protective love take on new meaning. The definition of community as found in the works of Stanley Grenz, Jürgen Moltmann and Stanley Hauerwas will be the theological lens.

Harry Potter and the Search for a Church: Spiritual Community and Sacrificial Love in
J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* Series

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

For ease of citation, each book in the series, and each primary theological text will be cited as follows. Full citations may be found in the bibliography. Note: All Bible verses at New International Version [NIV] unless otherwise noted.

Harry Potter Books

<i>Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone</i>	I
<i>Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets</i>	II
<i>Harry Potter and the Prison of Azkaban</i>	III
<i>Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire</i>	IV
<i>Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix</i>	V
<i>Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince</i>	VI
<i>Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows</i>	VII

Texts from Stanley Grenz

<i>Theology for the Community of God</i>	TC
<i>The Social God and the Relational Self</i>	SGRS

PREFACE

Very few literary series in recent years have galvanized and divided readers so much as J.K. Rowling's first, *Harry Potter*. When the series first hit the United States in 1999 and started gaining in popularity, numerous parents of the Evangelical Christian persuasion reacted with fear and loathing because of the mention of the idea of magic. The book burnings, vehement reactions and numerous blogs about how Harry Potter is "evil" and "corrupting our children" now seem almost silly. This overall shift in attitude from many families worrying whether their children should be reading about the boy wizard and his adventuring friends to supporting them as they attend midnight release parties for the books and movies is not the result of any one change. It would be poor sport to suggest that this shift is the result of any singular change over the 10 years of *Harry Potter's* publication, but this shift may be attributed to the prevalence of themes of Christian community that arise in the last three books of the series. Looking at the books through a lens of Christian spiritual community gives more clarity to the ideas that Rowling is developing throughout the series. With her literary vision completely realized in the finale of book seven, the fullness of her Christian themes also comes to fruition.

In this thesis, I will examine Rowling's vision of community through the lens of theologians such as Stanley Grenz and Jürgen Moltmann. Voldemort's fear of death and Snape's odd dual character are seen in the context of their interaction with community, and Rowling's ability to hold two opposing ideas in tension to result in some truth come to light through this view of true and false community that we find throughout the series.

“Community,” then, is defined for the purposes of this thesis as a group of people coming together under the banner of a special cause—at the largest as the wizarding community as a whole, and at the smallest as the community that forms between two people in a friendship or romantic relationship. In the Harry Potter world, the first guess for what the higher power binding community together is magic, but, as I show in this work, that is not necessarily the case. Over and above the power of magic, which is merely a conduit to give the wizards some similarity to each other—as in a race or geographical location—there is instead the mysterious power of love, which explains the use of Stanley Grenz, Jürgen Moltmann and Stanley Hauerwas as a theological lens. Love, that ill-defined force, that which even Albus Dumbledore (austere and revered Headmaster of Hogwarts) doesn’t understand fully, becomes the driving force behind all the themes and theories that Rowling presents. Whether or not one is able to experience love in community changes everything about him or her, a universal theme closely connected to Christian tradition.

While family and community in Harry Potter have been examined previously to some small extent, none follow the proposal that the family-like atmosphere in Hogwarts and the wizarding world is, in fact, a form of spiritual community—a church. John Kornfield and Laurie Protho identify the connections that Harry makes as a new recreation of family—it is a family connected to history, and imbued with “trust, loyalty and attachment ... [evolving] from this shared perspective” (193). Protho and Kornfield, however, maintain a sociological perspective of family, and neglect to acknowledge the idea of a higher power in the form of love that turns out to be the shaping force of the series. Other studies, such as Elizabeth Heilman and Anne Gregory’s work on insiders

and outsiders, fail to grasp the extent to which community, and in particular, spiritual community, is an ever-constant theme throughout the series. In her emphasis on community, in highlighting the role of love as a higher power, and in having her main character extend love and redemption to a sworn enemy, Rowling develops a fresh position in children's literature, humanizing the Gospel message in a secular setting. The nearly universal popularity of her novels, then, puts her works at an interesting position straddling both the Christian and secular worlds, something C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien before her developed. Lewis' emphasis on community is explored throughout his *Narnia* series, especially in the Pevensie children who are always working together, as a team; Tolkien, likewise, emphasizes spiritual community, especially in the relationship between Samwise Gamgee, and the hero of *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo, with neither being able to function without the other. While both works received great praise, and soon much popularity, Rowling's work outshines them both, being outstanding not only in children's literature, but in the arena of popular literature in general, succeeding in maintaining a popular audience while also reinforcing heavily Christianized or spiritual themes. In this thesis, I hope to prove that Rowling's playing with the tensions facing community, her eventual themes of redemption, forgiveness, and love, and her artful raising of questions about the quality of her complex and multi-faceted characters (such as Snape and Voldemort), lend her a place alongside Lewis and Tolkien in great fantasy literature, and indeed, in literature overall.

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To my parents,
whose unwavering support of my ridiculous obsession
with fantasy and encouragement of my studies made this possible

CHAPTER ONE

Theological and Critical Framework: Why Stanley Grenz is Important

In Baptist circles, one theologian is remarkably good at defining what certain doctrines and concepts mean for systematic theology, and at having a holistic concept that overrides and draws all the varying ideas in Baptist theology together. Stanley Grenz, author of several books, including *Created For Community*, and *Theology for the Community of God*, gives Christians a framework for examining the theology relevant to the Harry Potter series. Grenz's emphasis on community appears to be reflected in the world of Harry Potter, and, while I can prove no direct influence between the two, J.K. Rowling's commitment to the idea of community certainly lends itself to a Christian, and possibly "Grenzian" interpretation as such. Grenz's views of community are a useful lens through which to see Harry Potter's transition into the wizarding world, to interpret Voldemort's subsequent attempted destruction of that world, and, most importantly, to examine Harry's death, resurrection and extension of redemption to Voldemort at the end of book seven.

First, there is the question of why Grenz? The answer comes in three parts. First of all, Grenz is accessible. His book, *Theology for the Community of God*, is well researched, but understandable by even the laity of the church—which is his main audience. His philosophy of the Trinity and his subsequent philosophy of community (my main lens for this thesis) are some of the more well articulated theological views of the last few decades. In articulating such a view on community, Grenz is clarifying and

summarizing years of discussion about the nature of the Trinity, and taking it a step further in applying it in a significant manner to the Christian life. In this way, Grenz is an important theologian precisely because he doesn't spend his time writing over the heads of the laity, but instead is a theologian among them, as a member of their ranks, despite also being ordained.

Secondly, Grenz is recent. The development of his theological discussion is concurrent with the publishing of Harry Potter, and reflects trends in current theology that we see in the wizarding world. This emergent focus on community—evident in the voices of the emergent church surfacing even now (contemporary popular Christian writers like Francis Chan, Shane Claiborne, Donald Miller and Rob Bell all emphasize the community of God)—shows that Grenz's view is concomitant with the concerns of contemporary theology. However, his own research and discussions show that his theology is well-rooted in both Scripture and theologians of the past—he takes into account theologians as far back as Athanasius, and as recent as Karl Barth and Roger Olson.

Thirdly, Grenz is orthodox and mainstream. He's not alone in his work, as he explains in his introduction to *The Social God and the Relational Self*:

The stampede to the relationality inherent in the social model of the Trinity has crossed traditional confessional divides. But the commitment to a theologically oriented social personalism has also brought together proponents of otherwise quite diverse, even disparate, theological projects. Hence, feminist and liberation theologians close ranks with each other and with evangelical, philosophical, and process colleagues in suggesting that God is best viewed as the social Trinity. (SGRS 5)

Hence, Grenz places his own work within an emerging 20th century trend in theology, one that is rethinking the Cartesian individual self in terms of the wider church

community, and a trend that has been part of the post-modern project since the categories of modern and post-modern first developed. Grenz's recent developments place him firmly in the 20th and early 21st century traditions of theologians, making his lens an important one for examining the spiritual world of Harry Potter.

Now that I've established why Grenz is a suitable lens, we may now examine what he has to contribute. Grenz writes that the "Christian conception of God is vital and central to [their] faith" (TC 65). Indeed, it is out of the understanding of God as both one and three that the Christian concept of God as a primarily social being extends. The concept of God as both one and three, however, is hard to grasp fully. It means that God exists both as a unity and a diversity, which is then reflected in his people. Christians fundamentally believe that God is a oneness—they are not polytheists, as Grenz writes, but staunch monotheists (TC 66)—and believe quite firmly that the God of their faith is singular, but existing in three *integrated* parts. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are those parts that comprise the oneness of God, and this is the essence of the Trinitarian doctrine as set down in the Nicene Creed (TC 264). Grenz writes that understanding this threeness and oneness at the same time are important for understanding the community of God: "The divine threeness is not merely a matter of our perception of God. Nor are we merely speaking of God as he chooses to appear to us. Rather, the three of the one God is eternal; threeness is the way God actually is in his essential being" (TC 66). This three-in-one property, then, is a fundamental part of the divine reality. The three parts of the Trinity, in recent times (coming to prominence with Barth (SCRS 4)), have been referred to less as parts and more as persons. "Parts" runs the risk of branching off into the modalist heresy, which proposes that the three persons of the Trinity are merely three

different portions of the same God, meaning that he changes depending on what form is important, which, in turn, would mean that God changes when classical Christian tradition would say that God remains fundamentally the same. “Persons,” while running the risk of being misinterpreted into tritheism, preserves the uniqueness of each character of the Trinity and gives them a separate selfhood that still manages to connect them back to each other. The fundamental understanding of the Trinity members as “persons” places them consistently within a community that always returns to itself.

How each of these three persons relates to each other is a question long grappled with by theologians, but Grenz attempts to provide an answer by placing this relationship in the context of a divinely loving community. Each member of the Trinity functions in a different yet unified role, which is implementing love in creation. The way that each of the roles is differentiated is through generation and procession: the Son (Jesus) is referred to as *generated* by the Father, not in any sense that he is any sort of lower being, but rather that the Son is the extension of the Father into the human world. When Christians speak of God coming to Earth, they are talking of Jesus’ Incarnation as the Son of God—God did not create Jesus, but Jesus is simply an extension of the Heavenly Father. They are one and the same, but play distinct roles. Jesus’ role is to act as the Incarnation of God for humans to view. The Holy Spirit, likewise, is not created by either the Father or the Son, but proceeds from the love that exists between Father and Son—the Holy Spirit is the manifestation of that love. Grenz writes that the fundamental basis for God and the Trinity is love (TC 72) and therefore the Spirit is the procession or product of that love. Through the love of the Holy Spirit, Christians find God still present in the world, as Christ’s advocate for the Christian.

This idea that God is one but three means that God, for Christians, is fundamentally composed in community. Grenz uses Hegel's concept of personhood as helpful in understanding the relation of each part of the Trinity to the other:

To be person, [Hegel] asserted, means to be in self-dedication to another. The application to the triune God follows, one which in embryonic form may actually be traced back to Athanasius. The divine unity is comprised by the reciprocal self-dedication among the trinitarian members. This corresponds to the New Testament concept of *agape*, which may be defined as the giving of oneself for the other. Consequently, the assertion that love forms the foundation of the unity in the one God opens a window on the divine reality. *The unity of God is nothing less than the self-dedication of the trinitarian persons to each other. Indeed God is love—the divine essence is the love that binds together the Trinity.* (TC 68-69, emphasis mine)

The Hegelian concept of self-dedication, or a person as defined by his or her relationship to another, then, is the beginning of the community and image of God that we find reflected throughout Christian theology. Love (in the Greek, *agape*), here defined as the giving of oneself to another, forms the foundation not only for the Christian concept for God. Precisely because the understanding of God is so central to Christian theology, love is the basis for all of Christian theology. Because God is love, all Christian community and theology is centered on love.

Grenz expands more on our understanding of what love is in relation to the Trinity of God: "Love is a relational term, requiring both subject and object (someone loves someone else). Were God a solitary acting subject, a person apart from Father, Son and Spirit, God would require the world as the object of his love in order to be who he is, namely, the Loving One" (TC 72). God, then, as a triune being is completely encapsulated within himself as far as the act of loving is concerned—the Father, Son and Spirit are all forming an intricate dance of love being exchanged from one to the other,

and therefore it makes sense to say that God is Love because that is the nature of the relationship between the three parts of the Trinity. God's love is existent and dependent only upon itself.

At its foundation, then, the Trinity and therefore all Christian theology, is based on love exchanged in relationship with others. This social understanding of both the personhood of the Trinity and their relationship to each other places the individual in a role secondary to the community. Everything develops out of social relationship because as Jürgen Moltmann states: "The 'I' can only be understood in the light of the 'Thou'—that is to say, it is a concept of relation. Without the social relation there can be no personality" (*Trinity and the Kingdom of God* 145). In other words, without some sort of social relationship, particularly in relationship to a Trinitarian God, for the Christian, there is no "I." In returning to the ideas of personhood, and thus to the communal and social Trinity, theologians find new understanding of not only God himself, but—as Barth found when he began his *Church Dogmatics* by examining the social, personal Trinity as God self-revealed in the Scriptures—also a new understanding of what it means to be created in the image of God—the *imago dei*.

Before we get to what it means to be created in the image of God, however, we must be clear that talking of three persons is not, as near as it may seem, tritheism. This is, of course, the problem facing the use of univocal human terms to describe a God who, by what we know, is still profoundly a mystery. In applying the human categories of persons/personhood and social relationship to the Trinity of God, descriptions fall profoundly short. As Grenz writes, we must be clear not to interpret person, in the case of the Trinity, to mean a being extant within itself, but rather, we must see the Trinity as

“three subsistent relations that are in fact persons. In contrasting the human experience of being a person with the divine life, Nicholas Lash states the point succinctly: ‘We *have* relationships; God *is* the relationship that he has...God, we might say, is relationship without remainder, which we, most certainly, are not’ (qtd. in Grenz, SCRS 51, emphasis original). Therefore, when we talk of God being love, we mean that God, rather than producing love out of relationship between three separate persons, is instead primarily and precisely that relationship from which the three persons proceed. His three-in-one-ness only works because he is primarily relational and a personhood second.

God, then, as Christians believe, created the world out of the love that extends out of the relationship among the three members of the Trinity. As a result, Christians believe that creation and they themselves are “made in the image of God,” meaning, in Grenz’s interpretation, that humanity reflects God in the way that people relate to each other, in the ways that community is built. This image isn’t ready-made, though built into human nature. It is a dynamic process—community doesn’t grow overnight, but is “a process which we experience beginning with conversion and lasting until the great eschatological renewal which will bring us into full conformity with the image of God” (TC 178). Community, then, in reflecting the image of God, takes work and effort as his people come to resemble his communal nature. This is what “dynamic community” in later chapters of this thesis will refer to: a community that is working and transforming for a specific goal. In the Christian sense, community is salvific and loving: “each person can only be related to the image of God only within the context of life in community with others. Only in fellowship with others can we show forth what God is like, for God is the community of love” (TC 179). Life within community, then, is not

only important because it is the resemblance for the Christian to the image of God, but it is, in itself, a saving act. People are functioning in community to be transformed into God's likeness, and they can only do so within a community that reflects the love of the Trinity, a central theme of the Scriptures.

The reason, however, that sanctification and salvation are needed in the first place is because the human is a broken creature. The Christian concept of "sin" is that which breaks apart the relationship with God. Sin means that there is some central aspect of the human's life that fails to live up to the image in which God created it—the human fails to live in community. Alienation from others is evidence that humans have fallen short of God's design (TC 207). Broken human relationships, and a broken relationship with animals and God's creation is all evidence, in Grenz's eyes, of the human's brokenness and need for God. Rowling's awareness of how sin breaks apart community can be found in the presence and character of Lord Voldemort as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. Suffice it to say for now that the brokenness of relationships between fellows of community and the lack of ability to come together is evidence of a broken vertical relationship (between human and God), manifested in broken horizontal relationships (between human and human).

The realization that God is a social Trinity composed of three persons fundamentally changes the Christian's understanding of his or her own personhood in relation to others and in relation to himself. Grenz is fond of speaking of the "salvation community," or the recognition that Christians are called to live both in community to reflect the life of the triune God and to be saved within that community. In examining Catherine Mowry LaCugna's work on communion (found in *God for Us* (1992)), Grenz

explains that communion (read: community) found in the Trinitarian personhood of God is closely connected with the soteriology of Christ, mainly in that Christians are saved “by God through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit” (LaCugna, as qtd. in Grenz SCRS 54). Being saved in the community of the Trinity also translates to being saved in human community: in turning relationships to their correct orientation, Christians find themselves pushed, challenged and encouraged by others in their community, and, ultimately, saved within that community. Grenz writes that once a believer is converted, he or she is admitted into a new community, which consists of the universal church; “the one cosmic fellowship that transcends time. The ‘universal church’ is composed of all believers on earth at any given time, the one worldwide fellowship that transcends spatial boundaries” (TC 467). Therefore, this Church extends beyond the boundaries of nationality, ethnicity, gender and socioeconomic status and brings Christians into communion with one another, bound together by some higher purpose, to be called to salvation and sanctification as they encourage and edify each other.

