

## Fighters or Victims: Women at War as Depicted in Harry Potter Novels

**Shrouk Sultan**

Assistant Lecturer of English Literature- Department of Foreign Languages- Faculty of Education- Mansoura University- Egypt  
[shroukyasser@mans.edu.eg](mailto:shroukyasser@mans.edu.eg)

**Basma Saleh**

Associate Professor of English Literature- English Department- Faculty of Arts- Mansoura University- Egypt

**Asmaa ElSherbini**

Professor of English Literature- English Department- Faculty of Arts- Mansoura University- Egypt

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v4i2.938>

**APA Citation:** Sultan, S. Saleh, B & ElSherbini, A.(2022). Fighters or Victims: Women at War as Depicted in Harry Potter Novels. *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies*. 4(2).229-242. <http://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v4i2.938>

**Received:**

12/05/2022

**Accepted:**

31/05/2022

**Keywords:**

Harry Potter;  
Witches;  
Fighters;  
Victims .

**Abstract**

*Witches in Harry Potter novels play major roles that affect the course of events. Some of these witches are authority figures in institutions, while others can be housewives, aurors, ministry employees, or talented witches. This paper discusses several different witches who take part, intentionally or not, in the battle between good and evil in Harry Potter novels. Three of these witches will be tackled in terms of their roles as fighters, while three others will be tackled in terms of their degradation into victims. This analysis will be done through the investigation of the attitudes of the characters towards themselves and their positions, as well as the surrounding characters' reception of the selected characters, and carefully reading the events of the seven Harry Potter novels. Because Harry Potter novels are widely-read, the depiction of female characters in these novels as either fighters or victims impact readers' perception of women's roles in their communities. Analyzing the female characters, this paper intends to help readers to realize if Harry Potter novels help to empower women or limit their potentials. Since women issues are an important part of our lives, and since Harry Potter novels are widely-read, finding out whether these novels empower women or limit their potentials is crucial to our understanding of the major impact that fiction can have on people's lives.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

*Harry Potter* is a widely-read series of novels. Readers of different ages enjoy this series which revolves around a young boy named Harry who finds out on his eleventh birthday that he is a wizard. Shocked by this piece of news, Harry also comes to know that his parents, who died when he was one year old, were killed by Voldemort, a most evil wizard who terrorized the magical world. As the events progress, Voldemort rises from death and attempts to rule the magical world once more, and Harry realizes that it is his duty to kill Voldemort and end his reign of terror. When the war breaks between the two sides of good and evil, witches and

wizards of both sides get involved in the battles. Witches in *Harry Potter* face similar challenges to those that real-life women experience at tough times and at times of war. They either take on the role of strong fighters who strive to fulfill their aims, protecting themselves or their loved ones, or they are being subjected to ill-treatment and violence which deprive them of their powers.

## **2. Women Fighting for Empowerment**

Women empowerment has been one major goal for the feminist movement since the first wave of feminism up till the present time. Efforts have been made to give women their due human rights of education, equal pay, and suffrage, among others. Though some of these rights are granted in a wide range of societies. Other rights are still denied. The following section of the paper will provide an account of women's efforts as fighters against injustice during the waves of feminism, and of the kinds of ways in which they were victimized by patriarchy. During the first wave of feminism, women started to seek economic independence instead of marriage, which had women's savings and properties be a part of their husbands' fortunes. Rates of unmarried women between twenty and forty years of age were high, and that was another reason why women had to find jobs for financial support. Women's education was not qualifying enough to enable them to have jobs, not even teaching jobs, which were the only available option for them (Sanders, 2010: 20).

Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929) tackles the issue of women's careers and their right to have jobs and independent money accounts and fortunes of their own. The narrator refers to a friend's mother, Mrs. Seton, who had thirteen children and had no money of her own to spend the way she would have liked. Woolf sees that if women of past generations had their own independent will to get jobs, and to fight the norms that say they should not, things would have been different for the younger generations. If the ancestors had business savings, they could have helped these young ambitious women who want to go to college and have the opportunity to gain the knowledge that men were easily able to access.

Women in the time of Mrs. Seton underwent denial of autonomy, which is, according to Martha Nussbaum (1995: 257), a form of human objectification that means treating a human being as "lacking in autonomy and self-determination". This objectification was exercised, not merely by means of social power, but by means of law, as well. As Woolf states "in the first place, to earn money was impossible for them, and in the second, had it been possible, the law denied them the right to possess what money they earned" (1929: 20). It is inferred that when social suppression is supported by a higher authority, in this case, the law, people are more reluctant to stand against the suppression or seek to challenge it. The narrator imagines Mrs. Seton and her fellow women's inner dialogue as "Every penny I earn, they may have said, will be taken from me and disposed of according to my husband's wisdom... so that to earn money, even if I could earn money, is not a matter that interests me very greatly. I had better leave it to my husband" (20).

