



Gender, Body And Performance Of Identity: A Study Of The Harry Potter Series

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ABSTRACT

The present study is based on secondary sources and tries to understand the performance of identity through gender body in the Harry Potter series. In this paper, the study highlights various issues such as body politics, gender identity through characters, and stigma, in the Harry Potter series it has been observed how gender is portrayed through various characters.

Keywords: Gender, Body, Identity, Character and Harry Potter

Introduction

J.K. Rowling's "Harry Potter" series transcends being a children's fantasy genre and parodies complexified narratives of the human experience. If looked at through a magical glass, fluidity and transformation arise in representations of gender expressions. This research puts forth that clothing and performance are fundamental for characters constructing and negotiating their own identities. The analysis also covers the "body politic" in the wizarding world, along with the question of the distribution of power related to gender. Tied into this is an examination of how the portrayal of the monstrous offers insight into how this series challenges conventional understandings of masculinity and femininity. Indeed, these thematic threads are analysed in the chapter to try and shed light on the intricate play between the corporeal and the performative in the "Harry Potter" series. There will be much that speaks of gender dynamics across all the boundaries of the ordinary and the fantastic, adding to a fuller understanding of gender representations in today's literature. This essay will analyse the deconstruction of binary gender roles through the lens of identity and magic in the Harry Potter series by J.K. Rowling (Rowling, 1997-2011). By examining the characters and their experiences, we can explore a world where girls are not confined to traditional princess roles and boys are not expected to suppress their emotions (Rowling, 1997-2011). That's part of the magic that J.K. Rowling weaves into Harry Potter. Sure, there are hints of the usual "boys are brave, girls are kind" stuff (Rowling, 1997-2011). Harry is the champion and a fighter; he never shies away from a fight, just like he braved the evil Voldemort in the graveyard at the end of "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire," Vol. 4. Then there is Ron, who may be a little insecure about his place beside Harry and Hermione, yet is fiercely loyal and a great friend, there to comfort Harry after Sirius died in "Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix" (Rowling, 2003). There are glimpses of traditional masculinity and femininity, but otherwise, the characters are so much more complex, often defying expectations, and revealing a spectrum of identities.

Traits and Expectations:

Masculinity traditionally represents the ideas of bravery, strength, and logic. It evokes images of knights in shining armour, and Harry Potter embodies these qualities, indeed charging into danger headfirst and idealizing courage. Ron Weasley, on the other hand, despite his insecurities, demonstrates emotional intelligence and loyalty-feminine qualities.

Femininity: Traditionally associated with the caring motherly type of nurturing, sensitivity, and smartness, Hermione Granger, a brilliant and emerging witch, smashes this stereotype. She's outrageously intelligent and logical, continuously looking up spells like the confundus charm she puts on Snape in "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban" (Rowling, 1999), yet at the same time, she possesses some very prominent traits of loyalty and sense of justice, standing for house-elves' rights throughout the series (Rowling, 1997-2011)

Challenging the Norms

Hermione Granger: She constantly breaks this mould of the "damsel in distress." She is the one who comes up with the plans, works through spells like the time-turner in "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban" Vol. 3, and often recovers the day because of her immense knowledge. This challenges the notion that girls can't be the heroes and intelligence behind the operation. **Bellatrix Lestrange:** In absolute contrast to Hermione, Bellatrix presents a mortified version of feminine power. She is unfeeling, sadistic, and enjoys violence most people regard as the opposite of the essentially nurturing nature of women. This dark side is shown through her vicious torture of Neville's parents in "Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix", Vol. 5.

Ron Weasley: At first, he appears to fit into the conventional masculine role because he is athletic and has a great fascination with Quidditch. However, Ron Weasley has bouts of self-doubt and insecurities, whereby he sheds tears openly and, in most cases, becomes vulnerable. We see this after he argues with Harry in "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire" (Rowling, 2000), where he runs off and cries in the dormitory.