This concept of community may also change how a person approaches death, as the German theologian Jürgen Moltmann points out: “The thought of death and a life after death can lead to fatalism and apathy, so that we only live life here half-heartedly, or just endure it and ‘get through’” (50). While Grenz couches everything within the eschatology of an eventual kingdom on earth as well as heaven, Moltmann takes a serious look at how the way we approach death changes how we work in this life. Grenz and Moltmann connect in Moltmann’s ideas that, in an individualized world, separate from community, the death of the individual becomes a supreme evil: “If the narcissism of modern men and women relates everything to their own selves, then of course the end of

the individual self is ‘the finish’. Individualization dissolves the sustaining relationships, making each of us the artificer of his or her own life, and exposing us to the pressure of growing competition” (51). Grenz would likely agree with Moltmann’s assertion that the essentially modern problem of each individual fending for him or herself, separating from community and becoming, ultimately, self contained vessels, is at the heart of the problem of death. Because we have no ancestral or communal connections, Moltmann asserts, we have no true concept of the lineage of our family, of the way that our memory will be continued on post-death, and we therefore fear death as our greatest enemy. Living in community, then, destroys any fear of death because our memory will be carried on by our fellows in spiritual brotherhood. Moltmann quiets individualistic fear of death when he states: “people who accept their own death will also live with the remembrance of those who have died” (52). The community will carry on the memory of those who have died.

Moltmann, like Grenz, connects all human “livingness” (as he calls it) to the idea of love: “True human life comes from love, is alive in love, and through loving makes something living of other life too” (53). It is within love and under the banner of love for others that our soul and spirit develop into reality—the question is not whether I, as a soul, will move on and survive, but whether my love will (Moltmann 53). How each individual approaches death becomes a shaping form for his or her life, but because we have no ability to live in a world that is exclusively individual, how the community around us sees death is also a shaping force. Ultimately, it is this love for those around us that makes death such an event in our lives: “In love we surrender ourselves to life, and in surrendering ourselves to life we surrender ourselves to death” (Moltmann 55). By

living and loving in community, death becomes, as Dumbledore puts it, “the next great adventure” (I 297). Ultimately, “the person who retains a knowledge of death also cherishes the love for—for every life, for the life of us all, for the whole of life” (Moltmann 57). You may be already seeing hints of Dumbledore’s philosophy in what Moltmann has to say here, and I assure you that is not in error. What is stated here in Moltmann is surely reflected in the philosophies of the communities in Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series, an examination that will be made in much further detail in later chapters.

What Moltmann’s theory means, however, when combined with Grenz’s ideas of spiritual community, is that not only does spiritual community create an edifying source of love and family and reflect the Trinitarian God, but it also functions to reorient the person as a whole to the ideas of life and death and life after death. Even divorced from any sort of discussion of the Trinity in the in-depth sense that Grenz gives us, Moltmann’s theories of community are still deeply rooted in the community of people, and the sense of family one finds as one learns to love. Learning to love others changes one’s perception of death in that death, while still grievous, is not necessarily an event to be feared and avoided at all costs. Rather, it is another tool that allows the individual to experience life “to the fullest” merely because it is the recognition of one’s own mortality. Because death is “but the next great adventure,” and living in community helps the individual to understand such a thing, it is only in such dynamic community with others that one can approach death with calmness, rather than with great fear and trepidation. Living in love and community reorients not only one’s life in relation to whatever higher power exists—in the Christian faith, that is the triune God; in *Harry*

Potter, that is the power of love, over and above magic—but love and community reorient the individual’s life as it approaches death.

Theologian and writer Stanley Hauerwas takes what Grenz and Moltmann have theorized and connects it to a social ethic in his book *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic*. Hauerwas’ claim is that the narrative found in Christian tradition (and thus in Christian ethics) results in a need “to help Christian people form their community consistent with their conviction that the story of Christ is a truthful account of our existence” (10). Knowing what Christian community means and what sort of narrative that gives the Christian faith should, therefore, result in a faith that becomes works. Hauerwas goes on to write, “the primary social task of the church is to be itself—that is, a people who have been formed by a story that provides them with the skills for negotiating the danger of this existence” (10). In this sense, Hauerwas sees the role of the Christian community as one that is somewhat protected, but not to the point of sheltering itself from the world surrounding it. Indeed, understanding fully the role that the story of God plays in the narrative of the church body results in an active, dynamic community that is skilled in living within a world at disagreement with its mission—not unlike a wizarding community with its own separate narrative, skilled at living in a world of Muggles. The ethic that develops from the connection to community thus guides the members of the community toward living their lives differently, toward being different than they were before. While Grenz and Moltmann give us views on how community develops, and how it affects views on death, Hauerwas gives us a way in which the Christian community changes the way a member of it interacts with the world at large—he gives Christians a way to live. This way of living in community extends

both from the diversity of people brought into the community, and the truthful narrative of the community itself. Both of these factors manifest themselves in the ethical and moral behavior of the community as it interacts with the world at large, something we see worked out time and again in the wizarding world as their identity as wizards, the higher narrative of love, and their diversity in skills (think of the qualities of the houses in Hogwarts) affect how they interact with each other and with the outside Muggle world.¹

In discussing the lens that Grenz, Moltmann and Hauerwas have provided for their readers at length, it may be hard to see the connection to the wizarding world at large. As stated earlier, Grenz's vision of Christian community culminates in a theory of how persons relate to each other and to the higher power that exists in the universe. While Grenz's vision is very much tied to the vision of the Trinitarian Christian God, and therefore is not completely applicable to Harry Potter's wizarding world, (which, admittedly, does not seem to have an easily identifiable higher power, and certainly not one as well formed as the mysterious triune God), we still find reflections and threads of this theory of community and personhood in Rowling's work. As we develop structures for examining the world in which Harry is operating, we find that the idea of a spiritual community is lent some credence by the emphasis on the mystical concept of love, and the emphasis on how working together offers itself to success in both learning how to be a wizard and defeating Voldemort. Indeed, the choices that Harry makes to function within community and to protect his community are all based in that sacrificial love which he first experienced in the death of his parents, and which flows in his veins as a

¹ For the qualities of each house in detail, see the Sorting Hat's song found on pages 117-118 of *The Sorcerer's Stone*. Therein, the qualities of the Houses are as follows: Gryffindors have "daring, nerve and chivalry," Hufflepuffs are "just and loyal," Ravenclaws are "of wit and learning," and Slytherins are "cunning folk."

protection. The love in the *Harry Potter* series is an undefined, powerful force, garnering its own room in the Department of Mysteries, and frequently described as the most powerful and mysterious force in the universe. This love, while not defined as a Trinitarian Christian God, is the closest thing Harry Potter has to a higher power, and therefore how he interacts in the community and how he learns to love are closely analogous to a new Christian learning the language of salvation and love in community. While not a church in the necessarily Christian sense, Harry Potter's group of wizards functions in the way an ideal Christian church would—the spiritual community functions as a living, breathing organism. Community, here narrowly defined, would mean a spiritually united church group, and in the broad sense, a larger group of people working for a similar cause, both of which are found in the *Harry Potter* universe.

Because the communities in Harry Potter are indeed analogous to the salvation community Grenz speaks of (starting with the Trinity and moving into the *imago dei*), we can safely draw some parallels between the Christian community that Grenz outlines and the community that we see developing throughout the novels. In the next two chapters, I will break down what this parallel to Christian community means for Rowling's overall vision as she holds the brokenness and unity of communities in tension and develops several different spiritual communities throughout the novel.

CHAPTER TWO

The Tensions Between Communities: Books 1-4

Introduction

J.K. Rowling has a tendency to hold two different concepts in opposition, in narrative tension, not bringing any of them together until the final novel; therefore I have divided this chapter into sections to discuss the different tensions that she holds in each book, specifically as they relate to the different communities Harry is experiencing in his training as a wizard. Each book highlights a different spot of dichotomous tension—Muggles vs. Wizards, Slytherins vs. Gryffindors, for example—and Rowling uses these tensions to highlight a singular truth or theme within the series as a whole, and in this examination, the role of community comes into play over and over in each book as we look at these tensions. Throughout the series, the reader can see the sense of community, as Stanley Grenz specifically envisions it, slowly coming to light, fighting over the brokenness, coming together against all opposition, under the banner of relational and spiritually bound love. These first four books set up the idea of the wizarding world as its own civilization, as its own kind of church, which is then brought into nearly full completion in the final three books, which will be examined in Chapter Three.¹

Book 1: The Boy Who Crossed Over

In this first of the series, the readers meet Harry Potter, a young boy living in a cupboard under the stairs at his aunt and uncle's house. Nearing the age of eleven, Harry

¹ Before each section, I have provided a brief summary of each novel to refresh the reader's memory.

has had a hard life, clearly the disliked stepchild, subservient to his cousin, Dudley. On his 11th birthday, however, he is informed that he is, in fact, a wizard, and will shortly be enrolled in Hogwarts School for Witchcraft and Wizardry. Harry is also informed that his parents did not die in a plane crash, but rather were killed by the most evil wizard of all—Lord Voldemort. Throughout his first school year, Harry learns of the Sorcerer's Stone, an alchemy tool that will create the Elixir of Life, a potion that will continue one's life indefinitely. He discovers that Voldemort, who had never really died, is actually possessing his Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher and is after the Stone, stored in a hidden passage of the school. Harry comes to the rescue of both the stone and the school, preventing Voldemort from returning to power in this first year.

Rowling implements her vision of spiritual community from the very beginning of the series. In book one, the reader finds Harry Potter to be the isolated but likeable protagonist. Always picked on at school, with no friends around, Harry finds himself estranged from the community of normal person from the beginning. There appear to be two types of community at work at this first sight of Harry Potter: the Muggle community he fails to fit into, and the wizarding community of which he, as yet, knows nothing. Rowling sets up a contrast immediately between Harry and the family with whom he lives —the Dursleys—in opening the book: “Mr. and Mrs. Dursley, of number four, Privet Drive, were proud to say they were perfectly normal, thank you very much” (I, 1). The “normal” community they attempt to fit into is that of the average British neighborhood: Vernon goes to work in the morning for a perfectly normal and perfectly boring drill company; Petunia spends all day not-so-secretly watching the neighbors, gossiping about them, taking care of her small child, and, overall, being the stereotypical

British housewife. From the start, by calling them “perfectly normal, thank you very much,” our narrator identifies—with tone and phrase—a specific community for the Dursleys to fit into. The readers, especially British ones, immediately categorize the family in one specific manner, only to have it up-ended by the revelation of a terrible secret: the presence of the Potters in the Dursleys’ history, their skeleton in the cupboard under the stairs. Harry, as a product of this separate community, then, functions as a contrast, a piece of the puzzle belonging to a different box, a man who, as the apostle Paul identifies in his letter to the Philippians (Phil. 3:20), is a citizen of a different country.

This contrast between worlds is immediate and apparent: Petunia’s sister and her husband (later identified as Lily and James Potter) are “as unDursleyish as it was possible to be” (I, 2). Rather than fitting into the normal British community, as the narrator cues the reader to think, the Potters are different, belonging to a different sect, reflecting a different mode of thinking. This different society is a source of shame among the “normal” Dursleys of the world. The wizarding community—frequently referred to as such throughout the series—sets itself apart from the Muggle world immediately. There are two groups at work in the world of Harry Potter, one which Harry naturally—because of his birth and destiny—belongs to (wizards), and one which has been forced upon him by the circumstances surrounding his first year of life (Muggles), by the presence of He Who Must Not Be Named, the greatest source of dissonance in the novel.

In creating this dissonance between communities from the outset, Rowling highlights the odd and the supernatural, already giving her readers an idea of what to look for in the rest of the series. This being her first published work, it is vital that Rowling

establish her tropes and themes in the first of the series in order to develop them further on. Therefore, she must use these first few moments with her reader to introduce her themes. The line is drawn between the communities, and immediately broken by the presence of our protagonist, identifying him as not only different from the normal British community, but as a refugee from his own wizarding community—until he turned 11, Harry had no idea he was special in any sense. He wonders to himself: “A wizard? Him? How could he possibly be?” (I 57). He begins the tale as someone unique, and Rowling uses the emphasis on belonging to draw him on toward the community of the wizarding world. Harry’s relationship to the Muggle world is one that will become extremely important in later books as he forms an overlap between two often opposed communities. Though Harry is a pure blooded wizard, he has been raised as a Muggle, allowing him an extraordinary amount of empathy, that quality which Rowling clearly values, as she spends most of her 20 minute speech at the 2008 Harvard commencement discussing the development of empathetic imagination: “In its arguably most transformative and revelatory capacity, [imagination] is the power that enables us to empathize with humans whose experiences we have never shared” (Harvard). Her overall vision of bringing communities together is highlighted by Harry’s initial crossover between the two, which affords him an extraordinary amount of imaginative empathy.

The way Dumbledore (and by association, Hogwarts) begins to contact Harry also highlights the breakdown and overlap between communities that Harry represents. First it is by letter, which arrives with the average Muggle mail, a “perfectly normal” way to contact someone. Like much of the series, Rowling starts off with something perfectly

innocuous and seemingly normal, only to circumvent it and turn it around into a mark of the uncanny and unusual. The letter from Hogwarts is representative of such a turnaround: it looks like a normal letter on the surface, but what's inside is far from it—this is a sort of microcosm for wizards in general: human on the outside, but profoundly connected to the higher powers of magic and love. This letter—after creating panic and strife in the “perfectly normal” community of the Dursley household—is shortly followed by a peck of owls delivering the letters. Rowling ups the ante in small degrees, moving from the small, semi-normal contact all the way to a full-fledged, half-giant wizard named Hagrid knocking the door off its hinges. These communities, which Rowling establishes in the beginning of the series, will continue to collide and come together throughout the rest. What we see in these first few chapters is the beginning of a crossover between the Muggle world and the wizarding world, a line Harry straddles for most of the series, and eventually breaks apart entirely. The relationship between Muggles and wizards is strained at best as most pureblooded wizards view Muggles as some lower life form—Harry's position between these two worlds gives him the opportunity to function as an intermediary between the two, one with, as previously stated, a great amount of empathy for both sides. Harry can and does speak up for the rights of Muggles and Muggle borns, while also understanding what it is like to be a wizard. It puts him in a unique position between the two worlds.

When Harry finally arrives at Hogwarts, we see him make the awkward transition from thinking he was a Muggle to understanding the ways of the wizarding world. One of the first things Harry finds himself doing is making friends. Suddenly a hero in the wizarding community, Harry experiences being wanted, and living in a community that,

while it has its bad members and bad moments, functions like a family. Indeed, Transfiguration Professor McGonagall tells the students that the house they are in will function as their family while they are at Hogwarts (I 114). The school (and the wizarding community as a whole) is meant to function as a spiritual society, a type of church that builds up, encourages and edifies individual members as a means of connecting with the magic around them. It is in fighting in chorus with others that Harry, Ron and Hermione find their powers working together. For example, we see all their beginning wizard powers come together as they fight to defeat the mountain troll on Halloween. Harry and Ron had managed to insult Hermione earlier in the day for her brown nosing behavior in Charms class, and realize that she, sitting in the girls' bathroom crying all during dinner, wouldn't be aware of the danger of the mountain troll that is in the castle. Upon going to find her, they also find the troll, and all three work together to incapacitate the troll, using their newly learned skills as beginning wizards. The narrator comments afterward: "There are some things you can't share without ending up liking each other, and knocking out a twelve-foot mountain troll is one of them" (I 179). John Kornfield and Laurie Prothro write about this experience that: "What is perhaps more significant about the encounter is that each of the three friends, in turn, recognizes each other's needs and sublimates his or her own immediate interests and needs in order to help that person" (193). While Kornfield and Prothro stop just short of calling this *sacrificial* love, that, indeed, is precisely what begins to occur in this book, especially in this instance with the mountain troll, and will continue as a theme throughout the rest of the series.

One of the important influences on Harry's community development is the controversial Headmaster, Albus Dumbledore, who takes on a nearly father figure role to Harry, as well as that of a spiritual guide. In the chapter on the Mirror of Erised (a mirror that shows the viewer whatever his or her heart's deepest desires), it is Dumbledore who steps in and guides Harry to the correct way to deal with his deepest desires, setting himself up as an advice-giver and guide for the future. Dumbledore tells Harry about the mirror:

It shows us nothing more or less than the deepest and most desperate desire of our hearts. You, who have never known your family, see them standing around you. Ronald Weasley, who has always been overshadowed by his brothers, sees himself standing alone, the best of all of them. However, this mirror will give us neither knowledge or truth. Men have wasted away before it, entranced by what they have seen, or been driven mad, not knowing if what it shows is real or even possible. (213)

Harry, in understanding Dumbledore's wisdom, chooses to follow his advice. As the head of the school, Dumbledore is an immediately trustworthy authority; indeed, Dumbledore is the one who ushered Harry from his broken community of Muggles to his more true community as a wizard. Dumbledore, at this point, is taking on his role as spiritual guide, an almost guru-like persona. Though he is rarely physically present in this first book, his presence is felt everywhere. It is Dumbledore who first gives us the concept of love, particularly in this scene at Erised, explaining how one's desires and wishes can overtake one's life, and therefore must be in balance.

