

## Chapter Seventeen

### Recent Literature: Harry Potter

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J.K. Rowling's novels show unmistakable signs of reflecting our six archetypes. They are so wildly popular and so obviously filled with archetypal imagery that they are hard to ignore in a discussion such as this. In addition, they originally hit the reading public as something rather new, daring, and exciting, and partly this has to do with the way the characters are developed.

The archetypes are pushed upon us early. Harry the Innocent is orphaned practically at birth and left with the non-wizard Dursleys, who do all they can to make him feel like an outcast. Therefore we can see Harry as an Orphan (and he begins each new story back at Privet Drive, newly an Orphan) who becomes a Pilgrim. This happens first in the Hogwarts' sport of quidditch. The 'seeker' in the game has the task of tracking down a particular kind of flying ball, a flitch, which has more value than the other balls, and when captured causes the game to end. Clearly this is a metaphor about the different levels at which people can seek for meaning. This is re-enforced in volume seven when the very first flitch that Harry ever caught in a game turns out to contain one of the objects that Harry has been seeking for a long time. So Harry becomes a 'seeker' in the first volume, and it is plain we are to see him as a seeker after truth, a Pilgrim, from this point onwards, especially as he immediately sets about trying to solve the various mysteries that descend on Hogwarts.

Notice that in each volume the truth he has to seek is a little more sinister, and Harry has to develop and use his skills a little more fully. In each volume he has to show his courage, and he has to demonstrate love and loyalty during the climactic confrontation each tale provides – which allows him to be seen as responding each year to ever more demanding tasks. Starting each year as an Orphan, he moves from Pilgrim to Warrior-Lover archetype, and then becomes a Monarch in his mastery of the challenge he faces. The aftermath of each adventure is that there is an effect on the entire school that is in some way empowering – and the Magician in him emerges.

Another way to look at this is in terms of the endings of the seven volumes. The resolutions to the plots become steadily less cut and dried as we progress

through the series. In volume one Harry and his friends save the Sorcerer's stone from Voldemort's grasp, and their achievements are acknowledged with joy by their housemates at the end of term feast. This is an overt, public triumph, and one that would appeal to any eleven-year-old. In volume two Harry rescues Ginny Weasley, who has been possessed by the spirit of Voldemort. This is every twelve-year-old boy's dream, to rescue a younger person (and of the opposite sex, too) and yet the triumph is more muted. The Weasleys are happy, as is Dumbledore, but the celebration is less public. Volume three continues this trend with Harry and Hermione rescuing Sirius (the child rescues the god-parent, in a plot that must surely echo every adolescent's desire to show his worth to a respected adult) and Sirius escapes on the rescued hippogriff, Buckbeak, who had been wrongly condemned to death. Yet because the rescues were made possible only by use of a device called a time-turner, which is not exactly legal in Hogwarts, this is a triumph that only Harry and Hermione know about. Moreover, in doing what is morally right Harry has put himself outside the law. His success is a private one. Dumbledore feigns ignorance of the whole thing.

In volume four the gloom and secrecy seem to deepen. Harry may win the triwizarding contest, but he knows now that Voldemort is back and possessed of a body, and even his wizarding win is eclipsed by the death of Cedric at the moment of triumph. Moreover, Harry's awareness of Voldemort's true status is greeted with disbelief. This disbelief mounts in volume five as Harry finds himself more and more alone, more and more a Pilgrim rejected by his peers for his beliefs, so he in turn rejects their conventional thinking. By the end of the book Dumbledore is, to everyone's relief, back in charge of Hogwarts, and the prophecy Voldemort sought to capture has been saved, at least for now. Yet Voldemort's followers are growing in power, and the Order of the Phoenix seems divided and less than competent to contain the threat. Volume six concludes with a full-scale battle at Hogwarts and the death of Dumbledore. The victories seem to have become progressively less convincing, and steadily less reassuring. We are moved in each successive volume from a relatively simple moral world towards one that is more and more problematic. If everyone agrees at the end of volume one that Harry has done the right thing, by the end of volume six not even Harry knows if he's done the right thing.