Draco Malfoy: He is undoubtedly, at the outset, the stereotypical bully who believes that pure-blood families are superior to all others and that he owes special allegiance to his pure-blood lineage. However, as the series progresses, he also shows occasional glimpses of fear and inner turmoil. He is thus more complex than what was initially perceived could be expected. We can see him in a dilemma when he is asked to identify Harry in "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows" (Rowling, 2007)

Magic and Subversion

The magical world lends itself to unique play with gender norms. Polyjuice Potion enables physical transformation into another person, regardless of gender. That challenges the very notion of a fixed identity rooted in the body. Characters like Tonks, an efficient Auror often changing appearance, go even further to show this flexibility in presentation. Her ability to wilfully change her hair colour and facial features throughout the series shows this well.

Harry Potter by J.K. Rowling has complex portrayals of gender. Characters break stereotypes while their personalities and motivations span the spectrum. Magic, in its power to transform, is an instrument of social norms that enables the creation of a world where one's sense of identity goes beyond what conventional masculinity and femininity can allow.

Clothing and the Performance of Gender in Harry Potter

J.K. Rowling weaves a world where sartorial choices transcend the realms of mere fabric and fashion, forming a most interesting reflection and construction of gender identity within the magical realm. The traditional black robes of Hogwarts eliminate any semblance of individuality at first glance. Still, there are minute differences. Harry, Ron, and Hermione add scarves in their house colour and house badges to their robes as a way to signal their affiliation and school spirit. This suggests that even within a uniform, an allowance is made for the students to express their sense of self in some way.

Although J.K. Rowling does not delve deep into the everyday attire differences between the three major wizarding schools, including Hogwarts, Beauxbatons, and Durmstrang, there are hints of information about their attire during certain events that show some cultural inclinations. For instance, as far as Hogwarts is concerned, uniformity can be observed in the fact that there exists a sort of robe uniformity in black for one and all. This might be reflected in the area of discipline, tradition, and probably a sense of equality across the houses.

House Colours: The students individualise their uniforms by displaying scarves, badges, and ties in their house colours: Gryffindor red, Ravenclaw blue, Hufflepuff yellow, and Slytherin green. This indicated that it is the measurement for manifesting school spirit or for a person to identify which house he belongs to.

Beauxbatons: Elegance in Form: In the Triwizard Tournament in "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire," Beauxbatons students sport shimmering blue uniforms that bring to mind formal wear, indicating a much more elegant, perhaps stricter, form of dress code than what is used at Hogwarts (Rowling, 2000). Beauxbatons students also sport flowing blue headscarves and keep their wands tucked in their hair. That indicates a unique cultural preference for wand placement.

Durmstrang: Fur Cloaks and Tribal Feel: Durmstrang students arrive for the Triwizard Tournament in heavy fur cloaks, appearing to have a more rugged or tribal aesthetic ("Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire" by J.K. Rowling, 2000). This choice of fur clothing may reflect a colder climate in their northern European location. The Durmstrang students are otherwise described as having shaved heads and wearing simple dark robes under their fur cloaks. This indicates a rather utilitarian and maybe less emphasis on individual expression compared to other schools.

Quotidian Choices and Breaking Stereotypes:

The practicality of Hermione: Hermione, unlike many other girls, is practical enough to choose utility over style for most occasions. Her wearing of comfortable clothing—like jumpers, and sensible shoes—against the stereotypical image of girls who are always prim and look pretty contrasts in "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban" highlights Hermione's intellectual and comfortable orientation, rather than societal expectations of femininity.

Beyond Hermione:

Ginny Weasley: One can notice a change in Ginny's character throughout the series, being shy initially, she turns out to be more of a sporty and practical character, thus bringing her Quidditch side into showing her athletic personality. Casual clothes like jeans and jumpers are the costume she sports, taking the lead and following Ron's style initially. Further on, once she gains her confidence, she moves her costume base to the aspect including Gryffindor colours or the aspect of jerseys that show school spirit with character. **Cho Chang:** Her style of dressing reflects her personality. Described in "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban" as pretty and popular, she is very seen adoring her fashionable outfits. We see her draping herself in the robes of mute shades and flowy fabrics, which reflect a more feminine or subtle style compared to Hermione's boldness.