We see community, then, taking on new importance for Harry as he learns to function as a wizard, learns to work within the rules of the castle, and, indeed, outside them as well. Like any spiritual community, Hogwarts has rules and standards that function as guideposts for their members. As with the Christian community described by

Grenz, the community we find functions as a multi-faceted body. Harry is only able to get to the point of confronting Voldemort with the help of his friends. There are levels of puzzles that the wizards must solve—a giant game of real wizard chess through which Ron directs them, a series of potions with a riddle Hermione cleverly solves, and finally Harry's own wisdom and heart in finding the Sorcerer's Stone at the Mirror of Erised. Each member of the community performs his or her own special task. It is only through the functions of such spiritual community—Ron, Hermione, and Harry all working together—that Harry is able to defeat such evil.

Book 2: The Problem Child

In this second of the series, Harry encounters magic in his hometown of Little Whinging, in the form of a house elf named Dobby who informs him that Harry must not return to Hogwarts. In spite of the house elf's warnings, Harry returns to another year at the school, only to discover in the first few weeks rumors of a Chamber in the castle being re-opened by the heir of Salazar Slytherin, one of the founders of the school. The monster in the Chamber Petrifies students of the school, and each time it happens, Harry seems to be convincingly close, leading other students to think that Harry is the heir of Slytherin. In a twist toward the end, Harry and Ron discover the Chamber, and discover that Ginny Weasley, possessed by Voldemort through a magical diary, had been unleashing the monster on the student body. Harry kills this ghost of Voldemort by stabbing the diary with a poisoned fang from the monster and saves the school once again. As a nice touch to the end, Harry also frees Dobby the elf, in thanks for warning him of the danger, misguided though Dobby's attempt was.

It is in *Chamber of Secrets* that we see the breakdown of a community that had been set up previously. Book II of the series has long been the most problematic book of the bunch for both critics and fans of the novels, what with characters making decisions contrary to what we know of them—Hermione ripping a page out of a library book, for one.² Questions are introduced that aren't answered until book six, which is, admittedly, somewhat characteristic of the series, but this book raises the most questions of any of these first four.³ However, the author's overall concept of community remains intact as Rowling uses this novel to demonstrate how community functions under an outside threat—a hidden chamber in the castle has been re-opened, and unleashed a monster which kills Muggle-borns. Harry, once the center of a community, once The Boy Who Lived, becomes a source of controversy and the possible Heir of Salazar Slytherin.

Part of the problem of community in *Chamber of Secrets* extends from the tension between houses. We're told in book one that "there's not a single witch or wizard who went bad who wasn't in Slytherin" (I 80), predisposing us to dislike the Slytherin House from the moment we meet its first representative, a drawling Draco Malfoy in Madame Malkin's Robes for All Occasions. We follow in book two, then, as our and the characters' preconceptions about the houses are brought into focus with the fracturing of the community. Slytherin, Hufflepuff, Gryffindor and Ravenclaw are all fighting against each other. Lee Jordan, long time friend of the Weasley twins, comments on the House

² Hermione, a teacher's pet and one of the best students of the year, the student who has earned the reputation that makes Ron say, "When in doubt, go to the library," (II 255), rips a page from a library book, which Ron and Harry then find crumpled in her Petrified hand. It is, on the whole, a very odd character choice made to advance the rest of the plot for the book and possibly not the wisest of decisions.

³ Many of these questions include who Tom Riddle is, how he managed to come out of the diary and hold a wand, what is the difference between ghosts and Tom Riddle, and what sort of person was Salazar Slytherin? Many of these are outside the scope of this thesis, but how Tom Riddle affects community is certainly pertinent.

divides among the victims of the unknown monster, signifying that there is support for a rather drastic, Hogwarts destroying, move:

“That’s two Gryffindors down, not counting a Gryffindor ghost, one Raveclaw and one Hufflepuff,” said the Weasley twins’ friend Lee Jordan, counting on his fingers. “Haven’t *any* of the teachers noticed that the Slytherins are all safe? Isn’t it *obvious* that all this stuff’s coming from Slytherin? The *Heir* of Slytherin, the *monster* of Slytherin – why don’t they just chuck all the Slytherins out?” he roared, to nods and scattered applause. (II 258, emphasis original)

As Veronica Schanoes points out, this is a common technique of Rowling’s: she sets us up to be distrusting of certain characters—or even a certain house—even though there might not be a real reason, the actions of the character speak differently, or the evidence points elsewhere. Rowling herself has said that the snapshot of Slytherins we get in the book is certainly not the full picture: “I as the writer, because I’m leading you all there — you are seeing Slytherin house always from the perspective of Death Eaters' children. They are a small fraction of the total Slytherin population. I’m not saying all the other Slytherins are adorable, but they're certainly not Draco” (MuggleNet). This tension and conflation between trustworthiness and outright hatred for a character—crystallized in Snape’s duplicity and double agent status—becomes important throughout the rest of the series. We see it especially clearly in the tension between the houses here: we are predisposed to dislike Slytherin, but the evidence points to something else, something working outside the community.

The reason the threat is so terrifying for the members of Hogwarts in this book is the idea that the threat to the community comes from the inside of the community, giving Harry a sense of unease. This was the first place he could ever call home, the first place

he felt truly happy, and now it is turning on him. He overhears a group of Hufflepuffs discussing him in the library:

“No one knows how he survived that attack by You-Know-Who. I mean to say, he was only a baby when it happened. He should have been blasted into smithereens. Only a really powerful Dark wizard could have survived a curse like that. . . . *That’s* probably why You-Know-Who wanted to kill him in the first place. Didn’t want another Dark Lord *competing* with him. I wonder what other powers Potter’s been hiding.”

Harry couldn’t take anymore. Clearing his throat loudly, he stepped out from behind the bookshelves. If he hadn’t been feeling so angry, he would have found the sight that greeted him funny: Every one of the Hufflepuffs looked as though they had been Petrified by the sight of him, and the color was draining out of Ernie’s face. (199, emphasis original)

Here, Rowling emphasizes the human-ness (not humanity, which implies a sort of noblesse, but rather the quality of being human) in the wizarding community. Wizards themselves are an interesting example of the dichotomies Rowling is employing: they are both human and thus can identify with Muggles, but they are also conduits for some sort of supernatural power. This is where much of the tension in later books comes into play: whether or not there should be a hierarchy between wizards and Muggles. But this tension in book two stems from Harry’s realization that the wizarding community, though very different in many ways, still breaks down and acts like any normal, broken spiritual community when a threat is introduced. With the wizarding community dually functioning as a unique spiritual community and a fantastical group of magical people, this tension between what Harry thought the community was and how it actually functions under pressure exemplifies the Grenzian approach to community: a dynamic community connected to higher power that realizes its brokenness at the same time. Harry’s shock at his treatment as a scapegoat in the community, and at the fierce House loyalty that he finds among even his friends, is akin to the shock of a congregant

discovering that his new pastor shops, eats and sleeps just like everyone else. Kornfield and Prothro write that this is all part of Rowling's ideas of community:

Clearly, Rowling does not wish to represent Hogwarts as a utopia. Her portrayal of community and society in Hogwarts is a plausible characterization of the way people live and learn and work together. . . . Rowling, like her characters, never questions or challenges this aspect of community interaction, instead accepting it as an integral part of life. (196)

Rowling's awareness of the brokenness of community here outlines her willingness to have hope for the world: recognizing a broken part also means recognizing what that part is supposed to look like. Therefore, Harry and his fellow wizards, recognizing the brokenness and evil in the world, also have hope that love can cure it, a theme extended throughout all the novels. In contrast to Voldemort, wizards such as Dumbledore recognize that love and power are at work in the littlest, most broken of things. As Dumbledore says in book seven: "Of house-elves and children's tales, of love, loyalty and innocence, Voldemort knows and understands nothing. *Nothing*. That they all have a power beyond his own, a power beyond the reach of any magic, is a truth he has never grasped" (VII 709-10).

The last element introduced in this book concerning community is related to the class stratification in the wizarding world. This is the first time that we get a glimpse of the less majestic creatures who function as servants. In book one, there are centaurs, unicorns and Fluffy, the three headed dog—all imposingly majestic and somewhat terrifying. In book two, the underbelly of the wizarding community comes out—Dobby, the ugly, annoying little elf with droopy ears and a snot covered tunic is recognized as just as much a part of the wizarding community as those wizards who abuse him. Indeed, there is an inherent contrast in that this sniveling little creature would be servant to one of

the wizarding families so upstanding in the community—Lucius Malfoy, Dobby’s owner, is a governor of Hogwarts, a position of much prominence, honor and fame. This contrast highlights the continued tension between human nature and the call to something higher that being a wizard requires. Indeed, the parallel to the Christian church is drawn even more strongly here because we have the highlights of how “the least of these” are treated.⁴ Dobby, who is frequently told to punish himself—a particularly degrading way of dehumanizing a character because the master doesn’t even deign to punish the house elf himself—cannot speak ill of his masters and is a modern day slave. Harry, transcending social boundaries and societal norms, sees Dobby as an equal, eventually (in later novels) becoming his friend.⁵ Harry’s specific actions in this book highlight the way love is transcendent, exemplified by his decision to free Dobby at the end—he, unlike Lucius Malfoy, cares for the least of his society, enough to give the sock off his own foot to free the house elf, which may not seem like much, but is a small gesture of sacrificial love. One can connect this image easily to Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, particularly to the section reinterpreting the old Jewish law of “an eye for an eye”: “And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well” (Matthew 5:40). Stanley Grenz would comment that this gesture of sacrifice is precisely what community is built for—this is the community living in self-dedication and self-giving to one another. This connection emphasizes again how Harry’s world is very much that of a spiritual community, and Harry in particular grasps the concept of sacrificial love quite early on.

⁴ Matthew 25:40: “The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me’” (NIV).

⁵ For example, when Harry first meets Dobby and asks him to sit, Dobby replies that “Dobby has *never* been asked to sit down by a wizard – like an *equal*” (II 13, emphasis original).

Book 3: An Unexpected Family

Book three follows a complex line, with Voldemort seemingly absent through the majority of the book. It opens with the announcement that convicted murderer Sirius Black has escaped from Azkaban prison, a feat no one has ever accomplished before. Harry is warned not to chase Sirius Black, but it seems, throughout the story, that Black is the one chasing him down. About halfway through the school year, Harry overhears a conversation that provides him with motivation to pursue Black: Black, an old friend of the Potters, had turned over Harry's parents to Voldemort, allowing the Dark Lord to find and kill them. He was subsequently sent to Azkaban for the murder of fellow wizard Peter Pettigrew and twelve Muggles. When Sirius and Harry finally meet, the truth comes out: Peter is still alive, and Sirius had confronted Peter because it was Peter who betrayed the Potters, not Sirius. Remus Lupin, this year's new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher and a werewolf, corroborates the story. However, as they are going back to the castle to clear Sirius' name and to hand Peter over to authorities, the full moon comes out, and Peter escapes. Luckily, through the use of a Time Turner and some clever thinking, Harry and Hermione manage to save Sirius' life, but not his reputation, and Peter escapes to reunite with Voldemort.

As we follow Harry's transitioning into new communities and experiencing the flaws of each, book three brings to the forefront, yet again, Harry's desire for true community as he sees it in the form of a family. In learning about his background, what his father was like, he develops this ideal persona of who his father was, and pines after that sort of community. In the Muggle community of the Dursley household, there was no dynamic of a loving and gracious family who puts a roof over his head, feeds him,

sends him to school, and does so all in a loving manner. Indeed, in book six, Dumbledore tells the Dursleys that Harry experienced “nothing but neglect and often cruelty at your hands” (VI 55). In book three, *The Prisoner of Azkaban*, however, Harry begins to learn more and more about his own family history, and the idealization of that community begins to break down, a consistent technique of Rowling’s—set up a community as an ideal, as a source of helpfulness, love and possibly salvation from the drudgery of normal life, and then tear it apart again.

Up until this point, Harry only has the vaguest knowledge of his family. He knows what his parents look like, thanks to the Mirror of Erised and the photo album that Hagrid gives him at the end of *The Sorcerer’s Stone*. He knows that his parents met at school, married shortly after, and fought against Voldemort, which resulted in their death. He knows that, in appearance, he looks exactly like his father, except that he has his mother’s eyes. He knows that James and Lily were well-loved and well-liked by their peers—except for Severus Snape, whom Harry assumes has misjudged James on purpose. He learns, particularly in this novel, that James had a group of friends at his school who acted like family, much like how Ron, Hermione and he act. Finally, Harry seems to have found the sort of community to look for—that of a school family substituting for his real one. He spends much time thinking about and practically worshipping the ideal community-creator that his father was, which is why Snape’s revelation that James was both the method for saving his life and the reason it needed to be saved strikes such a harsh chord:

“I would hate for you to run away with a false idea of your father, Potter. ... Have you been imagining some act of glorious heroism? Then let me correct you – your saintly father and his friends played a highly amusing joke on me that would have resulted in my death if your father

hadn't gotten cold feet at the last moment. There was nothing brave about what he did. He was saving his own skin as much as mine. Had their joke succeeded, he would have been expelled from Hogwarts."

...Harry didn't move. There was a pounding in his ears. (285)

The idea that a person can be both the source and the reason for a saving act is evidence of the tensions and contradictions with which Rowling constantly works. Harry doesn't see that life is inherently full of these sorts of contradictions as the author develops them through decisions made by characters in the series, and Harry obstinately keeps reaching for the ideal, that community that will love and not hurt. This ideal begins to fall apart when Harry discovers that his parents were betrayed by their best friend, and then falls even further when he discovers that his intelligent, charming, smart and likable father—so closely resembling himself—was also an immature troublemaker and a bit of a cad when he was at school. The family community that Harry idealized falls apart around his shoulders—as he learns more, he learns that things are messy, imperfect, and, indeed, contrary to almost everything he knew, which is precisely as Rowling would have love be—messy and imperfect.

As Harry sets up these idealized communities in his head—families, friends, Hogwarts—our author continually knocks them down, tears them apart, and insists that real humanity and real community is not the ideal that Harry keeps reaching for. As in the Christian church, there is the notion of the ideal community and the community that actually exists among broken human beings. This latter is as Grenz emphasizes—because humans are human and therefore flawed and, as he would put it, sinful, they can never achieve perfect community. Even uniting under the banner of love, one would still find brokenness within the church body, just as one finds brokenness within the wizarding community. What is important here is that Harry keeps trying, keeps thinking

that this community can and will be better, and he never gives up on this dream of a perfect community, despite everything in his background that would push him to despair. Grenz would say that Harry has a continued eschatological hope—in recognizing that dynamic spiritual community is the goal, the Christian hopes for the fulfillment of God’s plan for restored community, something that Harry seems to be hoping for as well.

Indeed, in book three, we find Harry extending hope into happiness for half an hour when Sirius, a person he has no real, substantial reason to trust, extends his hand and offers him a family: “Harry’s mind was buzzing. He was going to leave the Dursleys. He was going to live with Sirius Black, his parents’ best friend. ... He felt dazed. ... What would happen when he told the Dursleys he was going to live with the convict they’d seen on television. ...!” (III 380). This moment occurs in the midst of an unlikely situation: they have just heard the entire tale of Peter Pettigrew, admitting to being Voldemort’s lackey and giving up Lily and James’ location to Voldemort. When Sirius invites Harry to live with him, they are leading a strange party—Harry and Sirius, an unconscious Snape, Pettigrew, Ron and Lupin chained together—out of the Shrieking Shack back to the grounds of Hogwarts. It is in the midst of this strange event that the chance at having family connected to the wizarding world is a great boon to Harry’s attitude, enough that it puts him into a daze. Harry imagines returning to the community that first rejected him to gloat over the new love and family he has found. The offer is almost too good to be true and in reality, it is. Having a connection to a very real family is, after all, all that Harry desires, and if the author allowed it here, the emphasis on community would fail, so the bond is again, broken. Harry’s idealized community fails, but as Dumbledore assures him at the end, not all hope is lost: “Didn’t make any

difference? ... It has made all the difference in the world, Harry. You helped uncover the truth. You saved an innocent man from a terrible fate” (425).

To wit, what we have seen so far is that with each breakdown of each iteration of community—the “normal” Dursleys, the school, his friends and now his family—Harry remains hopeful, loving, and, yes, even pure of intention. Even as he breaks school rules, functioning like a normal 13-year-old in his fighting amongst his friends, in refusing to follow the dictates of the school, he remains far more mature than many of his classmates in always looking beyond the brokenness of the people surrounding him and forward to that ideal. He remains ever hopeful, ever reaching into something beyond himself (even if he doesn’t quite know what that is) because he recognizes that community is where good things happen, and that he needs to become a part of it. In book three we find Harry at his most optimistic about the concept of community, and that, maybe, just maybe, he has reason to be. After all, a man who managed to escape from Azkaban prison—a most unlikely character, himself embodying contradictions of community—has offered Harry shelter and love, and seems to have done so out of no sense of obligation, but rather out of a sense of community.⁶ His best friend’s child—and godson, an implication of a deeper bond and a promise to care for Harry—is surely welcome in his home. Despite the logistics, the reader, along with Harry, is allowed to hope that finally Harry will find the community he has been searching for, in the person whom Harry’s parents trusted with their own lives.

