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Abstract

Discusses the concept of the wise woman warrior, focusing primarily on Éowyn, Orual, and Hermione Granger but bringing in other characters from the works of Tolkien, Lewis, and Rowling as well.

Additional Keywords

Lewis, C.S.—Characters—Orual; Rowling, J.K.—Characters—Hermione Granger; Tolkien, J.R.R.—Characters—Éowyn; Women

Wise Warriors in Tolkien, Lewis, and Rowling

Ernelle Fife

The phrase "wise warrior" sounds like an oxymoron, like "military intelligence." But wise warrior is an apt description of Athena—goddess of wisdom, reason, agriculture, and civilization, who was born, fully armed, from the head of Zeus, and whose shield bears the head of Medusa. She is mentor and guide to numerous heroes, and is seldom a deity of aggression, but of defensive warfare, battling to protect the city and the home. Her philosophy would be best expressed by Tolkien's Éowyn, in her response to the Warden of Gondor, the master healer who laments that "the world is full enough of hurts and mischances without wars to multiply them." Éowyn points out that "It needs but one foe to breed a war, not two [...]. And those who have not swords can still die upon them" (*Return of the King* 292)—witness, for example, the death of Cedric Diggory in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. In Tolkien's Middle-earth, the Enemy has already begun the war; that is evil's function, to breed enmity and hatred. To do nothing in response does not prevent a death, but merely turns a war into a massacre. Knowing when to fight, what to fight for, and how to fight take wisdom. In this paper I will analyze the role of the wise warrior, particularly the female wise warriors, in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, C. S. Lewis's *Till We Have Faces*, and J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series.

Female wise warriors should not be overlooked, discounted, or dismissed as minor characters, sidekicks, or failures. It is only the unwary reader who misjudges them the way Denethor misjudges Faramir, in Beregon's words, being "slow to believe that a captain can be wise and learned in the scrolls of lore and song, as [Faramir] is, and yet a man of hardihood and swift judgement in the field" (*Return* 44). Substitute the word "woman" for "captain," and similar misconceptions hold for many characters stemming from culturally determined gender distinctions. Rowling's Mrs. Figg is a good example. Readers were probably quick to

accept Harry's assessment of her as a batty old lady on her first appearance in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (22), but she is far more. Being a squib, a person born to magical parents but without magical abilities, Mrs. Figg can not protect Harry as can the witches and wizards of the Order of Phoenix, but armed with her string bag of canned cat food, she is a valued watcher whom Dumbledore trusts to help guard Harry (*Order of the Phoenix* 20-24).

Gender distinctions, however, are not limited to humans; I am not claiming that gender is a masculine construct created as part of men's political oppression of women. Tolkien's Ents are a good example of gender distinctions that can produce harmful consequences even among non-humans. The Ents, such as Treebeard or Fangorn, are wanderers; in anthropological terms, they are at the hunter-gatherer stage of development. The Entwives are more settled; they have progressed to the farming stage. In Treebeard's story, the Entwives seem to be a combination of Hobbits and the deity of the first creation story in Genesis: the Entwives ordered the flowering trees and plants, herbs and grasses, "to grow according to their wishes, and bear leaf and fruit to their liking; for the Entwives desired order, and plenty, and peace (by which they meant that things should remain where they had set them)" (*The Two Towers* 99). The later parenthetical phrase always brings to my mind a picture of Tolkien carefully laying out all his story notes and linguistic references on the dining table, deliberately and thoughtfully beginning to craft the next few chapters of his epic ten minutes before Mrs. Tolkien wants to set the table for dinner.