Fleur Delacour: Fleur Delacour, a student of Beauxbatons, carries an air of easy elegance about her. Her sartorial taste is distinctly French, for tailored suits and berets have been mentioned (Rowling, 2000). This polished style speaks to her poise and a hint of arrogance that matches her personality.

Luna Lovegood: She, as thus discussed, is an archetype of individuality. Sartorially, Luna comes across as a confused mash of mismatched attire, bright hosiery, and eccentric radish-like accessories. For Luna, it's this odd and flamboyant style, containing such particulars as radish earrings, that marks her personality apart from conventional normality.

Bellatrix Lestrange: The fashion of her character is in strict opposition to Luna's. She is depicted to prefer the more frightening and aggressive look. Clad in dark robes, with fancy hairdos ("Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix"), her outfit spoke volumes about her merciless nature and corresponded to the classical Death Eater look (Rowling, 2003).

This analysis gives evidence that female characters of Harry Potter describe themselves in connection to a varied range of clothes, hence moving past a typical prototype of what a 'girl' is. While others, such as Ginny or Cho, might be more concerned with traditionally feminine styles, others, like Luna or Hermione, make different ways. This is an instance of how this series can carry a much more multidimensional depiction of gender presentation than the stereotyped manner.

The "Make Do" Mentality: Weasley sweaters represent the Weasleys' weak financial situation. Practicality and making the best of everything is their way of life, including wearing ill-fitting clothes that are out of fashion. It also depicts the Weasleys' sacrifices in raising a large family and being able to send their children to Hogwarts for education.

Contrasting with this, Malfoy, in his sharp suits and expensive robes, constantly reminds readers of the huge wealth gap between the two families. In this way, he does reinforce the understanding of money as a signifier of status and good taste. His smart suits and hair, which are always combed ("Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets"), reflect his desire for status and association with pure-blood lineage. This marriage of attire with social status only further subjugates the ideals of masculinity that exist in the psyche, where appearance goes towards power and wealth.

Gender and Power Dynamics in the Ministry of Magic

Although it has a female Minister for Magic, Madam Bones, in the early chapters, the Ministry is an essentially patriarchal institution. Key decision-making roles rest in the hands of men—Cornelius Fudge and Rufus Scrimgeour being examples. This reflects what might be a societal bias: women may hold high positions but still lack real power over their world.

Death Eaters: This dark wizarding group reinforces conventional gender roles. Bellatrix Lestrange was a very powerful Death Eater, but she represented a corrupted, distorted form of feminine power. She is ruthless and sadistic, setting her absolutely outside the stereotypical role's women are called upon to assume as nurturers ("Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix"). After all, Bellatrix draws her powers from having allied herself with the dark lord Voldemort, not from any innate female strength within the Death Eaters' ranks. Most positions of authority are held by male Death Eaters, for example, Lucius Malfoy.

Order of the Phoenix: The Order, which is resistance against Voldemort, produces a much more sex-and-power-balanced view. We see high-handed females, Bellatrix's sister Narcissa Malfoy and Minerva McGonagall, standing on equal terms with powerful wizards. However, at the same time, we observe that the leadership of the Order is still slightly dominated by males, as Albus Dumbledore and Alastor Moody stand at the head of it.

Performance and Dominance: Voldemort is the concentrated principle of evil who is in the pursuit of absolute domination. Horcruxes allows him to transcend the physical realm, and he tries to get a hold of control over the wizarding world and his mortality. This overwhelming urge for control can be interpreted as a perversion of patriarchal ambitions of an absolute exercise of power.

Dolores Umbridge: With her sickly-sweet voice and outfits a bit too pink ("Harry Potter and the Phoenix"), Dolores Umbridge uses stereotypical images of femininity to camouflage a manipulative, controlling personality. Here, bright pink—a colour usually associated with innocence and lightness—became a means to disarm and cheat. Her latent ruthlessness reveals the performativity of her femininity and the dangers of judging by appearances.