But, alas, this will not be the case, as our other study in contradictions—Snape—destroys the burgeoning community. Combine that with some ill-timed celestial effects

⁶ It is from Sirius that we get the lesson that one should judge a man by how he treats his inferiors (IV 525), only to see him treat his house elf Kreacher as a lower being, not worthy of true acceptance into the family (see the chapter entitled “12 Grimmauld Place” in *The Order of the Phoenix* in particular).

(i.e., the full moon, which causes Lupin to transform into his werewolf self) and we have a broken world that fights against any sort of community forming, any sort of working together. But, again, it is Harry's hope of a family and a community that makes it possible for the world to be saved yet again. Harry works so hard to find Sirius in the end not only that Sirius may be saved, but so that he may see the image of his father coming to the rescue. He realizes nearly too late that it is only the distant hope and implicit image of his father that he has been clinging to, and not his actual father. Harry, therefore, must rely again on himself. This moment is a contradiction: his hope of a family, of a community, carries him on to depend upon himself. But this hope allows him to perform one of the most impressive pieces of magic yet done by a 13-year-old wizard, and it is not without purpose that Harry's Patronus takes on the form of a stag, a symbol of his father, James. It is Harry's continued hope for a communal family, for which he is finding constant, albeit unworthy, substitutes, that sustains his power as a wizard. Everything surrounding Harry's character hinges on this hope for a dynamic community. Stanley Grenz would say that Harry's hope resembles the Christian's hope for the renewing of the body and the world and the promise of a new life found in the community of Christ, again, an eschatological hope for renewal in community. The fact that Harry keeps hoping for a better world places him firmly within that Grenzian concept of community.

Book 4: A Game, A Gamble, and a Graveyard

Book four, one of the longest of the series, has multiple elements, the most important of which are the Tri-Wizard Tournament and the return of Voldemort. Harry, through no intention of his own, finds himself as the fourth Tri-Wizard champion,

competing against other wizarding schools. Throughout the three tasks of the tournament, Harry finds himself helped along the way by various people, and in the last task, agrees to tie with fellow Hogwarts champion, Cedric Diggory of Hufflepuff, and they move to touch the Tri-Wizard trophy at the same time. The trophy is, in fact, a Portkey which transports them to a graveyard. Cedric is killed quickly, and Voldemort uses Harry's blood in a magical spell that allows him to return to a bodily form. Before killing Harry, Voldemort, in his pride and certainty of power, decides to let Harry fight—a grave mistake. Their wands, sharing a core from the same Phoenix, connect and form a spell called *Priori Incantatem*, which allows Harry to escape. It is discovered, upon Harry's return, that Mad-Eye Moody, the new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher, is in fact one of Voldemort's servants in disguise, and the school year ends in mourning Cedric Diggory and awaiting to what is sure to be a battle for the ages against the newly risen Voldemort.

In book four, *The Goblet of Fire*, Rowling introduces a concept that had not previously occurred to either our protagonist or to her readers: other wizarding schools and, consequently, other wizarding communities. The idea that being a wizard would be an exclusively English phenomenon is, of course, ridiculous, but the sudden presence of other schools still takes Harry by surprise, as seen when walking around at the Quidditch World Cup. First he marvels at the sheer amount of other magical folk: "It was only just dawning on Harry how many witches and wizards there must be in the world; he had never really thought much about those in other countries" (IV 81) and then at the idea of other wizarding schools: "Harry laughed but didn't voice the amazement he felt at hearing about other wizarding schools. He supposed, now that he saw representatives of

so many nationalities in the campsite, that he had been stupid never to realize that Hogwarts couldn't be the only one" (IV 85). Coddled in the exclusively British wizarding world, the readers and Harry are surprised by the breadth of the wizarding community.

This book develops the concept of the universality of wizardhood from the start, at the same time emphasizing its exclusivity. We meet Harry again as he is preparing to go to the Quidditch World Cup, another example of a concept from the Muggle world turned on its head for wizarding purposes. It is safe to say that almost every British schoolchild (and thus, most of Rowling's target demographic) is familiar with the concept of the football (soccer, in America) World Cup and what it means for bringing countries and people from different communities together. Rowling here takes that concept and applies it to the wizarding world, bringing together a great diversity of wizarding communities under the umbrella of sport. Witches and wizards from Ireland, Bulgaria, the Americas, countries in Africa, and other remote regions of the world all converge on the World Cup, emphasizing the idea that wizardry is essentially universal. However, the secrecy surrounding the World Cup and the important need to keep Muggles away also emphasizes the exclusivity of this world, another example of the use of contradiction. While the wizarding community can come together and celebrate their wizardhood, it behaves almost like a secret club in that they must be careful not to let anyone not already a wizard into the community.

The community that had happily come together under the banner of sport, however, is soon broken up by that force which functions to break apart community in each of the books in the series: Voldemort. Voldemort's small community of followers

functions to disrupt the community of wizards when they are at their most joyous. He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named appears to be the reason that Harry's ideals of community have failed. I've mentioned that the wizarding world's community is broken, evidenced by the breakdown of communities in books 1-3, but the reason for this brokenness becomes almost painfully evident finally in book four. While Harry has been fighting Voldemort all along, Voldemort's power for "spreading enmity and discord" (as Dumbledore says in the end of book four) becomes especially evident here, crystallized in the actions of his followers at the World Cup, and exhibited again and again in the warnings about the rival schools needing to come together.⁷ There is a call for unity, for safety in numbers. Indeed, the entire reason the Tri-Wizard tournament is restarted is to foster community among the schools in attempts to repair it after it had been torn apart by the war with Voldemort years before (IV 187).

Rowling has used previous novels to set up how community is important to each of her characters, but particularly to her protagonist, Harry. In this book, then—the exact middle of the series—Rowling draws together the ideal community that Harry wants, and the brokenness of the actual community that Harry experiences, providing, at long last, an explanation of and some movement away from the brokenness. Up until now, there has only been a vague sense that Voldemort was behind the broken community that Harry was experiencing—things were not normal during his first two years at Hogwarts as he adjusted to the community there, and his first real chance at community each year was broken apart by ghosts of Voldemort's presence—Quirrell, Tom Riddle, and Peter Pettigrew all functioning either as Voldemort himself or in his stead. Here, in book four,

⁷ These actions include taunting the Muggle family on whose field the wizards have camped, setting fire to tents in the area, and, eventually, setting the Dark Mark (see glossary) in the sky.

Rowling posits an attempt at real, dynamic world community through the introduction of other wizarding schools. Hermione's relationship with Viktor Krum, the much older Quidditch star, is a microcosm of how the schools are supposed to come together—not necessarily as a romantic relationship, but without regard to status, stance, or school. This is true community.

However, the presence of Voldemort's followers once again knocks things out of balance. There are four champions instead of three, with Harry being inserted into the tournament, a very risky position. Strange things begin happening within the contests, such as the level of cheating revealed in the first round (IV 228), Dobby suddenly showing up with Gillyweed in the second round (IV 491), and Harry finding his way rather easily through the maze in the last part of the contest (IV 622). All of this culminates in the climatic graveyard scene in Little Hangleton in which Voldemort rises to true power.

This graveyard scene is one of the most important for Rowling's emphasis on community. Harry and Cedric go for the Triwizard cup at the same moment, discovering all too late that it is a Portkey, transporting them from the Hogwarts grounds to a graveyard in Little Hangleton, where Voldemort and Wormtail reveal themselves and kill Cedric. Harry is then captured and made to watch while Wormtail performs the magical spell that brings Voldemort back to his body (IV 636-643). It is by bringing together all sorts of disparate elements—flesh of the servant, bone of the father, and blood of the enemy—that Voldemort is able to regain power. Voldemort is able to take and manipulate the power of disparate and contradictory community to his own purposes: his Death Eater servants are a prime example of this, especially as many of them claim to be

the only ones in Voldemort's confidence, which encourages extreme devotion and loyalty without any real relationship beyond master and servant. Voldemort calls others to himself in order that he may use them—others in his circle are merely servants, not friends. But Harry's consequent use of community in relation to himself (*Priori Incantatem*) trumps Voldemort's evil uses of community altogether.⁸ Harry, does not even "call" others; they simply show up. When the ghost-like figures emerge from Voldemort's wand—a potent symbol of help coming from the least likely of places—they are not necessarily summoned by Harry, but immediately come to his aid anyway. He and Voldemort are both very surprised by their presence (IV 663). Harry immediately connects what happens with the wands with the community he has made with

Dumbledore:

[The phoenix song] was the sound of hope to Harry...the most beautiful and welcome thing he had ever heard in his life...He felt as though the song were inside him instead of just around him...It was the sound he connected with Dumbledore, and it was almost as though a friend were speaking in his ear...*Don't break the connection.* (IV 664, emphasis original)

Harry's connection with love, with a community, ultimately saves him in this dire moment, though it will be a long time before he can entirely process what happened. It is the appearance of a ghostly, faded James Potter that ultimately completes this emphasis of community, as Harry holds on for just long enough for his father to come and speak words of comfort. He has a "friend speaking in his ear," telling him what to do—his connections to love, to the larger wizarding community, create a sense of hope for his salvation. He is able to figure out a plan for escape because of the presence—unknown

⁸ See glossary.

by Voldemort—of a larger wizarding community. Harry’s attachment and desire for true community are ultimately what saves him here.

In two more small moments before the end of book four, Rowling once again emphasizes the saving aspect of community. The wizarding community moves from being simply a community of people who believe the same thing into a community that functions together to be saved while an outside force is attempting to fracture it. This sort of community is one that works together for its own salvation—what Grenz would call a “salvation community” (TC 458). The body of believers is united by the concept of being saved from their brokenness. In book four, we see the wizarding community take on this role: once through an attempted rescue, and once through words from our spiritual guide. This emphasis on a salvation community comes from the words of our spiritual guide in all seven books: Albus Dumbledore. First, Dumbledore’s words shortly after Harry returns with Cedric Diggory’s body—upon finally capturing Barty Crouch, Jr., masquerading as Mad-Eye Moody—indicate that good wizards work to keep community together, not break it apart: “The real Moody would not have removed you from my sight after what happened tonight. The moment he took you, I knew—and I followed” (IV 680). The moment that the fake Moody took Harry away from the community that surrounded him, the ever-insightful Dumbledore figured out that this Moody was not actually trustworthy. Having community in a time of grief and strife, then, is emphasized as all important.

Dumbledore also speaks a prophetic word about the importance of community in his final speech to the school—one that, ironically, causes much division among those who choose to believe in Voldemort’s return and those who decide to ignore it.

Dumbledore calls for the community to work together as one in both processing their grief over Cedric Diggory's death, and in honoring the one who was able to defeat Lord Voldemort a fifth time. Yet we see traces of the community already beginning to crack:

Dumbledore turned gravely to Harry and raised his goblet once more. Nearly everyone in the Great Hall followed suit. They murmured his name, as they had murmured Cedric's, and drank to him. But through a gap in the standing figures, Harry saw that Malfoy, Crabbe, Goyle, and many of the other Slytherins had remained defiantly in their seats, their goblets untouched. Dumbledore, who after all possessed no magical eye, did not see them. (IV 723)

The influence of Voldemort in separating the community into factions is already evident here, but Dumbledore is not as ignorant as the above quotation may indicate. He immediately follows the praise of Harry with a declaration that the ties between the wizarding schools would be "more important than ever before" (IV 723). Dumbledore speaks to Rowling's emphasis on how community must function if it is to defeat any outside threat. In previous books, we have only caught glimpses of such work, only seen brief idealizations of community in Harry's mind, only to have them knocked back down by some outside force. Readers have not yet been allowed the same hope that Harry holds. Here, Dumbledore emphasizes for us how important it is that community remain entirely intact and gives us hope:

I say to you all, once again – in light of Lord Voldemort's return, we are only as strong as we are united, as weak as we are divided. Lord Voldemort's gift for spreading discord and enmity is very great. We can fight it only by showing an equally strong bond of friendship and trust. Differences of habit and language are nothing at all if our aims are identical and our hearts are open. (IV 723)

Rowling, speaking through her character of Dumbledore, emphasizes the need for community as a saving grace in the wizarding world. The power threatening the good wizarding community will only become stronger if they cannot remain bonded together

with the ideal of love—as in the Christian community, people from all different walks of life are bonded together under the banner of love and hope. Dumbledore’s speech sets up a framework for the last three books in exploring whether or not the community will function together as a whole or continue to fracture. The wizarding community, already imbued with a supernatural element because of their work in magic, reflects, once again, the saving community of the New Testament, a group of people who must come together to rebel against the common way of thinking, and the outside threat to break it down, all because of love. Indeed, it is from the Gospels and the mouth of Jesus that the idea of an unbroken community becomes extremely important: “A house divided against itself cannot stand” (Matt. 12:25), a comment reflected in Dumbledore’s speech. It is this framework within which Rowling must work for the finish of her tale.

CHAPTER THREE

Choosing One's New Family: Books 5-7

Introduction

In the last three books of the series, much more of J.K. Rowling's theories about community bubble to the surface and become obvious. With the return of Lord Voldemort in book four, the urgency that draws the wizarding world together becomes much more apparent, and the consequences of Harry's actions are suddenly affecting the community around him in much larger ways—his choices in these last three books have a clear ripple effect which extends to those at the Ministry, and even in countries outside of Britain.

Book 5: An Order of Great Importance

In *The Order of the Phoenix*, Harry is struggling internally throughout most of the storyline. He keeps having terrible dreams about walking down a mysterious corridor, and, with the wizarding community not believing in the return of Voldemort, finds himself painted as a liar. The Ministry of Magic is interfering at Hogwarts, eventually pushing Dumbledore out of the Headmaster position and instituting Dolores Umbridge, the Minister's right hand woman, as Dumbledore's replacement. In the meantime, Harry has been assigned private lessons with Severus Snape in an effort to learn how to close his mind to these dreams, as it is suspected he is seeing into Voldemort's mind. Because of Harry's lack of willingness to study with Snape, he fails horrendously at the lessons, and Voldemort, discovering the connection between their minds, acts on it, giving Harry

a dream of Sirius being tortured in the Department of Mysteries at the Ministry. In reality, Sirius is safe, but Harry and his friends rush to the Ministry anyway, discovering too late their error. The Death Eaters—particularly noted are Lucius Malfoy and Bellatrix Lestrange—use Harry to grasp a prophecy that is in the Department of Mysteries. The prophecy pertains to Harry and Voldemort, and states, “neither can live while the other survives” (V 841). Right when it seems that the young wizards have lost hope, Dumbledore and his fighters appear and defeat the Death Eaters. Unfortunately, Sirius dies in the subsequent battle, an event that rattles Harry greatly.

Book five finds Harry estranged from the community that was so ready to throw their arms around him at the end of the last book. Once again, Rowling uses contradiction, giving her readers hope and then making them wonder why it’s not working out. Harry has once again returned to his Muggle home at 4 Privet Drive, receiving letters from Ron, Hermione and Sirius, but no with any real information, and resorting to sneaking listens at the news to find out if any large-scale destruction is taking place. He feels cut off, separated from everything:

The injustice of it all welled up inside him so that he wanted to yell with fury. If it hadn’t been for him, nobody would even know that Voldemort was back! And his reward was to be stuck in Little Whinging for four solid weeks, completely cut off from the magical world, reduced to squatting behind dying begonias so that he could hear about water-skiing budgerigars! How could Dumbledore have forgotten him so easily? Why had Ron and Hermione got together without inviting him along too? (V, 10)

In contrast to the great wealth of community that Harry began experiencing at the end of *The Goblet of Fire*, he is now unable to participate in the community for which he feels

such a desperate need.¹ The bitterness and pain that he feels at the separation serves to highlight the importance of all parts of the community working together, even if it puts certain parts of the community at risk. Dumbledore reveals later on that he kept Harry at a distance because he feared the connection Harry may have inadvertently formed with Voldemort, and here is the first time we actually see Dumbledore making a mistake. By not including Harry from the start in the community's plans (the Order of the Phoenix is itself a tightly knit community of wizards fighting for a certain cause), it could be argued that Dumbledore is at fault for Sirius' eventual demise at the end of this book. The feelings of loneliness, separation and ostracizing that Harry experiences here at the very outset of the novel manifest themselves further on in Harry convincing himself that he must act alone.