Volume seven takes this uncertainty to its limit, since Snape, whom we had last seen killing Dumbledore, is revealed to have been a double agent that the already dying Dumbledore requested should kill him. For large portions of the book even Dumbledore's own past seems questionable. However, subtler than this is that Harry is brought to recognize that part of Voldemort is in him, and some of his blood is in Voldemort. The only way forward is for Harry to volunteer

himself as a victim, knowing Voldemort will kill him and in so doing will destroy a portion of his, Voldemort's, own soul – rendering him that much easier to kill. That, Harry knows, will allow someone else to finish the task. Harry must choose to die willingly, even though he sees his life as a marvel he would rather enjoy. He recognizes this as the only way to stop evil. It is the ultimate act of love for others, the final word in ego-suppression and altruism. It is an expression of the long defeat Paul Farmer spoke of, and Harry ceases to consider personal victory. He simply desires truth and clarity rather than lies and deceptions.

As we discover, Harry 'dies', meets Dumbledore's spirit, and learns the remaining truths behind the events of the past seven years. This is convenient for the plot, of course, but it establishes two major points. For the first time Dumbledore tells Harry the whole truth, treating him as an equal. This marks Harry's transition to the highest level. Harry is aware of this and when he talks to Dumbledore we notice he does so as an equal, in the same way he'd address Ron or Hermione. There are few traces of the old master-pupil relationship. Truth leads to equality. Harry then has the choice to 'move on' – remain dead and explore the next world – or return and finish the task. Like Buddha turning back from the brink of nirvana, like Jesus returning to the disciples, Harry takes the loving route that will help others. He returns, fights Voldemort, and in blocking Voldemort's killing curse (notice that the good wizards don't usually use killing enchantments; only the evil ones do) it rebounds and kills Voldemort himself. We could say that the climax of these tales is about the selflessness of the true Magician, and since Harry doesn't do anything in the final encounter except allow evil to destroy itself, his way is less action than inaction. Evil has a way of imploding upon itself when confronted.

Behind this lies a major point, which is that in the final section of the saga the most important emotion is love. Molly Weasley's fury at the Death Eaters' attempt to kill her children is a magnificent and successful version of the love that Harry's own parents showed in attempting to defend him many years earlier. Anger that is based in love becomes justifiable. Loyalty, love and courage confront selfishness and greed, and love wins. In case we miss the point, Harry twice saves the repellent Draco Malfoy's life. He'll save even his enemies if he can.

In each tale Harry has to show his bravery and stand up for what he believes in, and what he values. His loyalty to Dumbledore is tested in all the tales, each time a little more deeply. In the sixth volume he is faced with an extreme test for his loyalty – he has to continue to obey Dumbledore's instructions even though he fears that doing so will kill the old wizard. In the seventh volume he has to be loyal to his cause even though he is convinced it will kill him.

Several things are important, here. One is that in a realm of magic and spells that can make people act against their free will, Harry's loyalty is not compelled

but it comes from his heart. Yet he also has to learn to control his heart-felt yearnings, especially to strike back at others. He'd dearly love to punish the Dursleys of course, but he must learn to control his power despite provocation in each volume. He has to discover the balanced use of his abilities, which means acting compassionately. And just as Harry is left to solve many of his difficulties on his own without Ron and Hermione to help him in the final crises, so we see him moving further and further from any parent substitute, too. In the third volume he rescues his godfather, Sirius Black, as well as his teacher Professor Lupin, who functions as a father figure and friend of the family. Eventually he loses Sirius at the end of volume five, Hagrid and Lupin are left marginalized, and even the grandfatherly Dumbledore dies. As he loses each in turn he must become more self-sufficient until, eventually, he must parent himself. It is as if Rowling is deliberately stripping Harry of adult and parental figures, forcing him to grow.

The fight for what is right therefore becomes increasingly lonely with each volume. In *The Half-Blood Prince* Harry eventually rejects even the sexual attachments that the young wizards blunder through. Harry tells Ginny Weasley he can no longer be her boyfriend as it is simply too dangerous for her to be associated with him. This can therefore be seen as an attachment that is not simply ego-based, and it is a good fit for the archetype of the Warrior-Lover, especially as Harry and Ginny seem to be evenly matched in many ways. It's not that he doesn't care for her – it's that he cares about her survival and he recognizes that since his own may be in question hers definitely will be. This is a marked contrast to the rather silly, self-involved adolescent crushes that seem to go on around him during the greater part of the story. Perhaps the piece of evidence we need is only made clear in book seven – Ginny understands why he's had to leave her, and accepts it while maintaining her love for him. Harry's birthday kiss leaves no doubt about that. And he never ceases to love her.