Entwives, keepers of the garden, along with hobbits and elves, seem to have a sense of place; they are grounded, as are the mature farandolae in Madeleine L'Engle's *The Wind in the Door*. The Entwives have much in common with hobbits, particularly with Samwise Gamgee. As Faramir comments to Frodo, "Your land must be a realm of peace and content, and there must gardeners be in high honour" (*Towers* 368). Sam is the gardener, the most grounded of the hobbits, the one with the greatest sense of place; thus, it is fitting that he is the one who never leaves Frodo, but is his guardian more than his servant. He goes on this quest not merely out of friendship and loyalty as do Merry and Pippin, but because he is following a call, as he tries to explain to Frodo: "I seem to see ahead, in a kind of way. [...] I don't rightly know what I want: but I have something to do before the end, and it lies ahead, not in the Shire. I must see it through, sir, if you

understand me" (*The Fellowship of the Ring* 127). These words follow him and echo through his mind and soul when he must choose to take the One Ring and fulfill the Quest, believing Frodo to be dead (*Towers* 432-35). Gareth Knight refers to this type of quest as "the magic of service," although he is referring to the quests in Lewis's *Narnia Chronicles* (68). Sam is also the character who is the least tempted by the power of the One Ring, perhaps because he is so grounded: the only reality for Sam is the Shire; power and conquest are simply not important to Sam. His unquestioning offering of service, his lack of aggression, and his domestic nature are deemed "feminine" characteristics, but they should not be so gendered. Faramir also possesses these characteristics, though Éowyn does not.

In many ways Faramir is as strong as, if not stronger than, Aragorn, but his story (like Éowyn's) seems short-changed. He is a fitting companion to Éowyn, as I will discuss in more detail later, but he is also a counterpoint to Sam. Faramir has the most vision and makes the wisest decisions all of the humans. He is a warrior, not by desire, but by necessity to defend his city:

"War must be, while we defend our lives against a destroyer who would devour all; but I do not love the bright sword for its sharpness, not the arrow for its swiftness, not the warrior for his glory. I love only that which they defend: the city of the Men of Númenor; and I would have her loved for her memory, her ancientry, her beauty, and her present wisdom." (*Towers* 355)

Mars would never make such a speech, but Athena would.

In their quest, or rather anti-quest, the Fellowship of the Ring undertakes a difficult journey full of dangers and trials to lose rather than to find the One Ring. What is gained from this anti-quest is counter-balanced by what is lost. The Ring is destroyed; but much that is good can be unmade, and learning can be lost. The Third Age of Middle-earth, the age of Wizards and Elves and Ents and much of their wisdom, will pass away. Even the hobbits are no longer part of the reader's sense of reality. Victory always carries a price, but this price is freely paid by those who chose love over power, guidance over control. To have a sense of belonging or of place is to know that one is part of a larger plan, even if that plan seems dark; to be guided by a greater entity or power, even if that power seems to be wearing an Invisibility Cloak. This is why Sam withstands The One Ring's

temptation: "his plain hobbit-sense [...] in the core of his heart" rejects the power of the ring, replacing visions of glory and conquest with "one small garden of a free gardener" (*Return* 216). Sam knows where he belongs, not only in the geographical, physical sense, but in the cosmic sense. Power has no attraction for him, and thus no power over him. His soul is directed outwards, as are Faramir's and Éowyn's, Orual's eventually, and Hermione's. Sam prefers, as do all wise warriors, to participate in the harmony of creation without attempting to re-direct the harmony for his own desires—the definition of evil in Tolkien's, Lewis's, and Rowling's fantasy worlds.

One such disharmony is the gender preferences among the Ents that have led to gender separation. The Ents say they have lost the Entwives, but we hear only Treebeard's story. In the Entwives' story, perhaps it is the Ents who have wandered off and lost themselves. Because the Ents and Entwives are separated, however, neither can withstand evil. They are a race of stewards, as are Samwise, Faramir, Gandalf, and Denethor (*Return* 33). However, just as Denethor's pride almost destroys the city he was fated to protect, the Ents and Entwives lose their lands because they no longer combine forces to protect them. The gardens that the Entwives maintained are now wastelands, what humans call "the Brown Lands" (*Towers* 100), according to Treebeard. And the Ents have waited far too long, remaining silent and watchful while Saruman's evil purposes have felled trees and polluted the land and water. They are wise, but they have linked action with hastiness, and they have failed to protect their trees. Treebeard laments that Leaflock has chosen to sleep, growing "almost tree-ish," and that Skinbark has retreated to where he can no longer see that "many of his folk and his tree-herds have been murdered and destroyed" (*Towers* 98). Perhaps if the Entwives were still part of this story, the story would have been a different one. Perhaps Ents and Entwives would have already defeated Saruman, or at least limited his evil influences.

