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Unspoken Dreams: A Psychological Reading of Hermione and the Mirror of Erised

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ABSTRACT: In Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone, the magical Mirror of Erised serves as a powerful symbol, providing readers with deep insights into the characters who interact with it. The inscription on the Mirror suggests that rather than simply reflecting individuals as they truly are, it reveals their strongest desires. In this book, both Harry Potter and Ron Weasley catch glimpses of their imagined selves, while Hermione Granger is excluded from this experience. This paper aims to explore Hermione's exclusion by envisioning her reflection in the Mirror, drawing inspiration from her characterization in the first five books. By utilizing the symbolism of the Mirror and its reflective properties, I will discuss Hermione's desires and how they shape her actions and responses to the world. This framework will facilitate a dialogue that centers on Hermione Granger, allowing for new interpretations of her character. My goal is to present vibrant and progressive representations of Hermione through feminist approaches to knowledge and critique. I am particularly interested in how Hermione's desires influence her behavior and interactions, especially considering her role as a gendered and racialized character within the adventure narrative, which creates complex desires that manifest throughout the text.

1. INTRODUCTION

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone" is written by the famous British author J.K. Rowling. It is a beloved work among children and consists of seven books in total. Hermione Granger stands out as one of the most competent, proficient, and capable characters in the series. Many fans and critics view Hermione as a strong example of girl power and a model to emulate. It's not unusual to consider Hermione as a character with real-world associations. There are discussions about the connections between the text and the world, which appear as subtexts within the storylines (Gupta, Gallardo-C).

Hermione's ability to identify solutions to problems is notable. She helps Harry Potter in many situations, often providing moral support whenever he needs it. She is very intelligent, and J.K. Rowling has said she identifies with Hermione Granger because of her ability to handle tricky situations. For example, when Harry wanted to understand more about the Philosopher's Stone, Hermione went to the library and consulted reference books to clarify his doubts, demonstrating her vast knowledge.

Hermione loves books and is always eager to participate in class, often raising her hand to answer questions. She helps her friends understand various subjects, showcasing her immense talent throughout the storyline.

2. MIRROR OF ERISED

Harry Potter, Ron Weasley, Albus Dumbledore, and Lord Voldemort all see images of themselves in the Mirror of Erised. As Dumbledore describes it, the mirror "shows us nothing more or less than the deepest, most desperate desire of our hearts" (SS 213). While we are told that the mirror reveals neither truth nor knowledge, its ability to delve into the soul and unveil its secrets is significant, as it speaks to those desires. When Harry stands before the mirror, he sees several deceased members of his family, including his parents, who look at him lovingly and smile. Having been raised by the cruel Dursleys, Harry has yet to fulfill his fundamental needs for identity and belonging.

The expressions of knowing and reassurance from his ancestors give Harry a sense of value and purpose. The Potters smile and wave at him, while he gazes back, yearningly, his hands pressed flat against the glass as if hoping to reach through to them. He experiences a powerful ache inside him, a mix of joy and profound sadness (SS 203).

In his final encounter with the mirror, during a showdown with Voldemort, Harry sees himself possessing the Sorcerer's Stone—the very object that Voldemort desires to regain power and rule the world. Harry's courage and cleverness in thwarting Voldemort reinforces his role as the ultimate hero. Additionally, he gains a precious memory of his family and identity that he can always cherish, even if he cannot physically return to their care.

Ron looks into the mirror and sees a reflection of himself alone, standing with pride as the Quidditch captain, Head Boy, and celebrating the victory of the House Cup. Although the text does not specifically explain how he recognizes these accomplishments by looking at his reflection, it can be inferred that they are represented through insignia or regalia that he sees himself wearing or possessing. This paper will identify, critique, and discuss two categorical elements of Hermione's desires: heroism and racial transcendence, as well as acceptance into the Wizarding World. Within each category of desire, it will describe the corresponding representative symbols that she might see reflected in the mirror.

3. HERMIONE AS HERO

Hermione's journey can be examined through the lens of how her gender positions her in the narrative, influencing her progress within heroic storylines. As these tales are centered around heroism, it's reasonable to assume that Hermione yearns for recognition of the many noble efforts she has made and will continue to pursue for the betterment of both the magical and Muggle worlds. In the wizarding community, the Order of Merlin is one of the highest honors an individual can achieve for their heroic service. When we first imagine Hermione in the Mirror of Erised, she proudly wears the Order of Merlin badge on her robes. However, this vision of her holding a prestigious position runs counter to the text's portrayal of gender and its representation of her as a girl.

As mentioned in the introduction, Hermione is regarded as a strong, moralistic, and high-achieving model of Western girl power. Anita Harris describes this vision in her book **Future Girl** as “the image of the successful and assertive girl in control of her own destiny” (Harris 21). Yet, throughout the series, Hermione often does not engage in critical moments necessary for protecting that destiny and frequently relies on the boys around her to act with courage and cleverness to save the day. Much of her energy is spent seeking validation, approval from her friends, and inclusion in their group, which is distinctly influenced by gender dynamics.

For instance, she covers for her friends by lying to the teachers about their whereabouts after being instructed to return to their dormitories, taking the blame for their collective disobedience. However, Ron reminds us that Hermione is still not quite their equal: “‘Good of her to get us out of trouble like that,’ Ron admitted. ‘Mind you, we did save her’” (SS 179). While the boys utilize their cleverness, physical strength, and magic to resolve crises, Hermione is deliberately cast in moments as a damsel in distress, contributing only through deceit (Rowling).

Though her acts of disloyalty are concerning, they can also be interpreted with complexity. Hermione's actions reflect her deep concern for the well-being of others. She employs rationality and logic to determine the best course of action, aiming for the safest outcomes. Her apprehensions regarding Harry's Firebolt and the Marauder's Map, though poorly timed, were justified.

4. CONCLUSION

Hermione is not just a gendered character; she is also a racialized character due to her Muggle heritage. I argue that her tendency to overachieve and her constant adherence to the rules of the magical world reveal a desire to transcend or assimilate away from her less civilized and antiquated Muggle identity, striving to become a nearly perfect citizen of the magical community. Hermione's Muggle background mirrors the experiences of many minority groups in the real world. The integrationist policies of the Ministry of Magic provide opportunities for the “genetically” disadvantaged and uninitiated members of the Muggle “elite,” but it is ultimately up to them to promote their own advancement.

As a Muggle who has made significant strides in the Wizarding world as an outsider, Hermione is often portrayed as a credit to her “race.” She views her entry into the Wizarding world as a privileged opportunity and works tirelessly to prove her worthiness to be part of this society. Hermione navigates a delicate balance between acceptance and rejection. Despite being considered

one of the brightest witches of her age, her character is underdeveloped as a heroine, largely due to her gender role in the narrative.

Even with her strong qualities and abilities, she is frequently relegated to the role of the damsel in distress, rendered helpless in moments of danger and appearing incompetent when she has the chance to contribute. She embodies the ideal of the overachiever, rising to meet every challenge she faces, yet she is threatened with literal extermination because of her Muggle heritage. Hermione struggles to fulfill her desires, but true to her character, those desires often remain out of reach. She must find a place where she can be accepted and appreciated for all the wonderful gifts she has to offer.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Aafrina B.: Conceptualization, literature analysis, investigation, and writing—original draft.

Dr. U. S. Akshara Govind: Supervision, critical review, and editing of the manuscript.

Both authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Ethics approval was not required for this study because it involved the analysis of published literary texts and did not involve human participants or animals.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data availability is not applicable to this study, as the research is based on the analysis of published literary texts.

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