Harry's devotion to Hermione and Ginny are a way for us to see him integrating the 'female' part of himself into his awareness prior to him reaching Monarch status. The point is made for us strongly in volume seven when Harry is merciful at important moments, accepting 'female' compassion in his life. Right at the start of the book when he's under direct attack by Death Eaters he uses blocking spells, not killing ones, and is criticized for it. In the final battle he has to restrain Ron from wanting revenge. Harry knows that Ron's desire to kill is based in love for his dead brother, but he also knows that revenge is not going to help them defeat evil. Harry's course has to be more merciful. Yet he cannot allow himself to be in any way soft. He deliberately avoids Ginny so that he won't let his personal feelings overwhelm his greater duty, which is surely evidence of the strength of his attachment and his awareness of the need to make balanced choices. This refusal

of ego-based actions marks Harry as more aware than Ron and Hermione (who are not above a passionate embrace with each other when they feel frightened). It signals him as moving towards the highest level of Magician.

In whatever way one looks at her achievement, J. K. Rowling has provided us with a series of novels that seem to reaffirm the sense that one grows through certain stages, and that we grow through the stages not just once, but we keep coming back to the same sorts of struggles except each time at a deeper and more complex level. In doing so Harry grows towards the level of Magician in a process that is cyclical. Rowling gives us a readily accessible framework since Harry progresses through each academic 'year' learning life skills and gaining personal power. In this series of stories Rowling has done something that simply was not possible in literature before, if only because cycles of novels were and are extremely rare. She has let us see that progress through the life stages is not just a one-time experience. Harry goes through all the stages, from Innocent to Magician and he does so each year: so he completes each stage in all its sub-stages, on an annual basis. We could spend a vast amount of time attempting to show this statement to be true in a detailed examination of the texts. Perhaps it is enough to say that Harry arrives each year at Hogwarts surprised by the new, heavier workload, and at the end of each novel he has just achieved a not-inconsiderable act of wizardry that seems to mark his trajectory from Innocent to Magician in each instance. I suspect, however, that since Rowling is a novelist who deals with representations of human beings first and abstract ideas such as 'stages of life' second, we might find ourselves getting bogged down early on if we attempt to show this as an even or orderly progression. Children are complex. They develop new skills and then temporarily slip back to a less aware level. And that is as it should be. It is Rowling's gift to us that she sees them as people who are growing, above all else.

We can take this insight into the adult world, as well. When any of us feels threatened or insecure we are likely to slip, for a while, a few levels in our awareness – no matter how evolved we may be in the rest of our lives. The highly paid executive who is laid off in a corporate re-shuffle may well move, in shock, from Monarch to Orphan level. The overwhelmed mother may find herself reduced to helpless depression and self-pity by a difficult family situation, and the Warrior-Lover becomes, for a while, a passive Orphan. This is how life seems to test us. The point seems to be that we have to bounce back.

Rowling has one other great advantage. Since she is not writing within a realist framework she is free to spend more energy examining the very areas that modern writing is often unable to approach – the realms of the Monarch and the Magician.

Let's take a look at this. If Dumbledore is an example of the fully developed Magician to which Harry is aspiring, it's worth noting that he is rarely at the forefront of the action. He is, rather, someone who allows the actions to unfold, and we see that he is specifically *allowing* Harry to use his own power whenever possible rather than seeking to control or direct him. This, after all, is the mark of the true Magician; good impulses in others are encouraged, but not forced. And, as we are plentifully informed, Harry's power stems directly from love. It was his mother's love that made the infant Harry able to resist Voldemort's killing spell, causing it to bounce back at him. Harry's place at the Dursley's, no matter how it is begrudged him, is safe because there is sisterly love behind it – Mrs. Dursley was Harry's mother's sister. Harry's loyalty to Dumbledore is based in love. This is a point we will have to return to, since it seems as if love of one sort and another is one of the greatest forces at work in moving people through the stages.