The danger of gender preferences when defined as gender restrictions, the negative meaning of a woman's place, is seen in the character Éowyn, as Deborah and Ivor Rogers note (109). When Éowyn is introduced to the reader, she is more of a passive observer than a queen or a warrior, a silent presence standing behind the King (*Towers* 148) or "alone before the doors of the silent house" (165), useful only as a nurse for an old man, a substitute for a staff. When Gandalf summons the Lord of the Mark

outside, Éowyn (who is still nameless at this point), “hastened to the king's side, taking his arm” to lead him through the hall (152). She is then dismissed by Gandalf (156), and possibly by the reader, but not by Tolkien. When Gandalf later asks King Théoden who will remain behind with the people, to “guide them and govern them in your place” (157), the king postpones the decision. It is as if he has forgotten his niece, or has never considered her a leader or warrior. Tolkien allows the reader to fall into this trap of gender stereotyping as well, a form of reader entrapment that he will continue when Éowyn disguises herself as Dernhelm.

Tolkien creates this reader entrapment through the choice of focalizer, the character through whose eyes the reader sees the action. In this scene at Edoras, Gandalf, Gimli, Legolas, and Aragorn, are the focalizers. We are given no background for Wormtongue, no personal history of Théoden or Éowyn or Éowyn's parents. In fact, much of Éowyn's description is given through Aragorn's perspective. Tolkien creates what little romance there is in *The Lord of The Rings* through the sexual tension between Aragorn and Éowyn. It is not surprising that this young woman should be sexually interested in Aragorn, especially when one considers the only other available male, Wormtongue. As she pauses in her dismissal by the men, Gandalf and King Théoden, Aragorn sees her as “fair, fair and cold, like a morning of pale spring that is not yet come to womanhood” (*Towers* 152). He too dismisses her; not as cruelly perhaps as the others, but just as thoroughly. He seems to understand, as should the reader, that Éowyn wishes to follow him as much from love as from a desire for glory or relief from boredom, yet his words reflect a rather masculine dismissal for the services of women: “If you had not been chosen [to remain behind to govern your people], then some marshal or captain would have been set in the same place, and he could not ride away from his charge, were he weary of it or no” (*Return* 67). In other words, not only is any woman, even a shieldmaiden, not as worthy as a male warrior, but she also complains more, as if the reader has not heard the hobbits and Gimli complaining the entire journey. It is interesting to note here that Háma, the head of the palace guards, would have been the most likely candidate to stay behind; he goes to fight and is killed in battle, one of the few named characters to die.

Éowyn speaks for many women who are capable of warfare as well as other forms of battle: “All your words are but to say: you are a woman, and your part is in the house. But when the men have died in battle and

honour, you have leave to be burned in the house, for the men will need it no more" (*Return* 68). She could speak for Jane Austen's Anne Elliott, who in *Persuasion* declares that women do not love more, but they are forced to live upon their emotions because their lives are so limited, restricted, or "caged" as Éowyn repeatedly says. Gandalf, too, echoes Anne's words as he reminds Éomer that "you had horses, and deeds of arms, and the free fields; but she, born in the body of a maid, had a spirit and courage at least the match of yours" (*Return* 174); he comes the closest to understanding Éowyn but only after she lies wounded. Éowyn's greatest fear is to be confined by gender expectations until she withers, fades from life and from the story. And the Enemy will win another small victory. Just as Denethor disdains his younger, less warlike son, the male characters dismiss Éowyn the same way they have dismissed the hobbits; even Elrond was wrong in his assessment of Pippin and Merry (*Return* 165). But just as the hobbits surprise even Gandalf, both the hobbits and Éowyn surprise the warriors, the Enemy, and possibly the reader.