Bodily Autonomy and Gender Fluidity

Polyjuice Potion- A potion where characters physically transform into somebody else, irrespective of gender. In "Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets," Hermione takes the form of a boy named Crabbe. This denies the notion that some sort of fixed identity is attached solely to one's biological sex and opens doors for exploring fluidity in gender presentation. At the same time, the narrative does not delve into self-quandaries over gender identity beyond the transitory transformation enabled by the potion (Rowling, 1998).

Gender Reassignment Spells: Interpretation The books never truly describe anything related to spells for gender reassignment. However, the presence of Polyjuice Potion and Metamorphagi—wizards who are capable of changing their form whenever they please—can easily be interpreted as such. It could be that magic might provide some kind of permanent bodily alteration to do with gender identity. Doing that through fan theories or original fiction from a Harry Potter-minded world is an interesting approach.

"Dolores Umbridge, with her thick spectacles and her curly blonde hair, looked like a particularly malevolent doll" (Rowling, 2003). This quote suggests that there is something inherently wrong with Umbridge; despite her female body, she embodies dominance and malevolence. "'I'm a girl!' Hermione hissed" (Rowling, 1998). This line illustrates Hermione's discomfort with being transformed into a boy, highlighting the importance of gender identity. "Her voice, as it always was, was as sweet as syrup" (Rowling, 2003). This description of Umbridge's voice emphasizes her manipulative nature and ability to influence others through her seemingly gentle demeanour.

Fluidity and Transformation: Challenging Fixed Identities in Harry Potter

Although the Harry Potter series does not do it explicitly, all facets of gender fluidity still have characters that rather interestingly challenge the idea of a fixed, gendered body. Characters like Nymphadora Tonks, Remus Lupin, and the Animagi throw a wrench in stabilizing. They mix things up in such a way that they offer explanations for stable gender identity.

Nymphadora Tonks: A Metamorphic Master of Self-Expression- She is a highly skilled Auror and a member of the Order of the Phoenix, always tending to overshadow magical talents with ever-changing appearances. A single ability as a Metamorphmagus makes her capable of opening her legs so wide to expectations of what society holds in terms of femininity and embracing fluidity in her gender presentation. The deeper look into the character of Tonks in the Harry Potter series comes with specific examples that are provided herein:

Shifting Canvases and Expressive Colours: Unlike many witches, who are often subdued or formally attired, Tonks often in bright, abnormal hair. We see her with her hair "banged into a rebellious mess of magenta" ("Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix," 2003). "Her hair was a vivid turquoise that clashed horribly with her robes" ("Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows," 2007). These bold choices are indicative of a playful personality that doesn't place much value on traditional feminine appearances.

Matching Her Mood: Tonks' hair colour does seem to reflect her mood. In moments of depression or when under stress, it turns a dull mousy brown ("Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince"). This very subtle association of her emotions with her physical form can reveal that these transformations may be, in part, a form of self-expression beyond just the aesthetics of the matter. **A Disguise Beyond Recognition:** Tonks' metamorphic abilities are not only a means of self-expression; they are also quite useful in Auror's work. In "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows," she disguises herself as Moody's grumpy Aunt Muriel to help complete a mission successfully.

Comfort in Fluidity: Tonks is comfortable with her constant changes, which indeed has the undertone of rejection against pressure to conform to one kind of femininity. She doesn't feel the need to maintain perfectly groomed appearances but puts across a more fluid and playful presentation about herself.

Inner Confidence: Her willingness to try different styles shows an inner confidence and a sense of security in herself. She is not dependent on any particular style to feel valuable or worthy of being respected as a capable witch and member of the Order.

Beyond the Gendered Limitations: Tonks's metamorphic abilities even transcend the limitations usually conferred on female characters. She is not just defined by her beauty or, at best, being physically attractive; it is more about her strength, bravery, and loyalty that truly comes to the fore.