Further evidence of this is in the sense that each volume of the series concludes with an act that has to do with love. In volume one it is Harry's purity of heart that allows him to be the one person who can hold the sorcerer's stone, since he's the one person who has no desire to use it for harm. In volume two the phoenix comes to save Harry as Dumbledore points out later, only because it recognizes the extent of Harry's loyalty and love for Dumbledore himself. In volume three Harry and his friends rescue two wrongly condemned creatures – Sirius and Buckbeak, and their love causes them to contribute to the resolution of the story. In volume four Harry's task is slightly different because he has to be loyal and loving to his friends *and* his rivals – and, in the case of Cedric Diggory, this saves his life. Moreover, when he fights Voldemort he proves in fact to be the more powerful magician. Seeing the images of his dead father and mother reminds him of what love is and Voldemort can do nothing against that. Volume five is in some ways about Harry's loyalty not just to Dumbledore but to the whole sense of what Hogwarts is there to do. The school is not just a place to teach skills, but a place in which the human spirit can be nurtured, and Harry knows that. He forms 'Dumbledore's Army' as a Warrior, but also as an act of loyalty to a principle of what is right, therefore achieving his objectives as a Warrior-Lover. Notice how his concept of love and loyalty has grown! Volume six shows him remaining true to what Dumbledore asks, even in the face of tremendous temptation, and even when he sees Dumbledore offering forgiveness to the despicable Malfoy. Malfoy's name is a clue here, since his name means, significantly, 'bad faith', which is the exact opposite of love. As we've seen in volume seven, Harry's love is tested to its ultimate limit, death, and he does not hesitate to fulfill his duty to what is right, what is loving, and what is true.

So, love and loyalty seem to be redefined as we go through these remarkable books, and it is these two qualities that cause the real magic to occur. Volume six

ends with Dumbledore's funeral, and yet we can be sure from the emotional reaction of the crowd that his death was in no wise a defeat for the forces of love and good. In fact, it seems to have mobilized those very qualities in the mourners. The same thing happens in volume seven when Harry is thought dead – the Hogwarts defenders become even more determined, rather than less. When Voldemort dies the Death Eaters scramble to run away in a display that is the exact opposite of loyalty to a cause. Even the Malfoys are terrified that their son might have been hurt, and they stop fighting in order to find him – placing love before ambition.

Rowling is probably not the final word in how the six stages function. I'd like to suggest, though, that she seems to have access to the same sort of template we've been discussing so far, and that this adds to the attraction of her books. Moreover, she is addressing herself to the parts of life where we can become Magicians, and she asks us to consider how we can get to that point. We could express this differently: the stories differentiate between muggles and wizards. Muggles are those who can't or won't accept that magic exists. They are, one might say, grimly utilitarian. They are the Orphans who, like Harry at the start, feel that life holds nothing more for them. Then there are those who know there is more to life, and who become Pilgrims in seeking that 'more'.

The Dursleys, interestingly, know that there is more to life than their muggle world view admits and they keep getting reminded of this; but they are deeply afraid of what they see and so they choose not to admit to what they know. Orphans of the first order, they represent the condition many people live in, as Orphans who are determined to believe in an Orphan world no matter what.

The final scene of volume seven is somewhat domestic. Harry is married to Ginny and they are seeing their children off on the Hogwarts express, and there they meet Ron and Hermione who are also married and doing the same thing. They all look like well-adjusted Orphans, doing the socially accepted activities of parenthood. Yet we know that they are sending their children off on the first part of their own journeys of self-discovery. The parents may look like ordinary wizards, but they have a profound awareness of the nature of love. The Magic continues in their children, and it's the magic of allowing others their freedom.