Éowyn does not know that Aragorn is betrothed to another, a fact that the reader has learned by inference more than by direct exposition. So the possibility of romance here is slight. But Tolkien does create the expectation that Éowyn will be limited to a role of lover or at least a potential love-interest, rather than warrior. This role is suggested twice when Éowyn brings the parting cup of wine. The first time, as chatelaine in her uncle's household, it is fitting that she performs this ceremony. However, Tolkien describes in detail only one interaction between chatelaine and guest, that between Éowyn and Aragorn:

Théoden drank from the cup, and she then proffered it to the guests. As she stood before Aragorn she paused suddenly and looked upon him, and her eyes were shining. And he looked down upon her fair face and smiled; but as he took the cup, his hand met hers, and he knew that she trembled at the touch. 'Hail Aragorn son of Arathorn!' she said. 'Hail Lady of Rohan!' he answered, but his face now was troubled and he did not smile. (*Towers* 162)

Later, when Aragorn departs leading his company through the Paths of the Dead, she is "clad as a Rider" (*Return* 68), but is still denied an active part to play in the upcoming war. The narrator focuses the reader's attention back to Aragorn and his sympathy for her plight, leaving Éowyn in tears, "still as

a figure carven in stone, her hands clenched at her sides [until] she turned, stumbling as one that is blind, and went back to her lodging" (69). Most of the characters, and probably the reader, see Éowyn only in roles designated as feminine. She is chatelaine, caregiver, lover or love-interest, but not counselor, ruler, or warrior.

It is Háma, the leader of the house guard, who remembers Éowyn and counsels King Théoden to appoint her to act in his stead. He even corrects his king when Théoden says that Éomer is the last of the royal line: "And he is not the last. There is Éowyn, daughter of Éomund, his sister. She is fearless and high-hearted. All love her. Let her be as lord to the Eorlingas, while we are gone" (*Towers* 163). Háma and the people of Rohan seem to know more about Éowyn than her own kin. One wonders who taught Éowyn how to fight, to wield a sword so expertly. Lewis will answer that question about his wise warrior, Orual, for it is her father's leader of the palace guard, Bardia, who recognizes her strengths, her valor, her determination, and her ability to lead. The careless reader who sees Orual as only a warrior and fails to see the woman behind the veil may also be the careless reader who misjudges Éowyn and fails to see her behind the disguise of Dernhelm.

Tolkien once again entraps the reader, carefully manipulating the focalizer so that the true identity of Dernhelm is not readily apparent to the careless reader. We first see Dernhelm, a nameless soldier, through Merry's eyes: "A young man, Merry thought as he returned the glance, less in height and girth than most. He caught the glint of clear grey eyes; and then he shivered, for it came suddenly to him that it was the face of one without hope who goes in search of death" (*Return* 91). This could be the description of unrequited love, but it is also the description of all who follow the Quest or who fight against the Enemy, particularly Faramir, who also has been ignored and dismissed.

The alert reader, one who does not fall into the trap of gender expectations, should realize who Dernhelm is and should expect that she, not Gandalf or Denethor or Aragorn, will conquer the Lord of the Nazgûl, once Gandalf reveals the riddling "words spoken of old [...] not by the hand of man shall he fall" (*Return* 112). Of course, she is aided by Merry, the hobbit that Éowyn does not dismiss as did her uncle but smuggles along to battle (93). Merry draws strength from the courage and skill of this "maiden of the Rohirrim, child of kings, slender but as a steel-blade, fair yet terrible"

(142). Each individually may be weaker than the enemy, but together they are stronger than even the Lord of the Nazgûl. This small partnership mirrors the old alliance between Men and Elves that was able to defeat Sauron the first time, and the new alliance of Elves, Dwarves, Men, and Hobbits that will defeat Sauron this time.