Societal Reactions: Dolores Umbridge's Disapproval: She is a character in the series that portrays utmost keeping to strict rules and conventional femininity, and she, in particular shows disapproval for Tonk's wild hair colours and weird hairstyles. She retains the societal disapproval regarding women keeping a simple and controlled look.

Acceptance Within the Order: Tonks' fellow members within the Order of Phoenix, who are rather the sorts to go against convention and embrace individuality, do not find her transformations remarkable at all. So, this does graciously mean that within the wizarding society, there is an even more progressive subculture allowing self-expression and less towards rigid enforcement.

Remus Lupin and the Werewolf Stigma

The character of Remus Lupin, the much-loved Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher in "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban," is doomed to live a life wrestling with an unsavory condition. His unwanted werewolf identity with each full moon combines to represent the constraints related to bodily autonomy and the social stigmas inherent in people who simply happen to be "different" (Rowling, 1999).

The Curse of Lycanthropy and Loss of Control: The monthly transformation into a beast, half man and half animal, in Lupin's body is a continuous reminder of the lack of control over the body. The shame and fear of hurting people are obvious during the change. "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban". Helplessness is fundamentally intrinsic in lycanthropy and underlies what gives ground to the social fear of the unknown and the uncontrollable.

A Life of Isolation: Lupin lives a double life; scared of rejection and discrimination. The need for secluded places often as Lupin is to transform means that he must keep his condition from most people. We, however, see this need for seclusion when he initially refuses the job of teaching at Hogwarts because there is a large danger that there might occur an exposure of lycanthropy on his part ("Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban"). "He would explain, in a low voice, the difficulties of controlling his condition and the shame he felt at what he was" (Rowling, 1999). This quote reveals Lupin's inner struggle with lycanthropy and the social stigma associated with his transformation disorder.

Beyond the Beast: Lupin was a Man of Strength and Compassion and did many other good things. He was a powerful wizard and an outstanding teacher; Lupin inspires his students with the knowledge he imparts and by his genuine care for their well-being. His truly outstanding teaching style is reflected in the amusing Defence Against the Dark Arts lessons, as manifest in "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban".

Loyalty and Friendship: Lupin turns out to be a loyalist of friendship, and a good confidant of Harry, Ron, and Hermione. He forms a strong bond with Harry, acting as a father figure, and guiding him throughout the series. His loyalty is further manifested in his membership in the Order of the Phoenix, fighting tirelessly against Voldemort, much like all of his other friends. "Professor, you're the best Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher we've ever had," said Ron seriously." (Prisoner of Azkaban) - This quote shows not only Lupin's teaching skills but also the positive impact he has on his students.

The Power of Choice

The concept of the Animagus in the series is a whole new perspective on transformation. Unlike the werewolves, who have no voluntary control over their transformation, Animagi—like James Potter and Sirius Black—can, at will, take the forms of particular animals. This essence of choices can open a nuanced study of identity.

Different Facets: In the case of an Animagus, this animal form, it assumes, can be an expression of the soul or personality belonging to a person. Here is Sirius Black, who turned himself into a big black dog, and this can be taken as an attribute of being loyal to his friends and protective of them.

A Temporary Escape: Animagus transformations can also be a form of escape or a way to explore different aspects of oneself. Unlike werewolves who are forced into a monstrous form, Animagi have control over their animalistic nature.

Blurring Gender Lines: The series does not explicitly involve the concept of gender in the transformation into an Animagus. However, although the Animagus is a human in a different animal body, having a human in an animal body demystifies the belief that gender has to follow biology. An Animagus can usually continue with usually manly or womanly identity besides being in the human form. **Potential Connection to Stable Gender Identity:** The ease with transformation comes to Tonks implies that gender identity might not be static, but instead represented more on a spectrum. It gives them the freedom to experiment with themselves beyond the binary.