The feeling of separation from Dumbledore—his spiritual guide—and being ostracized from the wizarding community (as a whole, they don't believe that Voldemort is back, and *The Daily Prophet* takes jibes at Harry nearly every day) leads Harry to develop his own separate core of believers. Harry, Ron and Hermione call together a core of students who "believe" in Harry's mission, who are willing to act radically to undermine the Ministry's actions. In Defense Against the Dark Arts class, the curriculum has eliminated the practical section of the course in favor of the purely theoretical. The students, upset with this change and with Ministry interference, begin a sort of reformation, a group for learning advanced skills of magic to defend against Voldemort, going directly against what they are being taught in Defense Against the Dark Arts that year by Ministry

¹ For example, on the train back to London, Draco, Crabbe and Goyle visit the compartment holding the Weasleys (minus Percy), Hermione, and Harry. When a fight breaks out, all members of Gryffindor cast spells and leave the Slytherins in varied states of magical duress (730). This could possibly be a forerunner of the battles that will form the conclusion for each of the next three books.

stooge Dolores Umbridge. Harry finds in Dumbledore's Army the joy of being in community again. This joy sustains him for much of the action in the novel:

Harry felt as though he were carrying some kind of talisman inside his chest over the following two weeks, a glowing secret that supported him through Umbridge's classes and even made it possible for him to smile blandly as he looked into her horrible bulging eyes. He and the D.A. were resisting her under her very nose, doing the very thing that she and the Ministry most feared, and whenever he was supposed to be reading Wilbert Slinkhard's book during her lessons he dwelled instead on satisfying memories of their most recent meetings, remembering how Neville had successfully disarmed Hermione, how Colin Creevey had mastered the Impediment Jinx after three meetings' hard effort, how Parvati Patil had produced such a good Reductor Curse that she had reduced the table carrying all the Sneakoscopes to dust. (V 397)

In rebelling against Umbridge, Harry finds an almost perverse joy, which sustains him through hard months of the school year, and convinces him that this rebellion against authority is the right move to make. However, it doesn't work out for him as Dumbledore's Army is discovered, broken apart, and results in a fight that causes Dumbledore to leave Hogwarts. By forming his own private community, he has developed his own understanding of what community means, and only reconnects to the larger community after he realizes that he has put his own spiritual leader at risk.

In the end, developing a separate offshoot of community within the larger wizarding world turns out to be a huge distraction from the pursuit of a right path in fighting Voldemort. Harry's leadership in this separate community gives him an overconfidence in his abilities and he continues to ignore the advice of adults he should trust—like Snape. Throughout *Order of the Phoenix*, Snape and Dumbledore are working for Harry to close off his mind from outside influence because Voldemort and he apparently have some sort of connection that could be dangerous; Harry's reliance on his own power leads him to rebel, to not work on Occlumency. During his final exams for

the year, Harry collapses, and has a vision of Sirius being tortured by Voldemort. In his subsequent rush to see if Sirius is safe, he completely forgets that Snape is a member of the Order and could help them out. He remembers only too late and is only able to give cryptic clues as to what is happening, without the benefit of knowing whether Snape understood, putting the entire Order, and his fellow students from the D.A., at risk (745). In separating himself from the larger, more mature community, Harry creates more problems than he solves. It is almost as though he has formed his own denomination, his own sort of church separate from the larger guidance, not unlike Protestant churches of today. In expediency, his new community takes care of his immediate problem with Umbridge, but in the larger scope, he fails in the spiritual task of blocking his thoughts from Voldemort and allows himself to be manipulated.

However, at the end of the book, Harry manages to save himself with the power of community. In the midst of a battle with Voldemort, Dumbledore protects Harry by fighting Voldemort himself. Voldemort attempts to cause Dumbledore to make a foolish decision by possessing Harry, but Harry rejects him by thinking of community, by thinking of love. Voldemort cannot bear to be in contact with something so pure, so connected to a higher power, and Harry deals a harsh blow in this somewhat private battle with Voldemort. While the fracturing of community causes great strife for Harry, the thought of a whole, unbroken community is what saves Harry in the end.

With a fractured community creating denominations within itself, it seems that the outside threat can penetrate much more easily. This again harkens back to Grenz's suggestion that sin is mainly manifested in broken community; because of infighting, because of Harry, Ron and Hermione's frustration with their spiritual leaders' lack of

communication, the “church” of the wizarding world falls apart. In contrast to Dumbledore’s warning, the wizarding community as a whole—with the unbelieving Fudge at its head—embroils itself in danger and essentially hands power over to Lord Voldemort. Voldemort’s power to break apart the wizarding community is shown throughout this book, which takes its readers down a depressing road before eventually the narrator attempts to buoy them up in books six and seven.

Book 6: Voldemort 101

In *The Half Blood Prince*, Harry and Dumbledore have a much more open relationship, with Dumbledore teaching Harry about Voldemort’s history through private lessons. They learn about Tom Marvolo Riddle, the man that Voldemort was before he became He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named. Most importantly, they learn the reason that Voldemort did not die when his spell rebounded back on him during his first attempt to kill Harry. Voldemort had learned how to create Horcruxes, a bit of dark magic in which a wizard can enclose a part of his or her soul in a selected object. With part of his soul stored elsewhere, a wizard cannot be destroyed. Dumbledore proposes that Voldemort may have seven Horcruxes, and each of these must be destroyed before Voldemort can properly be killed. At the end of the book, Dumbledore and Harry travel away from Hogwarts to find a Horcrux and succeed. Upon their return, they see Voldemort’s Dark Mark hanging over the castle, and that Death Eaters have penetrated their safehold. Draco Malfoy appears at the top of the Astronomy tower when Dumbledore and Harry (who is under the invisibility cloak) land. Draco threatens Dumbledore, but hesitates on actually killing him, at which point Snape appears and does the unthinkable: he kills Albus Dumbledore, thus eliminating a huge threat to Voldemort. Snape escapes, and the

book ends with Harry deciding that he probably won't return to Hogwarts, and will instead continue the task Dumbledore set before him: destroying the Horcruxes.

Things have settled down again in Harry's world, though strife and war are looming over the entire sixth book. However, with Voldemort apparently in hiding and waiting to act, what we find instead is an emphasis on growing community. Dumbledore develops a mentoring relationship with Harry, and allows Harry to include Ron and Hermione in this new inner community. Because it has been sanctioned by our spiritual guide, this community does not function like Dumbledore's Army—it resembles, more closely, elders in a church. Harry gains new status as a special disciple under Dumbledore, a member of a kind of higher order under the guidance of a spiritual leader, and his role, loosely summarized, is to first lead the community when its leader is gone, and second, to prevent outside threat to the community. Book six is essentially preparing Harry to take on his role as leader in book seven.

The significance of book six's treatment of community—in a brief sense—is the importance of history in creating that community. Dumbledore is interested in Voldemort—not just in merely stopping him, but also in understanding him as a wizard and as a person. Understanding a person's past helps one learn to interact with him or her in the present, especially when it comes to an enemy. Voldemort, it seems, because he never experienced community growing up, has no idea how to fit into community now, emphasizing Rowling's greater point of the importance of community. She makes a large point in interviews of saying that Voldemort “loved only power, and himself. He valued people whom he could use to advance his own objectives” (The Leaky Cauldron), and “that's where evil seems to flourish, in places where people didn't get good fathering”

(Grossman). It seems to be a rather simple equation—lack of community, in the form of family, friends, and loving people, will lead a person toward evil, and Voldemort, lacking or not wanting any of these things in his life, became the most evil of them all.

But such a proposition is far too simple. What, then, do we make of Malfoy? Of Peter Pettigrew? Of Gellert Grindelwald, even? Each of these characters acts in an evil manner at some point in the series, but each also has been raised in some sort of community. Simply knowing that a person does not grow up knowing community, or does not have the “right kind” of community, does not immediately sentence him or her to life as an evil wizard. Dumbledore makes it clear from the beginning of the series that “it is our choices, Harry, that show us what we truly are, far more than our abilities” (II 333). It is not merely the community that surrounds a person, but what he or she chooses to do with that community. The question that Rowling then raises is: Why did Voldemort choose such a path? Even though he is raised in a shoddy, rather bleak orphanage—just as Harry is raised by people who, though family, make him live in a cupboard under the stairs for the first ten years of his life, and certainly don’t respect him as an individual—Voldemort chooses not to love, not to participate in community. Harry, on the other hand, finds himself the hero of his community because, as Dumbledore puts it, “In spite of all the temptation you have endured, all the suffering, you remain pure of heart, just as pure as you were at the age of eleven” (VI 511). What is different?

It would seem that the history of the two individuals goes back to the community in which they began their lives. Harry, though his parents were torn from him and he was put in an unloving home, was born to parents who loved him, and were able to care for him for a year before their deaths at the hands of Voldemort. Voldemort, on the other

hand, was in the orphanage from the time of birth and was not born out of a loving relationship, but instead of an enchanted union that broke apart during the pregnancy. Voldemort sets store by fate and prophecy throughout his life and would see this pathetic beginning as evidence that he was destined to be as he is. Harry, on the other hand, as Dumbledore (once again our prophet and spiritual guide) explains, is able to walk into battle and do so freely because he is surrounded by love in his first year and makes a choice to live in such a community (VI 512). Rowling herself has stated that this beginning or conception is important in Voldemort's development:

It was a symbolic way of showing that he came from a loveless union – but of course, everything would have changed if Merope had survived and raised him herself and loved him. ... The enchantment under which Tom Riddle fathered Voldemort is important because it shows coercion, and there can't be many more prejudicial ways to enter the world than as the result of such a union. (The Leaky Cauldron)

Because Voldemort never experienced love even in utero and has put his faith in fate, he seems more predisposed to an evil path. Because Harry started in a loving family, and chose to learn to love others, Harry is more predisposed to recognize his freedom and goodness. Voldemort, then, is a self-fulfilling prophecy: because he hasn't experienced what it means to have a choice and to have freedom to love and be loved, he sees nothing beyond the possibility of not loving. Harry, on the other hand, having experienced all ranges of love and disregard, is able to see the difference between the two. Everything returns to the community of faith and love. Because Voldemort was not even conceived in a true community, he has no concept of what it means to be a part of one. He is, in a way, destined to be outside community, but his choices put him farther and farther from any sort of redemptive community, like the one Harry finds at Hogwarts.

It is then not merely the presence of community—Voldemort certainly had that, especially at Hogwarts—but the choices that one makes within community that shape one’s personhood. Community in the wizarding world, then, parallels even more the Christian community that Grenz outlines: it is dynamic, moving and changed by the choices of its members, though in its most basic form has elements that hold it together: love, stability, and friendship. It is also like the Body of Christ that Paul outlines in 1 Corinthians 12:18-20: “But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.” Each member contributes his or her own special abilities and knowledge to the community, and each member becomes valued and important. The equal footing on which Harry and Dumbledore find themselves in book six is an example of this body of love functioning as brothers and sisters, as family, something Voldemort never really achieved. Dumbledore asks for and relies upon Harry’s powers as a wizard, giving him confidence and the place in community which he craved in book five, creating a healthy environment of love.

Book 7: Of Hallows and Horcruxes

In this last of the books, Harry, Ron and Hermione set off to find the Horcruxes and in the midst of their search, become sidetracked by trying to figure out who Albus Dumbledore really was as a wizard and as a man. Some incriminating information has come out about him, implying that he was not always as Muggle-friendly as people thought, and in fact, shared a deep friendship with Gellert Grindelwald, the only other wizard in history who could challenge Voldemort in wickedness. The troupe of three spend the first part of the book looking for the Horcruxes, and discover that there is

possibly something else Voldemort is after in his search for dominance: the Deathly Hallows. These Hallows—objects of incredible magical power—would supposedly give the wizard possessing them the title of “Master of Death,” and give him or her immense power. Voldemort, evidently, only knows of one: the Elder Wand, a wand that is said to be unbeatable. Harry is faced with a choice: pursue the Hallows or continue destroying Horcruxes. He does, indeed, choose to destroy the Horcruxes, eventually finding each one and destroying them. In a remarkable turn of fate, Harry finds himself back at Hogwarts, battling Voldemort and his army. Through the memory of Snape, given up as he was dying, Harry learns that he, with his lightning scar and ability to speak to snakes, is a Horcrux himself, and so must sacrifice himself. He goes to confront Voldemort, and watches as Voldemort casts the killing curse. Instead of dying, however, Harry finds himself in a hazy replica of King’s Cross station, discussing life and death with Dumbledore. After this talk, Harry returns to his body (believed to be dead) and reveals himself to Voldemort in the midst of the battle. Voldemort and Harry duel, and in a parallel to the way that Harry’s journey began, Voldemort is killed by his own rebounding curse, finally releasing his hold on the wizarding community.

Community is emphasized from the start in book seven, with Harry’s “escape” from the Dursleys’ home at 4 Privet Drive. When wizards turn 17, they are considered adults, meaning that Harry will no longer be under the protective magic of his aunt and uncle’s care.² The members of the Order of the Phoenix devise a plan to help Harry to escape by using Polyjuice Potion to take on his identity in order to confuse the Death Eaters in pursuit. While the idea that protective love can end may seem contradictory to

² Dumbledore believed that once Harry came of age—turned 17—the protective magic that bound him to the Dursleys would finally fail, and Harry would be vulnerable to attack.

the idea of community, Rowling here emphasizes blood relation and the idea of growing up—when one is a child, family is one’s biological ties, which is why Harry was still protected by love when with the Dursleys. However, once he comes of age and his family becomes something he chooses rather than something that is forced upon him, it appears that this protection no longer applies. Harry must now face numerous decisions about who his family is, and it is clear it will not be the Dursleys, though Dudley’s reaction upon leaving is indeed surprising and indicative that there was some sort of community extant there. Dudley, at the very least, tells Harry that he’s not “a waste of space,” an indication that they could have been friends eventually (VII 40). In this beginning, Harry leaves the community that *might have been* with the Dursleys for a community that *is*. He steps fully into the wizarding community, and the actions of his fellow wizards in the Order demonstrate how much he has been accepted. They are willing to take on his likeness and sacrifice themselves in order to protect him: Alastor Moody gives his life, George Weasley loses his ear, and even Harry’s pet owl, Hedwig, is lost in the fight. This is our first indication that sacrificial love will be at the heart of this book, and therefore, at the heart of the whole series.

We also enter into the seventh book in the midst of something surprising: a wedding. This potent symbol of both Christian community and of a certain type of love highlights the seventh volume’s emphasis on community. While the forces of evil are breaking families apart around them—the Ministry is under threat, rumors are flying about Voldemort, and no one knows precisely what he is doing—two smaller families are able to join together to celebrate the importance of community. In Christian tradition, the wedding metaphor is used to explain the intimate relationship between Christ the Messiah

and his Church here on Earth: Christ is the Bridegroom eagerly awaiting the Church, the Bride. In the Old Testament, Israel's wayward ways in pledging to other gods and disobeying the first commandment earn the chosen people the name of whore and prostitute in Hosea, enhancing the metaphor that Christ and his community are married. Grenz discusses this in terms of the church's role as a body—the church is in a covenant with God:

Believers enter into covenant with God and each other so that they might be an eschatological community, the fellowship that pioneers in the present the principles that characterize the reign of God. Hence, they point a way toward the kingdom.

Consequently, the identity of the church in the world does not focus merely on bringing into the fold those whom God elected before the creation of the world. Rather, at its heart is the goal of modeling in the present the glorious human fellowship that will come at the consummation of history. The church, therefore, is a foretaste of the eschatological reality that God will one day graciously give to his creation. (TC 479)

The significance of the image of a wedding, then, is that it is the most intimate sort of community that one can have. Using the relationship between two people who are pledged to each other for life as a metaphor highlights the intimacy and importance of community as a whole. Biblically speaking, marriage is about creating an entirely new community: “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). Rowling emphasizes this in a magical ceremony—there are sparks that fly and encircle the newly wedded couple, signifying their new unity. By using such a metaphor as a catalyst for the book's main action, Rowling reminds us straightaway how important community will be for the task that Harry has set before him.

The marriage that takes place in *The Deathly Hallows* is one that not only emphasizes community, but does it in a way that sets up Harry's task as a cross-cultural

one. Fleur, a French wizard, is marrying Bill Weasley, an English wizard, and though it is a little contrived, it seems that the emphasis here is on the internationalism of the marriage—the two families come together a couple of days before the marriage, and while the joining of two separate families into one is stressful, it is ultimately a joyous occasion. The idea that people would be able to experience bonding and joy even while under such threat is tied to Rowling’s overall emphasis. The joy does not last long, however, as during the reception, the news arrives that the Ministry has fallen into Death Eater hands, and all the Ministry protection disappears. Death Eaters appear and everything is thrown into chaos; Harry, Ron and Hermione just barely manage to Apparate away from the mess. The breaking apart of the wedding party post-nuptial, then, recalls for us how broken the wizarding world is, and emphasizes quite poignantly the power that Voldemort truly has for ripping apart communities.