Perhaps being grounded and understanding one's sense of place within the cosmic story eliminates gendering or at least the problems that gendering creates. Certainly, once Éowyn meets Faramir, her perspective shifts. She does not fall out of love with Aragorn; she has never loved him, only what he represented—valor, activity, movement, travel, a warrior's life and death. And she does not at first fall in love with Faramir, but rather accepts an altered sense of place. Battle is not the only option in fighting the Enemy; a shieldmaiden is not the only path to follow that requires courage and action. Faramir does not misjudge her; neither does she misjudge him (*Return* 293). She sees a man who is as trapped as she is: when she demands to be released from the House of Healing, declaring that "I cannot lie in sloth, idle, caged," he truthfully responds, "I also am a prisoner of the healers" (293). Gender being no longer an issue, she sees herself as Faramir might perceive her, as "a child that has not the firmness of mind to go on with a dull task to the end" (293). But she soon realizes that Faramir no longer pities her, but has come to love her. To be loved for who she is reveals her own heart to her, "[a]nd suddenly her winter passed, and the sun shone on her" (299). Healing for Éowyn is more than physical or psychological; she learns that she must have a sense of place, and she chooses that place, to be a healer by the side of Faramir, not a Lady of Rohan or a great Queen. She no longer needs to be great or to strive for renown or glory, but she will be content to "be a healer, and love all things that grow and are not barren" (300). She and Faramir are to become gardeners.

As I mentioned before, Tolkien's Éowyn is similar to Lewis's Orual; both are great warriors who learn wisdom through suffering, both are women who are denied opportunity because of their gender, both feel trapped by their royal duties. The Fox's response to Orual's decision to fight Argan (197-98) sounds eerily similar to Aragorn's denial of Éowyn's request to ride to battle. Orual is the feminine combination of the warrior Bardia and the Greek philosopher, the Fox. But Lewis makes Orual the centerpoint of *Till We Have Faces*. Rather than creating a new myth, he adapts an existing one, thereby forcing the reader to question which is the true myth.

Orual insisting that her story be told, much like Tolkien's Melkor insisting that his melody be heard, is both the rationale for Orual writing her narrative and her redemptive act. Orual learns wisdom, not through living her life, but by re-living it through narrative. Her first opportunity for wisdom and for spiritual growth comes when she meets Psyche (102-16), but she denies the possibility of any other reality besides her own, even refusing to acknowledge that she does see the god's palace (132-33). Later, when she becomes Queen, she hides her soul from the truth just as she conceals her face behind a veil, and her identity as Orual behind her title of Queen. She defends herself against the gods, against truth, by being "wide awake and sober and hard at work, to hear no music, never to look at earth or sky, and (above all) to love no one" (81). Orual denies her own soul, having "locked Orual up or laid her asleep as best I could somewhere deep down inside me" (226).

However, as the last narrative, the one written by the priest of Aphrodite, makes clear, she has been a good Queen, creating peace and prosperity for her people rather than wealth or power for herself. She, like Frodo and Sam on the steps of Mordor, understands the importance of story. But Orual learns at the end of her story what Frodo and Sam realize while they are still creating their story, that the perspective from inside the story is quite different from the perspective outside the story.¹ In narratological terms, the reader can never become the focalizer, but a skilled storyteller can make the reader, the physical person reading the printed page, into the narratee, the one to whom the story is being told.