Harry has made a life based in love, not power, and it has been signaled to us that he is not interested in power when we see him give up the Elder Wand, the most powerful wand in existence, in order to have his own magic wand back again. His own wand is nominally inferior, yet it has one huge advantage: Harry has felt it on several occasions showing him what to do and he is utterly comfortable in his rapport with it. This is the realm of the ultimate magician, when the magic seems to do itself because it comes from the core of oneself. Giving up the supremely powerful Elder Wand is a symbol of how Harry chooses to relinquish

power for its own sake in order to accept something that is more authentic to who he is. It's a moving moment and it's utterly in tune with the six stages, and with the sense of what a Magician needs to be.

In fact, throughout volume seven we see characters acting and speaking from the heart in this way. They speak out and act directly on what they believe, even if it seems to be against their obvious best interests. Professor McGonagle's cry when she thinks Harry's dead, Molly Weasley's fury when she sees her children under threat, Ron's rescue of Hermione, Dobby's rescue of Harry which costs him his life, Harry's rescue of Malfoy, even Harry's own pronouncing of Voldemort's name – which results in his capture but ensures that Harry gets the wand he needs – all are examples of characters showing their real feelings rather than reacting with fear. The point is re-enforced when Harry argues with Lupin, forcing him to go back to look after Tonks and their child. At first sight Harry seems to be working against his own best interests. He needs as much help as he can get. Yet he's also speaking from his heart about the love bond that Lupin should be honoring but cannot because of his fear. That's why he has to reject Lupin's help. Anything offered in the spirit of fear is to be refused, because only courage can breed love and attachment. And that's part of the Magic that changes ordinary people into extraordinary people.

Rowling has given us one further important gift in this last novel and it is an insight into the nature of the highest level of Magician. We see it when Harry, in nearly dying, is blasted free of the part of Voldemort's soul that had attached itself to his soul when he survived the first attempt, as a baby. In Chapter Thirty Five we're told this information explicitly, and we also note that Harry wakes up naked, not needing his glasses, and 'unblemished'. This is surely a symbolic scene in which he is perfected, as one might be when going to heaven. He has in fact returned to being a pure Innocent, as well as being a Magician. The point seems to be this: the Magician archetype is not complete until it has welcomed back this first, most important stage – which is, as we have noted, the stage at which we all learn unconditional love. And Harry does offer Voldemort love in the final confrontation. He tells Voldemort the truth he needs to know, he offers him a chance for remorse (using that exact word), an opportunity to back down and save himself, and when Voldemort strikes he deflects the charm back at him. It is a remarkable scene, filled with symbolic undertones, and Harry the Magician is complete.

The hint is clear: we become full Magicians when we act out of a sense of truth, compassion, and love, all of which demand courage and absolute faith. The pure emotions of the Innocent combine with the acquired skills of the Magician at this highest of levels, since everything we do is in service of love. And without this highest form of love it is impossible to achieve real peace.

With this in mind, if we look at Harry's conversation with Dumbledore's spirit, it's worth noticing that he does not reproach the old wizard with how things have turned out – although he well might, given how he has been denied a fair amount of information. Dumbledore even asks, "Can you forgive me? Can you forgive me for not trusting you?" (713). It's an important moment and Harry's reply is an incredulous, "What are you talking about?" This tells us several things. The first is that even Dumbledore suffers from fear and lack of trust. Even he cannot be fully open. Perhaps this is one of the flaws that kept him from being the very highest level of Magician and which he must now put right. The second point is that we witness in Harry a forgiveness that is freely given before it has even been requested. Real forgiveness is already present in the heart of the Magician who has arrived at full integration of the Innocent's love in all its elemental power. Just as a child will always forgive and love a parent, so does Harry in this scene. Dumbledore goes so far as to admit that Harry is "the better man" for his purity and trust, and Dumbledore doesn't flatter. Harry is no pushover however, which is what we might associate with the idea of the Innocent. The flayed baby he sees in this chapter is startling to him, and when Dumbledore says the child can't be helped he accepts it. What we don't learn until later, and it is something that Harry doesn't spell out directly, is that this suffering creature is actually Voldemort's tortured soul. This is hinted at when Harry tells Voldemort during their duel that he's seen what Voldemort will become. No one has to tell Harry this. He just knows it because he recognizes what happens to those who do not love, and he knows he can't help that suffering figure even if he wishes to. It has to help itself. And from this we learn that love and compassion has its limits. We cannot help those who won't be helped, which is one of the saddest facts of our world. Ask anyone who has tried to use love to help someone they care for who has a serious addiction.