And the wedding is just the beginning. Voldemort tears apart communities left and right, infiltrating the Ministry, and encouraging people to turn their loved ones in for the Muggle-born Registration Commission to make sure that they are actually wizards and witches.³ This ability to turn friend against friend, brother against sister, husband against wife is one that Voldemort capitalizes on again and again, and one that Harry must work to defeat. Harry’s path, then, is to set out with what is left of the exclusive elder group from book six in search of the Horcruxes.⁴ In traveling with Ron and Hermione, he learns the importance of communicating within a community—the in-fighting, lack of planning, and lack of motion stagnates their tiny community, and they have no success

³ The farce of a Ministry that exists in book seven establishes a kind of “blood review,” a panel that reviews the bloodlines of Muggle-born wizards, under the presupposition that they are criminals and have stolen their magical power from a rightful witch or wizard.

⁴ See glossary.

until outside influences (Dumbledore via the Put-Outer, Snape via the Doe Patronus) change the dynamic. With a connection to the larger community through the Weasley's radio program and the destruction of one Horcrux, they are finally heartened and able to continue in their quest. It is when they stray from community—Hermione and Harry going off alone to Godric's Hollow, for example—that things begin to fall apart. Again and again, Harry, Ron and Hermione's small community works best when it is placed within the context of a larger community.

The time at Shell Cottage (Bill and Fleur's new home), for example, allows them to escape for moments from the quest: though they spend the entire time plotting how to break into Gringott's, they finally have a larger community of people to talk to, and a mode of action that helps them be a dynamic community once again. The small communities in the wizarding world, then, only function well inasmuch as they are able to connect to the community and be buoyed and heartened by support from them:

The radio's dial twirled and the lights behind the tuning panel went out. Harry, Ron, and Hermione were still beaming. Hearing familiar, friendly voices was an extraordinary tonic; Harry had become so used to their isolation he had nearly forgotten that other people were resisting Voldemort. It was like waking from a long sleep. (VII 444)

Harry is buoyed by the reminder that he is connected to the larger spiritual community, and gains much courage from this fact. Indeed, he discovers how the power of love has been working among those at Hogwarts, discovering upon returning that Neville Longbottom, Seamus Finnigan, Ginny Weasley and others have been fighting in his stead, fighting the battle he probably would have fought had he made the choice to return to the school.

The final battle shows people of all houses coming together, poignantly emphasizing community with the return of estranged family members, old Quidditch captains, and members of Dumbledore's Army. One particularly poignant example of how this battle reunites broken families is that of the Weasleys and the return of their middle son, Percy: he had denied that Voldemort was back, worked for the Ministry despite it being infiltrated by Voldemort's spies and pretended not to know his own father in the Ministry of Magic building. The way that the Weasleys welcome him back into the fold is particularly heart-wrenching:

Mrs. Weasley burst into tears. She ran forward, pushed Fred aside, and pulled Percy into a strangling hug, while he patted her on the back, his eyes on his father.

‘I'm sorry, Dad,’ Percy said.

Mr. Weasley blinked rather rapidly, then he too hurried to hug his son.
(606)

This reunion is a microcosm of numerous reconciliations that occurred before the final battle—the community is finally coming together, nearly in the manner that Dumbledore called for to in his speech to the school at the end of *The Goblet of Fire*.

However, in what is possibly one of the most confusing and yet greatest examples of community we have in the series, Harry is actually alone. In the denouement of the series, Harry realizes that in order to save the community of Hogwarts and, indeed, the wizarding world, he must step out alone and sacrifice himself. But this time, instead of foolishly stepping forward without support, and doing it for his own selfish benefit, he takes on the new role of a somewhat complicated Christ figure, responding to the cries of his community as it is falling apart around him. He does not step out entirely alone as the thoughts of the community go with him, and as he walks, he is able to call others who have gone before him back to himself, to again support him in community, much like

they did in book four when he faced Voldemort directly for the first time. With the Resurrection Stone, so cleverly hidden by Dumbledore in Harry's first Snitch, Harry is able to call the ghost-like personas of Remus Lupin, Sirius Black, and his parents to walk with him.⁵ These ghostly beings buoyed him with "loving smiles," and comment that they are proud of him for this bravery, which allows him to walk on toward his death (VII 699). It is thus through the work of a community that Harry is finally able to fulfill his duty as the hero of our tale, and defeat Voldemort.

Voldemort's final moments, on the other hand, are divided from the community that surrounds him. In contrast to Harry, whose followers are protected by his sacrifice and come to his aid, Voldemort's followers are falling en masse around him with many, such as the Malfoys, deserting and turning on him. Voldemort eventually finds himself utterly alone, in the midst of a battle, facing his mortal enemy, and here, Harry does the unexpected. He offers Voldemort the chance to return to the community he has despised for so many years: "It's your one last chance ... it's all you've got left. ... I've seen what you'll be otherwise. ... Be a man...try...try for some remorse" (741). This extension of community to someone outside it could only be achieved by someone who knows what community means. Harry is offering Voldemort a chance to be forgiven, to return his soul back into its wholeness of community, and to function in the wizarding world. This offer is interestingly tied to Christ's desire for community: even as Christ, in the Gospel stories, was being sacrificed, he called out for the people to be forgiven.⁶ Harry sees here the importance of the wizarding community and offers it to someone outside the community. Rowling emphasizes community for the wizards in the same sense that

⁵ See glossary for an explanation of the Resurrection Stone.

⁶ See Luke 23:34a: "Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.'"

Grenz emphasizes community for the Christian church. The goal of a Christian community, as Grenz sees it, is to not only be an edifying, dynamic group for the Christian, but to be one that calls others to redemption. A primary part of the Christian community is evangelism—calling others to salvation, to redemption, back to the love which dominates the body (Grenz TC 502). This is precisely what Harry offers to Voldemort in the last few pages of *Deathly Hallows*.

Communal love is indeed the major emphasis throughout the whole of the series, tied together in the epilogue which shows the coming together of enemies and friends, and acceptance of people's faults and distinct personalities, all working together to make the world better. 19 years after the battle at Hogwarts, we catch up with the old Hogwarts crew as they are sending off their own children to another school year. Harry and Ginny have married and introduced new members to their family—James, Albus, and Lily—and it seems idyllic, at least for the wizarding world. The boys are arguing about whether the newest student in the family—Albus—will end up in Slytherin, signifying that old House stereotypes are very much in place, but it is more in fun than anything else. Draco is at Platform 9 and $\frac{3}{4}$ with his wife and their child, and Harry acknowledges him from across the way. Each of the characters has found his or her own way, and though some of the old enmities are in place, they are not nearly as strong as before. Draco and his family are only enemies of the Potters on the surface level, and it is clear that the characters recognize that unity as wizards is the most important binding feature. Rowling herself has said that “Harry knows Draco hated being a Death Eater, and would not have killed Dumbledore; similarly, Draco would feel a grudging gratitude towards Harry for saving his life. . . . Real friendship would be out of the question, though. Too

much had happened prior to the final battle” (The Leaky Cauldron). Despite the fact that they could never be friends, at least in the sense that Harry, Ron and Hermione are friends, there is an acknowledgement of a common bond, a coming together. Even after 19 years, the memory of that final battle still lingers and the triumph of community holds much sway.

In Harry Potter’s world, community starts from the beginning, is held in several different tensions per Rowling’s common narrative technique, and yet triumphs in the end. It is community, love, the ability to work with and understand other people, and to form a new family that trumps all evil in the wizarding world—indeed, a heavily Christianized concept. This new body formed at Hogwart’s with love as the reigning principle resembles the church community found in the Bible: imperfect, often chastised for going the wrong direction (see Paul’s letter to the Galatians in particular for this), but eventually coming together under the banner of a common cause and a common love.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Flaw in the Plan: Voldemort and Snape as the Extreme Exceptions and Differences

In the series as a whole, and especially in book seven, we find exceptions to the rule of community as Rowling and Grenz envision it. For one, the character of Snape ends up in a no-man's land between the two worlds, driven by romantic love, but still hated by both groups—especially after he kills their spiritual guide, Dumbledore. The presence of Snape as a Judas character, but one who is ultimately sympathetic, complicates the idea of love within the community as a higher power. In contrast, Voldemort's role in community, and the subsequent destruction of the community and himself through murder, Horcruxes, and Dark Magic, complicates the views of the community as related to death. Voldemort's fear of death seems to stem out of his lack of community, asking the question: "How close are each of our characters to evil? Is communal love all that keeps them on the side of the good?"

One of the failings of community in *Harry Potter* is that spiritual community works as long as it is expedient for all involved, which is yet another sign of the brokenness within the community. The wizards have a tendency to be just as selfish as their Muggle counterparts in the modern day Christian church—especially shown in the characters of Mundungus Fletcher, who is basically good, but will forgo protecting Harry to make a Sickle, and in the actions of various students at Hogwarts concerned about their Quidditch team more than the fact that Voldemort's back.¹ Harry acts on and rejects this

¹ See Angelina Johnson's behavior in *The Order of the Phoenix*, immediately after Umbridge disbands the Gryffindor House Quidditch team, page 355.

tendency to undermine community with selfishness. In book seven, when Harry realizes that it may not be a good idea to inform his friends of his impending death, he leaves them behind, which both underscores, and contrasts, his similarity to Jesus the Christ in the Gospels. He rises above, in the end, the selfishness of normal wizard behavior to sacrifice himself for the good of the community. Harry—though he is clearly to be interpreted as a Christ figure—is far from perfect: breaking rules in school, flouting authority, making mistakes, and being far from the Christ commonly cited by Christian tradition, one who is free from sin.² In contrast to the Jesus of Christian tradition, Harry seems much more human: bumbling along, making mistakes and figuring things out as he goes. As a result, if we pinpoint Harry as a Christ figure, there must subsequently be a Judas to betray him, and the question is whether Snape or Voldemort fills that role.

The argument for Snape as our Judas is quite strong. He betrays the wizarding community in the worst way possible: by killing off the only wizard Voldemort ever feared. Dumbledore's death disheartens the community, throwing it into chaos, and subsequent questions about the "holiness" or true righteousness so to speak, of the spiritual guide come to light. Rather than using Dumbledore's death as a rallying point, the wizarding community fractures even more—an element that would make us think that Voldemort is somehow behind it: a cut and dried Judas in the form of Snape destroying the community when he kills Dumbledore, with Voldemort as the evil Tempter in the background.³ However, the background story that we finally get in the next book reveals

² 1 Peter 2:22-24: "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.' When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed."

³ The Ministry falls to Voldemort's powers early in book seven and numerous wizards who are fighting are forced into hiding, meeting in secret, and nearly constant movement.

that it is much more complicated than Snape finally being turned to evil. Indeed, it is knowing, from Snape's memory, the entire backstory behind what led up to Dumbledore's death that convinces Harry that what he has to do is to sacrifice himself. Snape, in love with Harry's mother Lily, turns double agent against Voldemort, just before Voldemort's first attempted killing of Harry. We learned in book six that Snape is the Death Eater who overheard the prophecy about Harry and Voldemort, a prophecy that convinced Voldemort he needed to kill Harry and his parents. After Snape realized that the prophecy meant Lily Potter, the one love he never really got over, he begged Voldemort for mercy, to let Lily live. Voldemort, surprisingly, gives her a choice to live or die for her son, and, as we know, it is her choice on which the entire action of the series hinges (VII 679). Snape became a double agent, undertook becoming a spy against Lord Voldemort, all for love of Lily. Without Snape, we would, ostensibly, have no Harry, which is a paradox. Harry never would have realized that he himself was a Horcrux, and never would have had the courage to step out of the castle and go into the Forbidden Forest knowingly approaching his death had Snape not been willing to act as traitor in the first place. It is entirely because of the knowledge revealed in Snape's memory, given at the moment of his death, that Harry learns he is a Horcrux and must sacrifice himself in order that Voldemort may be killed. Without Snape's help, Harry never would have gone to death with "a well-organized mind."

Snape, much more than Harry, knows what sacrificial love feels like as he straddles the line between two worlds, ultimately agreeing to do what is seen as so despicable in the minds of the wizarding community and wizardlore that it can tear one's soul in half: he kills. His memories indicate to the readers, to Harry, and eventually to

the rest of the wizarding world that his killing of Dumbledore was more an act of mercy than that of a vicious killing and the betrayal of a dear friend:

“You alone know whether it will harm your soul to help an old man avoid pain and humiliation,” said Dumbledore. “I ask this one great favor of you, Severus, because death is coming for me as surely as the Chudley Cannons will finish in the bottom of this year’s league. I confess I should prefer a quick, painless exit to the protracted and messy affair it will be if, for instance, Greyback is involved—I hear Voldemort has recruited him? Or dear Bellatrix, who likes to play with her food before she eats it.”

His tone was light, but his blue eyes pierced Snape as they had frequently pierced Harry, as though the soul they discussed was visible to him. At last Snape gave another curt nod.

Dumbledore seemed satisfied. (VII 683)⁴

Snape’s murder of Dumbledore, then, was arguably a mercy killing, though one that knowingly would damage the community. In keeping this great secret so that Harry could be much more prepared to make the sacrifice that he had to make, Snape was acting with the wizarding population’s best interests at heart.

Snape, the arguably most love-driven character of them all, also has the surprising aspect of being the least integrated into community. While Harry has the benefit of being protected by love, and is able to love in many different ways, Snape’s form of love is, at first, one-sided. His deep, unabashed, yet hidden, romantic love toward Lily, Harry’s mother, inspires him to reach higher than his upbringing would suggest. Like Voldemort before him, and like Harry after him, Snape has no discernible reason to choose for love. Unlike, Voldemort, however, Snape has a sense of openness toward love, probably born out of actually having a mother and father—albeit abusive—at home, versus a community of fellow orphans and a matron, as in Voldemort’s case. However, Snape, though he had a family, had a broken one, leaving the child Snape confused and unaware

⁴ Additionally, Rowling tells us in the Leaky Cauldron webchat that Harry would have done all in his power to make sure that Snape’s name was cleared.

of what a healthy love looks like. His only glimpse into possibly healthy loving relationships is through the unconditional love that the child Lily Evans offers. She, as his best friend, offers him a confidante, a deep friendship, and probably some of the first friendly looks he has ever received. It is through seeing the type of person that Lily is that Snape makes decisions toward the good. Veronica Schanoes writes that “[Snape’s] being on the side of the angels is a distinct choice, one that he consistently makes despite loathing his allies” (134-5). This choice to love, however, is imperfect because he doesn’t see or experience the depth and breadth of familial love that our main hero, Harry, finds in his friends at Hogwarts. Snape’s obsession with Lily—shown in book seven by the doe Patronus, and that he steals a page of a letter with Lily’s name on it—leads him almost into community, but because he is only loving in one way, he ends up straddling the lines between good and evil.

And it is here that we discover a wrinkle in Rowling’s theory of love, something that makes it not as clear cut as it seems. Dumbledore’s statements in his speech to Harry about love indicate that the ability to love—in *any* sense—is what sets Harry apart from the evil in which Voldemort has so completely engrossed himself. Dumbledore elaborates:

You are protected, in short, by your ability to love! [...] The only protection that can possibly work against the lure of power like Voldemort’s! In spite of all the temptation you have endured, all the suffering, you remain pure of heart, just as pure as you were at the age of eleven, when you stared into a mirror that reflected your heart’s desire, and it showed you only the way to thwart Lord Voldemort, and not immortality or riches. Harry, have you any idea how few wizards could have seen what you saw in that mirror? Voldemort should have known then what he was dealing with, but he did not! [...] But then, he was in such a hurry to mutilate his own soul, he never paused to understand the incomparable power of a soul that is untarnished and whole. [...] You see, the prophecy does not mean you *have* to do anything! But the

prophecy caused Lord Voldemort to *mark you as his equal*. . . . In other words, you are free to choose your way, quite free to turn your back on the prophecy! But Voldemort continues to set store by the prophecy. He will continue to hunt you. (VI 511, emphasis original)

Dumbledore is clearly indicating here that Voldemort's major flaw, and the source of his subsequent downfall, is that he lacks the ability to love altogether. The ability to love, in any form, is the price of admission into the dynamic, functioning community of wizards, at least in a way that would help the community function at its smoothest. Why then, does Snape find himself so excluded? He loves, and quite deeply. As previously mentioned (Chapter 3), romantic love, in the *Harry Potter* novels, is seen as a symbol of community—Bill and Fleur's wedding is a potent symbol as well as a celebration. Snape, then, wallowing in unrequited love, seems not to have learned how to love in any way but as he loves Lily, and that love has complicated and tainted his view of the wizarding community. He, drawn to the power of dark forces, understands the pull of romantic love, but not of friendship, family, or even merely unconditional love for one's fellow wizard. Rowling's desire to keep him whole and redeem him in the end through allowing him a platform, a place to confess to this hidden love, indicates that openness and recognition of love is also quite key. She comments in an interview with Meredith Viera shortly after the release of *Deathly Hallows*: "Snape is a complicated man. He's bitter. He's . . . spiteful. He's a bully. All these things are still true of Snape, even at the end of the book. But was he brave? Yes, immensely. Was he capable of love? Very definitely. So he's—he's a very—he was a flawed human being, like all of us" (Viera). Snape, though he fights and snarls and generally gives the impression of being evil, still recognizes the conventions that love has in functioning within his community. He knows that if he loved Lily, he must work to protect Harry, and indeed, as Rowling hinted before

book seven's release, it is because Harry resembles Lily so closely that Snape is able to hold to his promise to protect him.