Lewis makes Orual both the narrator and the narratee of her own story in Part Two of the novel. What she does not know is the fabula, the story not as it is told but as it exists in the creator's mind, all the characters and all the events in chronological order. But the narratee should be able to recognize the Christian paradigm of God re-directing the story back into the fabula, the story as it is meant to be, the story before it was "bent," as Lewis phrases it in his science fiction trilogy. Only after Orual hears the story of Istra, what she considers to be an incorrect version of her sister Psyche's story, does she write the narrative of her life. By so doing, she realizes that

¹ Kurt Bruner and Jim Ware also discuss this shift in perspective between those inside the story and those outside the story in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*; Gunnar Urang comments on this distinction in perspectives, though he does not use this terminology, as being an example of Tolkien's Christian "theology of history" (103-08).

her version is not accurate either. Writing her narrative is the first step towards acknowledging the truth, towards achieving wisdom of the soul, becoming Psyche.

Orual proves herself a great warrior and a great queen; she has achieved what Éowyn, trapped in her life as Lady of Rohan, had wished for. But the wisdom that Orual lacks, and what comes to her only at the end of her life because she had earlier denied Psyche, her soul, is the wisdom of what Lewis calls gift-love. In his work *The Four Loves* Lewis describes the four types of human love—affection, friendship, eros, and charity. But each type of love can be self-motivated, what he calls need-love, or God-motivated, what he calls gift-love. Orual's demands on Psyche, the Fox, and Bardia, on everyone around her except her people, is need-love. Psyche best describes the destructive nature of love stemming from one's selfish desires when she agrees to disobey the god, Cupid in the myth, because Orual has threaten to kill herself:

“You are indeed teaching me about kinds of love I did not know. It is like looking into a deep pit. I am not sure whether I like you kind better than hatred. Oh, Orual—to take my love for you, because you know it goes down to my very roots and cannot be diminished by any other newer love, and then to make of it a tool, a weapon, a thing of policy and mastery, an instrument of torture—I begin to think I never knew you. Whatever comes after, something that was between us dies here.” (165)

Orual does love, and inspires great love, gift-love in others, but her love is merely need-love, self-love. The wisdom she lacks is the perspective that her part of the story must be in harmony, in obedience, to the story as written by the gods. She must learn gift-love by becoming Psyche.

The act of writing her version of the story so that she is heard by the gods is the first step towards developing gift-love. However, because she tries to create her reality for herself, her true reality—the fabula—slips away from her, until the only way for Orual to perceive reality is through the narrative of dreams. The reader, however, should be able to perceive reality, the fabula, if not on the first read, at least on re-reading, and this novel is

one that practically demands a re-reading following the final narrative by the priest.²

Orual is a different type of warrior than Tolkien's warriors, because the battle against one's self for the mastery of one's soul, psychomachia, is a different type of battle. The psychomachia of *Till We Have Faces* is more quest than battle, a quest for the wisdom of knowing one's place. Orual has thought her place was to be Queen, and she is right, but only partially right. Her place as Queen of Glome is within a larger narrative of the god's creation which is within the larger narrative of Lewis's Secondary World which is within the larger narrative of God's creation. Thus, Psyche is both Blessed and Accursed, rather like many heroic figures in the Old Testament, because she is both a pagan character and a Christian allegory. She is also, as Corbin Scott Carnell points out, Lewis's only fully developed personification of *Sehnsucht*: Psyche longs for the god of the mountain because she is pagan, but through that longing, and by inspiring longing in others, she is redeemed (116).

Just because Christianity is not explicitly incorporated or referred to within the author's Secondary World, does not make that world pagan. Tolkien, Lewis, and Rowling create Christian works even though their Secondary Worlds appear pagan. If the reader is not Christian or chooses to ignore the Christianity of the narrative's fabula, then these novels will be read as merely pagan fantasy. For example, because noted children's literature scholar Jack Zipes fails to acknowledge spiritual elements in children's literature (207-208), he sees only the potential for social value in the Harry Potter series; his Marxist/Freudian analysis reduces the books to being "ideologically conservative with a strong investment in the restitution of male hegemony" (215). Thus, it is not surprising that he dismisses the female characters.