Harry and Voldemort's souls meet in an otherworldly version of King's Cross station, symbolically a point from which one can choose many directions. The one soul is whole, loving, ready to learn the full truth. The other is in the form of a squalling baby, unable to listen, wrapped in its own misery. Harry returns to the world for love, his ego almost non-existent. Voldemort returns only for gain and ego aggrandizement.

Egoism is the absence of caring for others. Carried to an extreme it becomes evil, and so evil is shown to us as the opposite of real love. We need to know this since we all have to deal with the problem of evil in our world, not just when we are school children. All the same, children have a remarkable grasp of the nature of this struggle – their playground dramas of good guys versus bad guys are evidence of that. They seem to be rehearsing for their life struggles to come. Harry's

struggle is larger and more complicated than this; he has not only to fight against evil, but he also has to fight his own temptation to slip into a place of hurt and despair and anger, which is simply a form of self-hatred. Self-hatred is a lack of self-acceptance that can lead to an over-compensation in the form of the lust for power and vindication – and that can very easily create evil. That’s the lesson he gets from the Dursleys. They hate him because they fear the fact that he’s different, and by extension that makes them peculiar. And they want so much to be accepted by other muggles, and to fit in and gain approval. They can’t just love who they all authentically are. In fact, they hate who they are when Harry is around. Harry’s response to this is, frequently, to wish to revenge himself on them. Revenge, as we know, never improves anything, certainly not the existing relationships between human beings, and so each time he feels this urge Harry is tempted to act in a self-hating fashion. His education, therefore, involves loving what is right and loving others, but it also involves learning to love himself so that he can love others – even if they don’t seem to deserve it.

This message about love is a major part of what Rowling conveys to us, and I have to say it sounds like wisdom and it feels entirely accurate. It may not look much like the way our present governmental and legal systems function, but that may be the whole point. It’s closer to the teachings of Jesus than of Machiavelli. Rowling’s achievement is that she has taken us into spiritual realms most writers never attempt. Hermann Hesse perhaps comes closest, although he keeps us in a realist world. Rowling’s magical kingdom is not just a backdrop. Instead it is an important device that clearly enables her to say what she needs to say about the nature of the Innocent’s power of love, and how it has to re-emerge for the Magician to become complete, and this could not be said in any other way.

This long section has shown us several things. The first is that the six stages echo throughout our literature. At times it may not be immediately obvious, but the stages are there. There is simply too much evidence to overlook.

The second thing is that since the stages are there in our most influential literature it is a fair bet that they articulate, to some extent, actual points of change that people go through that are linked to profound unconscious processes. Literature survives because it feels true in some fundamental way to those who read it, or hear it, or see it on stage.

Third is the obvious point that literature shows us in a highly compressed form the important events in lifetimes, real and imagined, and as such it shows us dynamic examples of individuals as they grow. Literature can be, therefore, a rich repository of human wisdom. As we’ve seen with Harry Potter, it can even take us beyond death when it needs to.

Fourth, and perhaps somewhat contentiously, is that some of what is today marketed as ‘literature’ or ‘memoir’ may be beautifully written and packaged but reach no further than the Orphan’s sense of self-pity, focusing only on the dreadful childhood of the main character. While this may be sensational and sell millions of copies we have a right to ask whether or not there is any real wisdom in such a book, whether it asks us to wallow in misery or seeks to show us the way forward. The six stages may just give us a sense of what may be missing and therefore allow us to avoid what is second rate.

The fifth point is that literature comes in many shapes; good, bad, accurate, inaccurate, and mediocre. The smash hit today is sometimes deemed worthless tomorrow. To some extent I’ve tried to offset this by focusing on literature that has been popular and enduring and which has been accepted as a competent vision of human characteristics. Yet I am sure there will be a few people who will object by saying, “But it’s just words on a page. It’s not life!” And they’d be right. All I can say in reply is that literature, to date, has been the best way of rendering the inner life we have discovered. It might be a cracked and tarnished mirror, but it may be the best we’ve got.

#### **Note**

1. Rowling, J. K.. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. Scholastic, 2007.