However, Snape is not accepted by the wizarding community because his love is hidden, unlike the highest functioning members of the company who are able to love with ease. For example, Molly Weasley, Ron's mother and matriarch of the Weasley clan, is able to accept Harry as her own son and share all of her family's meager possessions with him, even giving Harry, on his 17th birthday, a special watch belonging to her brother. Hagrid, also, loves not only his students, but his animals with a love bordering on obsessive fatherliness. Snape, by the time he is an adult, has seen examples of all of this type of love, and yet, remains closed off. Schanoes brings up once again our evidence that Snape may be a good character despite his lack of acceptance into the community:

In book I, Snape saves Harry's life despite their mutual hatred and injures himself trying to stop Quirrell from aiding Voldemort. Snape does not play a very large role in [b]ook II ... but in book III, Snape's complexity of character becomes quite clear in retrospect. Snape works very hard to brew a potion ("particularly complex") in order to help a man for whom he holds a lifelong hatred and who currently occupies the position he wants. Snape's fateful appearance at the Shrieking Shack in the final chapters of book III occurs because Lupin forgets to take his Wolfsbane potion and Snape is bringing him his needed dose. And Snape really does seem to believe that he is again saving Harry's life by trying to capture Lupin and Sirius Black. Finally, in book IV, Snape and McGonagall aid Dumbledore in saving Harry's life, and Rowling implies that Snape may well be returning to his previous, extraordinarily dangerous role as a spy in Voldemort's circle. Whatever his assignment is, he is carrying it out despite being terrified. (134)

In later books, we see Snape alerting the members of the Order of the Phoenix when Harry and Dumbledore's Army run off to the Department of Ministries to rescue Sirius, Snape softly and carefully healing Draco Malfoy's wound after Harry unwisely uses *Sectum Sempra*. We also see a Snape helping Ron, Hermione and Harry in their journey,

suggesting to Mundungus the seven Potters scheme at the beginning of book seven, providing the sword of Gryffindor to them at a time of need, and eventually dying at the hands of Voldemort. All of these actions seem to speak to the idea that, deep down, Snape is a good, trustworthy character; however, it is very, very deep down. Rowling comments: “Harry forgives him. . . . Harry really sees the good in Snape ultimately. I wanted there to be redemption and I wanted there to be forgiveness. And Harry forgives, even knowing that until the end Snape loathed him unjustifiably” (Viera).

Snape, clearly, is not without evil tendencies. Despite the cleansing of his reputation that occurs in book seven, his identity as the “Half-Blood Prince” emphasizes his pride over his mixed bloodline, and his spoken words seem to revile those who are Muggle-born. His everyday actions within the wizarding world seem to be intended to undermine the effectiveness of his larger efforts—what he says every day in the classroom seems to backtrack on the larger strides he is taking in saving Harry and his friends. It seems that the role he is playing as an evil wizard is one that he knows too well, and may even enjoy playing. His personality, whether by virtue of his upbringing, or by choice, seems to fit perfectly into the evil persona he is forced to take on as a Death Eater turned good guy. Indeed, in his interactions with students, he is one of the few people who manages to make Hermione cry on a consistent basis, mainly because of his outright abuse of his position as a teacher. Throughout the books, he takes the side of his house, the Slytherins, a group well known for their pure-bloodedness. In a particularly harsh incident in *The Goblet of Fire*, Draco casts a jinx on Hermione that makes her already chipmunk-like teeth grow abnormally fast. When Snape interrupts the fight and sends Goyle to the hospital wing, and is asked if he could do the same for Hermione, he

looks at her and sneers, “I see no difference” (IV 299-300). Snape’s particular brand of meanness fits his role perfectly, but also seems to unnecessarily bias the readers (and Harry) against the Potions Master.

He has held an anti-Muggle worldview since he was a child—one of the breaking points in his relationship with Lily is that he calls her a Mudblood (VII 675). Even his seemingly salvific affection for Lily falls apart when it fails to extend to James and Harry:

“If she means that much to you,” said Dumbledore, “surely Lord Voldemort will spare her? Could you not ask for mercy for the mother, in exchange for the son?”

“I have – I have asked him –“

“You disgust me,” said Dumbledore, and Harry had never heard so much contempt in his voice. Snape seemed to shrink a little. “You do not care, then, about the deaths of her husband and child? They can die, as long as you have what you want?”

Snape said nothing, but merely looked up at Dumbledore.

“Hide them all, then,” he croaked. “Keep her – them – safe. Please.” (VII 678)

Snape’s motivation (and subsequently his frustration and consternation) is because he is in love with a girl who is across bloodlines. An analogous relationship would be the white son of racist parents, raised to espouse their same attitude, meeting, becoming friends with and eventually falling in love with an African-American woman. While Snape might still vocally espouse that old view because it works in his selfish favor, he has ultimately been overtaken by love. His anger comes not from a rooted worldview anymore, but from anger at both playing this façade and at maintaining an unrequited love. For all his talk of bloodlines, and boasts of being pureblood, his history speaks quite differently—his identity as the Half-Blood Prince, rather than complicating the issue, clarifies things. Secretly, he is proud of his mixed blood, but because he acts

partially from selfish motive in hiding his love and from desire to play his role as double agent, he maintains an outward appearance of reinforcing pure blood, of disrespecting Muggle-borns, of seemingly undermining the community of the wizarding world. It is as Veronica Schanoes describes, Rowling's narrative technique in creating the character of Snape is to trick her readers, just as he tricks his followers (132). His love for Lily comes as that much more of a surprise, and the fact that he had been secretly working for the community all along fails to complicate his character—instead, it makes all the answers fall into place. Rather than Snape as an outlier in the community, Rowling clearly sets him up to *appear* as an evil character—he is the character we love to hate—and in doing so, we place him far outside the community of wizards. It is not necessarily Snape who has isolated himself, but rather we the readers and the wizarding community who have rejected and isolated him. He finds himself rejected, and so refuses to reach out to the community, and because he refuses to reach out, the community continues to reject him. Both ends of the communal relationship have failed in the character of Severus Snape.

But in learning the background story, in learning how deeply he loves, Snape is welcomed back into the community. The revelation of his struggle clarifies the complicated nature of his character, and while he appears to reside outside the community, he is instead the exemplar of sacrificial love. Snape's seeming outsider status is one of the keys to understanding the themes of sacrificial and communal love within the series—it is because he is an outsider that his love seems much more heroic. In his decision to hide his love, in taking up the mantle of double agent, he allows others to revile him, he willingly steps away from a wizarding community. Both sides of the equation fail in the character of Snape—because he is limited by his tunnel vision of love

for Lily, he does not know the importance of becoming fully a part of the wizarding community and the wizarding community, quick to judge him without consideration for the idea that he is a grown man with feelings, reviles him and doesn't allow him a place at the table. Rowling gives us a hint of this failure on both sides in a conversation between Harry and Lupin in book six, after Harry has suspected Snape of something devious yet again:

“It isn't our business to know,” said Lupin unexpectedly. He had turned his back to the fire now and faced Harry across Mr. Weasley. “It's Dumbledore's business. Dumbledore trusts Severus, and that ought to be good enough for all of us.”

“But,” said Harry, “just say – just say Dumbledore's wrong about Snape—“

“People have have said it many times. It comes down to whether or not you trust Dumbledore's judgment. I do; therefore, I trust Severus.... You are determined to hate him, Harry. ... And I understand; with James as your father, with Sirius as your godfather, you have inherited an old prejudice.” (VI 332-33)

Dumbledore, knowing fully both sides of Snape, is the only one who pushes him into acceptable wizarding community, allowing him a place to do good and to work for the community that he doesn't understand and that doesn't understand him. Lupin chooses to trust Dumbledore's right judgment even if he doesn't understand. While neither liking nor disliking Snape, Lupin accepts him into the community, recognizing that it is the only way the community can work together, something which Harry and the readers (as they are led by the narrator) refuse to do. Snape's failure to become a part of the spiritual community of the wizarding world is as much the fault of other wizards as it is his own.

In respect to Snape's halfway status between the worlds of good and evil, of acceptance and rejection, his “master,” Voldemort, offers a different story. Voldemort seems beyond redemption and one of the complications of the love in the community that

Rowling sets up is the idea of redeeming people into the community. He seems from the start to be beyond redemption, drawing, once again, choice and destiny into tension. This tension is most clearly crystallized in the different views of death as represented by Harry and Voldemort, who are foils to each other.

The first view we're presented with is when Dumbledore tells Harry in *The Sorcerer's Stone* that "to the well-organized mind, death is but the next great adventure" (I 297). How the individual chooses to live in community affects how he may choose to approach the end of that life. Voldemort, who refuses to live within community, greets his death with fear and very little grace; whereas Dumbledore, a man surrounded by community for his entire life, and a man choosing to love everyone deliberately, greets his death calmly and even gracefully. Voldemort fears death greatly, as Dumbledore indicates:

There is nothing to be feared from a body, Harry, any more than there is anything to be feared from darkness. Lord Voldemort, who of course secretly fears both, disagrees. But once again he reveals his own lack of wisdom. It is the unknown that we fear when we look upon death and darkness, nothing more. (VI 566)

Indeed, Voldemort's fear of death is precisely what condemns him: in his efforts to avoid and conquer death, he willingly tears himself apart and traverses into realms of the darkest magic—he knowingly destroys the community between body and soul. That fear of death is his motivation for turning into a dark wizard—he holds a belief from childhood that magical power should be able to overcome death: "My mother can't have been magic, or she wouldn't have died" (VI 275). Instead of concentrating on living within a community, learning how to make the best of his life with others, he goes deeply into misery, with a willingness to live a half-life in order that he may simply delay or

conquer death.⁵ His desire to conquer death by magical means leads him to create Horcruxes, a piece of incredibly dark magic that requires the death of another human being, whether Muggle or Wizard, in order to be performed, and thus requires a breaking apart of community. His followers, also, are called Death Eaters, a name symbolic of the attempts to defeat death, and his symbol—a snake and a skull intertwined—are potent symbols of death and destruction, indicating both his obsession with and fear of death.

In contrast, Rowling gives us Dumbledore, and Harry, his disciple, as those who are learning how to greet death with open arms, rather than turning and running away. They learn how to love in community and therefore greet death as an old friend. It is as Jürgen Moltmann has stated previously—connections to ancestral and communal relationships result in the removal of the fear of death, in a way to approach death without fear. Because Harry’s battle with Voldemort began essentially when an act of love defeated an act of hate and fear, he has been protected from the time he was very young by the forces of love. Rowling provides her character with various substitute father figures throughout his life who show him love, affection and selflessness. Dumbledore is the most important of these—especially as our identified spiritual guide. It is through Dumbledore that Harry can begin to understand what love and sacrifice truly mean, and it is Dumbledore who gives Harry the tools to finally approach death with open arms. Indeed, in book seven, when Harry finds Dumbledore’s family gravesite, another explicitly Christian connection is made: Matthew 6:21 is written on the grave of Dumbledore’s sister (VII 325). The verse, “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also,” underscores the importance of family and community in Dumbledore’s life.

⁵ In book one, the centaur Firenze indicates that the drinking of unicorn blood would confine one to a kind of half-life, one continuing but unfulfilled (I 258).

Having been the brother left in charge, and eschewing that responsibility, as we learn in the chapter about King's Cross station, Dumbledore has held throughout his life the regret of being the source of his family's destruction. His "heart" needs to be in the right place, and Harry's discovery of this sentiment on a gravesite underscores that connection. Because of Harry's ability to love and to function within a community, he has managed to remain pure of soul, not willing to sacrifice this purity in an attempt to defeat death, but rather willing to give even his enemies a chance at redemption.

This conflict, indeed, between fear of death and, if not affection, willingness to embrace it, is what the series comes down to. *The Deathly Hallows* emphasizes this decision as Harry is choosing between chasing the Hallows or finishing the job of Horcruxes. Even with his less tainted, more pure, soul, he is still tempted to chase after that sort of power and immortality that possessing the Elder Wand, the Invisibility Cloak, and the Resurrection Stone would suggest. Rowling couches this decision within a labor of love as Harry digs a grave for Dobby, in a way showing that Harry will choose love and sacrifice—the harder path—over the easy way of trying to use magic to achieve all ends, even immortality. The use of magical means to defeat death—the Hallows—fills Harry with a joyless obsession, much like that which takes hold of Voldemort in his desire to overcome mortality. But in the end, it is Harry's overpowering love for a creature who sacrificed himself for Harry that helps Harry to make the decision to take the path of love over death. When he climbs out of the grave which he had dug for Dobby, his decision is made (VII 479).

Voldemort, in contrast to Harry's decisions facing death, destroys the normalcy that exists within his own body in his efforts to avoid death, destroying community at its

deepest levels—the balance between body and soul. Voldemort is identified and ostracized as evil precisely because of his willingness to disregard such a relationship. Not only does Voldemort destroy those surrounding him, but also destroys that which must exist within himself: his body and soul functioning together. This is evidenced especially in Voldemort’s marked appearance after he has been creating the Horcruxes—read: murdering—for awhile. When Voldemort rises out of the cauldron in *The Goblet of Fire*, he is physically different from all those present: “Harry stared back into the face that had haunted his nightmares for three years. Whiter than a skull, with wide, livid scarlet eyes and a nose that was flat as a snake’s with slits for nostrils...” (IV 643). This is not, however, Voldemort’s appearance as most would have known him when he was Tom Riddle. In *Half Blood Prince*, Harry notes in a memory that Voldemort’s life of murder and destruction of his own soul must have taken a toll on his physical appearance:

His features were not those Harry had seen emerge from the great stone cauldron almost two years ago: They were not as snake-like, the eyes were not yet scarlet, the face not yet masklike, and yet he was no longer the handsome Tom Riddle. It was as though his features had been burned and blurred; they were waxy and oddly distorted, and the whites of the eyes now had a permanently bloody look, though the pupils were not yet the slits that Harry knew they would become. (IV 441)

As Voldemort is growing in evil and damaging his soul, his physical appearance—his corporeal body—is also changing to resemble that which is regarded as evil in the Christian tradition—a serpent. As his soul changes, so does his outward appearance. One cannot inflict that much damage on a soul without its taking a toll on the physical body. However, this particularly striking aspect and explanation of Voldemort seems to deny the difference Rowling establishes between body and soul.⁶ The soul, however

⁶ It should be noted here that the difference Rowling establishes, while good as narrative and plot device, is not what is recognized as “good theology.” Many theologians today agree that the resurrection of

separate it is said to be from the body, is still very much tied to the corporeal world as changes in the soul affect changes in the body. One possible explanation is the idea that because Voldemort had no connection to community, he had no true concept of what he was doing, and therefore, no concept of what a soul does when it is ripped apart. Because no one else in recorded wizard history has ever divided their soul into multiple pieces, there is no precedent, but it is clear that the relationship between body and soul is complex and cannot be explored without detrimental effects on the person.

Harry is the only person who is able to experience what life after death may be like. When he approaches his death, he uses the Resurrection Stone to call to himself those who have passed before him, who are brought back not out of Harry's selfish desire, but to comfort him on his way to join them: "It did not matter about bringing them back, for he was about to join them. He was not really fetching them: They were fetching him" (VII 698). Harry calls those he loves back to himself so that he may learn to approach death in a way precisely the opposite of Voldemort's view—without fear, without running away. After being killed, Harry finds himself in some sort of purgatorial afterlife, a way station between worlds. Choice, the center of the philosophy of the series, is underscored again in that Harry can choose to return to earth, to return to his body. Harry, as our Christ figure, decides to return so that other souls may not be maimed—not that they be killed, but Dumbledore specifically says "maimed" (VII 722), indicating that more souls would be damaged beyond repair, turn irrevocably evil, if Voldemort wins here, if Harry does not overcome death. Dumbledore also adds that

believers referred to in 1 Corinthians 15 means not only a resurrection of the "soul," but of bodies entirely, indicating that the relationship between body and soul is much more intertwined than Platonic thought, expressed in Rowling, would dictate. It is beyond my scope to discuss the whole of the theology here, but for more information, Stanley Grenz's *The Social God and the Relational Self*, as well as N.T. Wright's *Surprised by Hope* (see bibliography) have interesting theological explorations of the issue.

“fewer families would be torn apart” if Harry should return (VII 722). It is love, again, that is underscored as the final solution—Harry’s love for those around him, for his community and new family, that forces him to see that this is the sacrifice that must be made, and that is what keeps his soul clean and pure.