Beyond the Body: The character of Remus Lupin shows how identity does not relate to only a physical form. He may have involuntarily transformed into a werewolf, but his inner self remained staunch and compassionate. **Choice and Agency:** The fact that Animagi can choose their animal form allows one to see how one's identity can be formed to an extent. The transformation to Animagus in the Harry Potter concept can be a metaphor read through to the exploration of the self, beyond the realms of a purely physical or gendered identity.

Release of Hidden Traits: It may symbolize the release of hidden traits of a personality and its expression in the animal form. For example, Sirius Black's Animagus form would be that of a large black dog—a symbol of his ardent loyalty and protectiveness. Although brave and strong-willed in human form, the shape of an animal might assist him in acting out urges even more primitively. **Instincts and Shadow Selves:** Perhaps the instinctual nature of an Animagus form can be a symbolic expression of our base instincts, or maybe it expresses our "shadow selves" within our repressed personality traits in everyday life. Herein, a transformation can be made for an Animagus to face such instincts head-on and learn to integrate them into his whole self.

Breaking Gender Norms: Being able to transform into any animal type possible challenges the assumption of linkage between biological sex and masculinity/femininity. An Animagus can have characteristically feminine or masculine features quite independent of his or her former human shape.

Monstrous Masculinity: Deconstructing the Myth of Physical Dominance

Though projecting expected physical prowess, the Harry Potter series captures a very nuanced notion of masculinity that seems to fall between the lines of true character and projection. Most times, giants are portrayed as monsters and even aggressive beings. This story brings another point into consideration with characters like Hagrid. **Monstrous Stereotypes:** Giants are typically depicted in the series as such—large, brutish, and easily manipulated by dark wizards. This serves to further articulate the way that masculinity is

very much tied up with size and brute force—and subsequently, that those things are monstrous (Rowling, 2000).

Hagrid: A Gentle Giant - Hagrid is fully against this being portrayed as the gentle giant he is. For the thought of his great size and hewn rough exterior, he is true, loyal, a friend, a careful caregiver of magical beasts, and a lion in protecting Harry and Dumbledore. In him, we see that masculinity can justify diversity in feelings and actions. ("Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone") "There's no monster that won't turn nasty if you treat it like one. Treat it with respect, there's no telling what you might learn." Hagrid, "Sorcerer's Stone" - Through this quote, Hagrid shows his partiality towards understanding and respect, dispensing with the notion that size has anything to do with being a monster.

Gendered Mortality: Pressures of Society and the Body

While the series doesn't exactly concern gender and an afterlife, some interesting parallels may be drawn between both in terms of character motivation. Indeed, it is the loyal and fierce attitude of Bellatrix Lestrange toward Voldemort that will lead her to die for him. This can be taken as stemming from an originally twisted desire—beyond the constraints that society places on her gender—that she be above and beyond that in her allegiance to violence, in his quest for immortality, and hence to ultimate power and regulation. But it all ends up leading her to her lowest at the end of it all, depicting means through which sacrifice of bodily integrity and sense of self in efforts to be more powerful is a twisted success.

The concept of death and the afterlife in the Harry Potter series contains a spectrum of beliefs about how bodily integrity affects the self. While some characters cling to the physical, terrified of what lies beyond it, others demonstrate how one's self can very much have a life of its own, regardless of the body. In contrasting these worldviews, and especially the way both views enter into a play of gender performance, the series calls attention to what social dictates and expectations can sometimes do regarding our longing to subvert and exceed bounds—these being, specifically, limitations we face concerning our dealings with and grapple with death and afterlife.

The series of books, namely "Harry Potter," is multidimensional in exploring gender. In their way of breaking down binary structures, as well as being fluid in identification, the narrative challenges the accepted ideas of what masculinity and femininity entail. By considering aspects of the monstrous, performance, and clothing, concerning power dynamics, an intricate play surfaces in the link between what is physical and performative. This rich tapestry of gender representation can furnish not only a narrative world but also a lot of significant insights applicable to the wider discourse of contemporaneous society.

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