Mrs. Arabella Figg, mentioned above, is only one of the wise warriors in Rowling's fantasy world. Minerva McGonagall, Hermione Granger, and Mrs. Molly Weasley are other examples; Ginny Weasley and Neville Longbottom are becoming wise warriors, and Luna Lovegood has potential for becoming one. Mrs. Weasley first appears as a rather dumpy, rather ordinary (for a witch) mother (*Sorcerer's Stone* 92-93), hassled by her

² What Lewis does with multiple narratives in *Till We Have Faces*, Tolkien does with his "interlacing technique" (Shippey 107)—create a Christian fabula within a pagan narrative.

offspring and vainly trying to keep her sons presentable and out of trouble (95-96). She soon adopts Harry as another son, giving him hugs at every meeting, expresses concern that he doesn't get enough to eat (*Chamber of Secrets* 34-35; *Order of the Phoenix* 61), cleaning him up (*Chamber* 56; *Phoenix* 123) or worrying that he is too young for what he must do (*Phoenix* 87-91). Her worst fear is not that she will die fighting Voldemort and his Death Eaters, but that her family will die (*Phoenix* 175-77). Mrs. Weasley's mothering nature is her dominant characteristic, which makes her sudden transformation from "a short, plump, kind-faced woman" into what closely resembles "a saber-toothed tiger" (*Chamber* 32) all the more frightening for her family and Harry.

With her only weapon her words, though she has been known to wield a fireplace poker "like a sword" when provoked (*Chamber* 38), she can be quite a forceful personality, as her family and friends well know, vacating the premises with the first sign of combat if at all possible (*Phoenix* 507). And it is Mrs. Weasley, not her husband, who sends the Howler when Ron takes off in his dad's magically modified, flying Ford Anglia (*Chamber* 87-88). Hermione uses this fear to stop George and Fred from testing their products on first years, by threatening to inform their mother of their activities. Just the thought of listening to their mother's Howler is an extremely effective threat, though one considered by the twins as "way below the belt" (*Phoenix* 254).

Mrs. Weasley and Lily Potter represent the greatest power in Rowling's secondary world—self-sacrificing mother's love. This love protected Harry from Lord Voldemort's curse, and has continued to protect him since. This type of love is what Lewis describes as gift-love, the love that Orual finally gains the wisdom to understand. This gift-love, or God's love, seems to be the central motif of the Harry Potter series; characters willingly sacrifice themselves for others. A more difficult choice is what Dumbledore refers to in the final pages of *The Order of the Phoenix* (834-42), the test that Psyche initially fails, which is the choice to sacrifice another to save one's soul or one's world. Rowling seems to be drawing upon Biblical parallels of Abraham and Isaac as well as God's sacrifice of "his only begotten son."

Hermione is another warrior figure easily dismissed as merely a sidekick, even by some feminists, oddly enough, whose analyses of her strong character seem limited to counting the number of times she shrieks

or squeals. About the only positive analysis of Hermione from a feminist perspective is by Eliza Dresang, but hers is limited to mostly literary allusions, and she doesn't mention Athena. Hermione is certainly the character who comes the closest to knowing all things, including the wisdom that attempting to learn everything is not wise; she gives up the Time-Turner at the end of *The Prisoner of Azkaban*. Hermione also knows when to fight, something Harry hasn't learned yet. She understands the difference between aggressive force and defensive action, telling Professor Umbridge that jinxes "can be very useful when they're used defensively" (*Phoenix* 317) and then proceeding to put theory into practice by jinxing anyone who is disloyal to Dumbledore's Army, defeating Umbridge herself (*Phoenix* 612-13).