In the end, both our Judas and our great enemy work to reinforce both the brokenness and the dynamism of community. Both are playing roles, but only one of them realizes it. Harry’s offer of redemption to Voldemort and Voldemort’s breaking apart of his own soul are not complications, but manifestations of and reactions to the ideas of communal love. Snape, seeing love possibly clearer than most—with the exception of Dumbledore—plays his role knowingly and convincingly, turning eventually into one of the greatest martyrs of the book. Snape is ultimately the most human of them all, struggling with what he is called to do and refusing to do it. He is ultimately the most tragic in that redemption, for him, only comes after he has already sacrificed everything he could for the community that has continually rejected him. All characters in Harry Potter’s world reflect the current brokenness of the spiritual community, and each deal with it in his or her own way; Snape and Voldemort, however, are our clearest examples of the two extremes and are therefore worth looking at closely.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

At the end of a 4,200 page journey with Harry Potter, the unlikely hero with a lightning shaped scar, the reader should have a better understanding of what it means to love in community, and a better picture of that which breaks it apart. Through each of the books in the series, J.K. Rowling draws out themes of community, family, home and romantic love to tie them all back together in the denouement. Rowling's vision of community is connected and intertwined with concepts of Christian community, specifically the Body of Christ as Stanley Grenz, Jürgen Moltmann, and Stanley Hauerwas also envision it. The Christian parent, rather than being terrified that his or her child is reading about witches and wizards and spells, can now use the books as a starting point for discussion about what it truly means to love one's neighbor, or, indeed, one's enemy.

With the story of Harry and his relationship to community, Rowling has also issued a challenge to her readers: to love as boldly, as openly and as greatly as Harry does in the moment that he offers Voldemort a chance to repent. It is, yet again, in the words of the spiritual guide of the books, Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore, that we find our challenge and our moral: "Do not pity the dead, Harry. Pity the living, and, above all, those who live without love. By returning, you may ensure that fewer souls are maimed, fewer families are torn apart. If that seems to you a worthy goal, then we say good-bye for the present" (VII 723). Harry's world reflects a church body, a community

that has its ups and downs, but in the end reflects the search for a higher power. In the case of both the wizarding and the Muggle world, that higher power is love—love which binds, challenges, comforts, protects, and pushes community members beyond whatever limits they thought they had. In the characters of Ron, Hermione and Harry, we find the communal bond of deep friendship, a friendship which acts like family. In Dumbledore, we find the wisdom that comes with loving deeply, a wisdom to know not only what a person's powers are, but also his limits and how to use both to benefit others. In Snape, we find the conflict of knowing some portion of love but not all, and therefore finding rejection from the community to which one rightly belongs. In Voldemort, we see how a lack of community becomes destructive, not only to a person's self, but to everyone surrounding him. And in every minor character, we find variations on the virtue of love, reconciliation, sacrifice and community—families brought together, torn apart, those dysfunctional and those happy, in the inferiority of some characters and in the superiority of others. This thesis is by no means an end-all-be-all of the ideas of community in *Harry Potter*, but merely comments on a conversation that Rowling started and all of her readers will continue. In reading Harry's journey toward redemption, Christian readers—particularly those fearful Christian parents—may learn how to continue their own.

GLOSSARY

People

Albus Dumbledore. The Headmaster of Hogwarts, Albus is one of the most renowned wizards of his age, famous before he left Hogwarts, and well known as the only wizard Voldemort ever feared. Dumbledore is instrumental in shaping the philosophy of the series, and acts as the spiritual guide for the people of the school. He is killed in book six by Severus Snape after returning from a search for a Horcrux with Harry.

Barty Crouch, Jr/Fake Moody. Son of the minister of International Magical Cooperation, Barty Crouch is a vehement follower of Voldemort, sent to Azkaban shortly after Voldemort attacked Harry Potter's parents for torturing Neville Longbottom's parents into insanity. Crouch was smuggled out of prison by his father, and kept in hiding for a number of years until he escaped and took on the persona of Mad-Eye Moody to make his way into Hogwarts and manipulate the Tri-Wizard tournament to get Harry to the graveyard where Voldemort comes back.

Bill Weasley. Ron's oldest brother, Bill works for Gringott's, the wizarding bank, and marries Fleur Delacour in the seventh book.

Crabbe/Goyle. Draco Malfoy's thug buddies, these two members of Slytherin are essentially around to be muscle, but end up accidentally destroying one of the Horcruxes.

Dobby: House-elf owned by the Malfoys, Dobby is freed by Harry in the second book, and killed by Bellatrix Lestrange (one of Voldemort's followers and friend of Barty Crouch) in book seven. It is in digging a grave for Dobby that Harry makes the decision to pursue the Horcruxes instead of the Hallows.

Draco Malfoy. Draco is a student the same age as Harry, he is a member of Slytherin and Harry's enemy for the time of school. Draco becomes the youngest Death Eater and is instructed to kill Dumbledore, a task he is unable to complete in book six, making him a complex character straddling the line between good and evil. Draco is the son of Lucius and Narcissa.

Fleur Delacour. Fleur is the Tri-Wizard Champion from Beaubaxton's, the French school. Fleur is Bill's wife.

The Dursleys. Consisting of Vernon, Petunia and Dudley Dursley, these are the main Muggle characters of the series. Petunia is Harry's aunt and after her sister Lily and husband James are killed by Lord Voldemort, the Dursleys agree to take Harry in, thereby sealing the protective spell of sacrificial love. The relationship is not a good one, however, as Harry is often treated like an unwanted servant.

Gellert Grindelwald. Gellert is an evil wizard only surpassed by Voldemort. He and Dumbledore were friends for a summer growing up, and sought to unite the Deathly Hallows. He was the owner of the Elder Wand for a short period of time, and was defeated by Dumbledore (who is the owner of the Elder wand for most of the series).

Griphook. Gringott's Goblin who helps Harry, Ron and Hermione break into Gringott's to find one of the Horcruxes that is hidden in a vault.

Hagrid. Hogwarts' gamekeeper, Hagrid is a half-giant who was expelled from school the first time the Chamber of Secrets was opened (he took the blame for Tom Riddle).

Harry Potter. The main character of the series, known by the lightning shaped scar on his forehead and round glasses. Harry's parents were killed by Lord Voldemort, and he subsequently went to live with the Dursleys, his only living relatives. He is "The Boy Who Lived" and eventually "The Chosen One."

Hermione Granger. One of Harry's best friends, she is a Muggle-born who takes school very seriously, and is the best student of her year, if not the whole school. Hermione's quick logic gets Harry out of fixes quite frequently, and she is a big aid in finding Horcruxes and learning spells.

Hogwarts Founders. Four famous wizards, whom each house is named after, founded Hogwarts: Godric Gryffindor, Helga Hufflepuff, Rowena Ravenclaw, and Salazar Slytherin. In-fighting among the four led to the splitting of the school into houses in the first place—Slytherin insisted on admitting only purebloods, and Gryffindor wanted anyone magical. Thus each house's qualities reflect the qualities of its founders.

James Potter. Harry Potter's father, a former student at Hogwarts, and one of the primary rebels against Voldemort during Voldemort's first rise to power while Harry was under one year old.

Kreacher. Sirius Black's house elf, Kreacher is an old creature who has spent year repeating the anti-Muggle sentiments of most of the Black family, and now has gone a little bit off his rocker. In book seven, it is revealed that Kreacher actually helped Regulus Black undermine Voldemort.

Lily Potter. Harry's mother, and Petunia Dursley's sister. She was best friends with Snape until he called her a Mudblood during their fifth or sixth year together at

Hogwarts, at which point she started being closer friends with James, eventually marrying him and producing Harry.

Lucius Malfoy. Draco's father and one of the followers of Voldemort, Lucius' mansion plays the part of the Death Eater's headquarters in book seven.

Mad-Eye Moody. Alastor "Mad-Eye" Moody is an Auror, or Dark Wizard Catcher, who has clearly been through many battles—he has a wooden leg, a chunk missing from his nose, and possibly strangest, a magical eye that can see all around him in 360 degrees.

Minerva McGonagall. Deputy Headmistress and head of Gryffindor house, McGonagall is one of the most reliable members of the Order of the Phoenix, and very experienced at Transfiguration—she is an Animagus, which means she is able to turn herself into an animal of her choice (in her instance, a cat) at will.

Molly Weasley. Ron's mother, Molly acts as a second mother to Harry, and is a member of Order of the Phoenix.

Narcissa Malfoy. Draco's mother, Narcissa does not have much of a role until the very end of book seven, when, after Harry wakes up from being shocked by the Avada Kedavra, she is the one who checks to see if he is alive and lies to Voldemort about it, creating a turning point in the series.

Nearly Headless Nick/Nicolas de Mimsy Poppington. The ghost of Gryffindor house, Nearly Headless Nick is a sort of secondary friend to the children, popping up at times when they want to talk about something or discuss things related to death. In book two, he has his 500th Death-Day party.

Neville Longbottom. A fellow Gryffindor, Neville is the other student who may have been named in the prophecy, and is skilled in the area of Herbology, and only Herbology. Neville shows a little bit of bravery in *The Sorcerer's Stone*, but really comes into his own in *The Deathly Hallows* when he kills off Voldemort's snake, Nagini, the final Horcrux.

Peter Pettigrew. Friend of Remus, James and Sirius during their years at Hogwarts, Peter is an Animagus, and was actually the one who betrayed James and Lily to Lord Voldemort the month that they died. He is also the person who gives "the flesh of the servant" to bring Voldemort back to his body.

Professor Quirrell. The Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher in Harry's first year, Quirrell actually turned out to be playing host body to Voldemort, and was killed (albeit accidentally) in the fight against Harry in the denouement of book one.

Regulus Black. Sirius' brother, he was a servant to Voldemort, eventually finding out about the Horcruxes and betraying his Master by removing the locket.

Remus Lupin. Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher in the third year, Lupin is an old friend of James', and a werewolf, which is the reason that Sirius, James and Peter became Animagi in the first place. Remus has much experience in being ostracized because he is a werewolf.

The Riddles. Tom Riddle, Sr. is Voldemort's Muggle father, and is from a family which lived near Merope Gaunt, Voldemort's mother. Merope enchanted Tom to make him marry her, and after she got pregnant, she lifted the enchantment and he left her. When Voldemort was 16, he found out about his past, and went to Little Hangleton (the hometown of the Riddles) and killed Tom Riddle and his parents. It was presumably their killings that he used to make his first Horcrux.

Ron Weasley. Harry's best friend, this red-headed, freckly kid who comes from a pure-blood family, but, unlike the Malfoys, his family doesn't consider bloodlines to be important. Ron destroys the first Horcrux in book seven, and is a great source of support for Harry.

Severus Snape. The Potions Master for most of the series, Snape was at school as the same time as James and Lily, but was only friends with Lily until they went their separate ways in their fifth or sixth year. Snape's (arguably) most important impact in the book is killing Dumbledore in book six, which allows him to take the place of Headmaster of Hogwarts school in book seven, surprisingly, putting him into a position to help Harry out.

Sibyll Trelawney. The Divination teacher, Trelawney is generally considered to be a fraud, were it not for her few correct predictions throughout her life. It is she who originally made the prophecy concerning The Dark Lord and Harry Potter, and also predicts the return of Voldemort in book three.

Sirius Black. Best friend of James and Lily, Sirius is Harry's godfather and was imprisoned wrongly for the death of 12 Muggles shortly after James and Lily were killed. Sirius provides the Order of the Phoenix a headquarters in book five, eventually dying at the hand of his cousin, Bellatrix Lestrange, during a battle at the Ministry of Magic.

Voldemort/Tom Riddle. Generally regarded as the most evil wizard of all time, Voldemort is the alias of Tom Marvolo Riddle, Voldemort is alternately known as He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named or You-Know-Who, he has a number of extremely powerful spells at his command and is the only wizard known to create so many Horcruxes. In the seventh book he can fly on his own, and kills Harry before Harry makes his own curse rebound on him again, finally killing him off.

Special Words/Terms

Avada Kedavra. The Killing Curse. One of the three Unforgivable Curses, as defined by Mad-Eye Moody in *The Goblet of Fire*.

Azkaban. The wizard prison. It is on an island out in the middle of the North Sea. Sirius Black spends 12 years here for a crime he didn't commit.

The Daily Prophet. The wizard newspaper, through which Rowling reveals many plot developments and twists. *The Daily Prophet* starts taking jibes at Harry's sanity in book five, and eventually falls into Voldemort's hands in book seven as he is taking over.

Death Eaters. What Voldemort's followers call themselves.

Deathly Hallows. Consisting of the Elder Wand, the Invisibility Cloak, and the Resurrection Stone, each of the Hallows, when collected by one person, are said to make that person the master of death.

Dementors. The guards of Azkaban, these otherworldly creatures spread despair everywhere they go—their diet is the negative feelings of others, and thus, when a dementor is near, a person relives the worst experiences of his or her life.

Dementor's Kiss. Lupin defines this as possibly the worst punishment a person could experience. The dementor sucks the soul of a person out through his or her mouth, leaving them a shell of a body.

Diagon Alley. The wizarding equivalent of High (in America, Main) Street in London. Hidden behind the Leaky Cauldron pub, Diagon Alley contains Madame Malkin's Robes for All Occasions, Flourish and Blotts' Bookshop, Gringott's Bank, several apothecaries, pet stores, and broom shops.

Elder Wand. A wand made from Elder wood and the hair of a Thestral (see below), this wand is said to be given to one of the brothers Peverall by Death himself in the Tale of the Three Brothers by Beedle the Bard. The first of the three Deathly Hallows, the Elder Wand is said to be unbeatable, and is the most sought after of the Hallows.

Forbidden Forest. Bordering the grounds of Hogwarts school, the forest is, as its name implies, forbidden to all students. The forest is where the Thestrals live, along with a huge hive of Acromantulas (giant spiders), and is the home of a large herd of centaurs.

Half-Blood Prince. In book six, Harry gets an old textbook for Advanced Potion Making that is covered in scribbles from a mysterious person calling himself "The Half Blood Prince." Following these scribbles helps Harry become the star of the

potions class, though they also end up nearly destroying his relationship with Snape when he uses a spell from it on Draco Malfoy, nearly killing him. The identity of the Half Blood Prince is later to be revealed as Snape.

Hogwarts. The British wizarding school, every magical child in Britain gets a letter informing them of their acceptance to attend at age eleven.

Horcruxes. Voldemort's method of achieving immortality, Horcruxes are a sort of talisman that contains a piece of a wizard's soul. It protects the soul, and if a wizard's body is killed, he is not actually dead because a piece of his soul is contained elsewhere and lives on.

Invisibility Cloak. The second of the three Deathly Hallows, the Invisibility Cloak offers the wearer complete invisibility, even from Death himself. The Cloak was passed down from the Peverall brothers to the line of James Potter, and subsequently to Harry himself.

Leglimency. The practice of seeing what is in someone else's mind. It is not precisely mind-reading, but rather is the practice of invading a person's mind and pulling out certain thoughts and things he or she may not want known. Voldemort is particularly skilled at it.

Muggle. A non-magical person. The most prominent Muggles in the book are the Dursleys—Vernon, Petunia, and Dudley—Harry Potter's relatives.

Occlumency. The practice of closing one's mind to Leglimency. It involves emptying one's mind of emotion and thoughts. Snape is especially skilled at this.

Patronus. A Patronus charm is essentially a projection of good feeling, of happiness that a wizard is able to put forward, often as a guard against Dementors. A Patronus charm is very difficult to do, but Harry masters it in his third year, thanks to the teaching of Remus Lupin. A Patronus, when fully formed, will take on the form of an animal that is representative of some aspect of its wizard's personality—Harry's Patronus is a stag, in remembrance of his father, for example.

Priori Incantatem. A spell that shows the last spell cast by a wand. Bartimus Crouch uses it to determine what wand cast the Dark Mark (Voldemort's sign) at the Quidditch World Cup in book IV, and it appears again during the graveyard scene in the same book, the spell is also the result of a link between Voldemort and Harry's wands, which share a core of phoenix feather from the same phoenix.

Quidditch. The wizarding equivalent of football, Quidditch is played on brooms, with four balls—the Quaffle, the Snitch, and two Bludgers. Each of the houses in Hogwarts has their own team, and Harry is seeker on his House team.

Resurrection Stone. The third of the Deathly Hallows, the Resurrection Stone, when turned over three times, calls back from the dead those most dear to the person. Harry uses it to call back his parents, Lupin, Tonks, and Sirius to himself.

Sectum Sempra. One of the spells invented by the Half Blood Prince, this spell essentially acts as though the wand is a sword, creating hard to repair wounds on the person attacked.

Thestral. Thestrals are magic horse-like creatures that a wizard can only see after he has seen death. These creatures appear in *The Order of the Phoenix*, and take the remaining members of Dumbledore's Army to the Ministry of Magic to rescue Sirius.

Tri-Wizard Tournament. In book IV, wizarding schools from France, England and Bulgaria, to compete in a tournament between schools. Each school submits a champion (who is then selected by the Goblet of Fire) to compete in three tasks, culminating in the possibility of winning 1,000 Galleons (wizard money), and the title of Tri-Wizard champion.

Unforgivable Curses. Three curses that are ruled illegal by the Ministry. They are *Crucio* (a torture curse), *Imperio* (a curse which allows you to control another person), *Avada Kedavra* (defined above).

Wand. This is a wizard's conduit for magic, the wand acts an extension of a wizard. Each wand is made from some sort of wood, and a core of some sort of magical creatures.

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