Hermione matures very quickly, much more quickly than her best friends, Ron and Harry, and her patience with teenage boys is heroic in and of itself. She is annoying at first: the teachers' pet, the student who has read everything, forgets nothing, and knows all the answers, who color codes her notes (*Sorcerer's Stone* 228), makes up study schedules for herself and her friends every year and gives homework planners as Christmas presents (*Phoenix* 501). Whenever she can spare time from her favorite activity of studying, she spends an inordinate amount of time trying to stop Harry and/or Ron from doing whatever they shouldn't be doing, even during vacation, such as flying without permission (*Stone* 148) or wandering around after hours (155-56). It's not surprising that Headmaster Dumbledore chooses her for Prefect.

Her intensity can be misguided and quite humorous at times. For example, after Harry, Ron, Neville, and Hermione escape from Fluffy, she exclaims, "I hope you're pleased with yourselves. We could all have been killed—or worse, expelled" (*Stone* 162). She signs up for every subject for her third year, a feat made possible only by special permission to use the Time-Turner, but almost has a mental breakdown. The only test on which she does less than excellent is the practical Defense Against the Dark Arts exam when she panicked, unable to dispel the boggart who took the shape of Professor McGonagall telling her she failed all her exams (*Prisoner* 319). And her attempt to free the house elves, SPEW, speaks for itself. Of course, Rowling's politically incorrect humor at misguided, over-confidant "do-gooders" has drawn a great deal of criticism from liberal and highly theoretical academia, which just might explain Professor Umbridge. In

contrast, not satirized is Hermione's undertaking of Buckbeak's defense despite her heavy course load, twelve courses instead of the usual seven (*Prisoner* 274). Ron and Harry, on the other hand, forget all about Buckbeak.

Over the first five books Hermione's intellectual abilities and skills keep growing, making her a formidable opponent even when she is not using magic. She concocts the plan, and the Polyjuice Potion, to sneak into Slytherin House to spy on Draco (*Chamber* 159). She figures out what Slytherin's monster is and how to defend against it (255, 290-91). She unmasks Rita Skeeter (*Goblet of Fire* 613-14) and silences her. Hermione talks Harry into teaching students practical Defense against the Dark Arts techniques (*Phoenix* 326), and figures out a safe method of informing all the students of meeting times (398-99). She remembers to mark the doors they have already entered in the revolving room at the Minister of Magic (*Phoenix* 772). She is the student least likely to respond to Draco's insults, and when she does respond, it is to protect someone else and she is quite effective.

As Hermione matures, she becomes less bossy and much more perceptive and insightful, developing into a truly wise woman. In *The Order of the Phoenix* Professor McGonagall instructs Harry to listen to Hermione (249); Harry's failure to do so precipitates a series of events leading to his godfather's death (732-35). Hermione is the only student who recognizes that Professor Umbridge's presence signals the Ministry of Magic's interference at Hogwarts (213-14). She understands not only Cho Chang's emotional turmoil (230, 458-59, 572-73), but also Harry's teenage angst (66, 157, 498-99, 733-35), and Ron's anger (*Goblet* 289-90, 432). She also understands Sirius's selfishness and inherent risk-taking personality (*Phoenix* 158-59, 377-78), just as Mrs. Weasley understands before anyone else that Sirius expects Harry to be like his father, Sirius's best friend, and the dangers of this expectation for both Harry and Sirius (89). While Hermione seemed most like Professor McGonagall in the earlier books (*Chamber* 84, 213), in the fifth book she begins to be comparable to Mrs. Weasley. Even Harry, not the most perceptive individual when it comes to females, sees a resemblance (*Phoenix* 658).

In the tales "that really mattered" as Sam says to Frodo, "Folk seem to have been just landed in them, usually—their paths were laid that way, as you put it. But I expect they had lots of chances, like us, of turning back, only they didn't" (*Towers* 407). They, and we, must make the right choices to

become the wise warrior each of us is capable of being. Wisdom is not mere knowledge, and not all warriors carry weapons. And some wise warriors perhaps do not know their own power. In addition to their fictional characters, Tolkien, Lewis, and Rowling are also wise warriors in their own way, guiding readers and inspiring writers for generations to come.

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