Second wave feminists were concerned with violence against women in different forms. Feminists paid special attention to domestic, and sexual types of violence. Feminists' efforts to help the battered women and victims of rape varied between social and voluntary work, and exercising pressure over governments to change the legal system with regard to crimes of domestic and sexual violence against women. Third wave feminists continued with the struggle to end violence against women. In 1995, the UN Fourth World Conference on Women addressed newer forms of violence as gendered violence. Some of these new forms included the violence against women in the times of war, forced abortion or sterilization and parental sex selection (Connors, 2013: pp. 26-27).

Susan Brownmiller (2013) believes that the physical structure of men and women might explain why the man becomes the predator and the woman becomes the prey because of the "... anatomical fiat, the inescapable construction of their genital organs" (6). The reason behind some men's use of violence against women is that they try to assert their position as the leading element in social relationships. Violence, then, is perceived as a tool of he who carries it out to maintain his male dominance (Saunders, 1988; Annandale & Clark, 1996).

Other feminists thought that the use of violence on the part of a man does not spring from merely his physical structure; it is a culturally-induced and accepted behavior, as opposed to the humble demeanor which is usually encouraged in women (Griffin, 1971: 2). Violence is suggested to be a way of self-expression by those men who use it in patriarchal societies, rather than a means to an end or a tool to achieve a certain purpose (Connell and Wilson, 1974: 16).

Using the feminist lens to critically analyze widely-read works of art, pinpointing the prominent themes of such a work, is a must. This is because popular works of fiction might influence many readers' attitudes and behaviors towards themselves, as girls or women, or towards their fellow citizens, as boys and men. Thus, this paper aims to dissect female characters of Harry Potter who take part in the fight for or against a noble cause, focusing on which roles these characters play in the battle-field, and how they are treated: appreciated or humiliated. Three of the chosen characters play a major role in the war between good and evil in *Harry Potter* novels. These women show skill and resilience, yet they may face several obstacles as fighters which may reflect some gender-based limitations forced upon them. A section of this paper will deal with the characters of Bellatrix, Hermione and Fleur as Fighters. The other three chosen characters are abused by other characters during the tough times of the war between good and evil. All of these three women possess a special quality: fame, skill and/or talent. Yet, these same gifts bring about their destruction; they are either stripped of these powers or these powers are used against them.

### **3. Bellatrix as a Fighter**

Bellatrix is one of the strongest female characters in the novels in terms of magical abilities, fearlessness and experience. She is the only female death eater that is mentioned to take part in the ministry battle between the death eaters, and Harry, his friends and the aurors (Rowling, *Order*, 2003: pp. 718-751). Moreover, she is the only death eater to manage to kill one of the aurors, Harry's godfather, Sirius (741). Bellatrix, though seems mentally unstable, is smart and cunning enough as to weave the plot that lures Harry into believing that Sirius is in danger, and so gets him to rush to save his godfather. Consequently, Harry is brought to where Voldemort wants him to be (765).

Bellatrix is more powerful than the rest of the death eaters, most of whom are men. She is brave enough to handle the news of being sentenced to life in prison, a most terrible prison for witches and wizards, standing tall to confront the judge, threatening him with revenge and promising to reunite with the Dark Lord, as mentioned earlier in this paper (Rowling, *Goblet*, 2000: 501).

Although Bellatrix pays Snape a visit with her sister to ask him to help her nephew, she does not try to flatter Snape in any way to get him to help her nephew. On the contrary, she speaks out her inner feelings and thoughts, risking the possibility of angering Snape (Rowling, *Prince*, 2005: pp. 17-31). This shows how Bellatrix is confident, fearless and a risk-taker.

Bellatrix is ruthless and enjoys causing others' pain. She causes Neville's parents to lose their sanity with torture. She goes to Azkaban prison for such a crime, yet when she escapes, she is as daring and nasty as she used to be. She also brags about her crimes, and she takes pride in the fact that she can execute the torture curse, which needs the wizard or witch

who casts it to enjoy inflicting pain upon others (Rowling, *Order*, 2003: 746; *Hallows*, 2007: 598). Furthermore, she also tortures Hermione for information at the Malfoy's Manor (Rowling, *Hallows*, 2007: pp. 376-379). Although she does not have to do, when Bellatrix is done with Hermione, she is ready to let Greyback, the werewolf, feast on her (384).

Bellatrix is not the kind of merciful master to her allies or servants. She mistreats Griphook, the goblin, and tortures him for information. Moreover, she uses torture against him for pleasure. Griphook helps her know that the sword found with Harry, Ron and Hermione is not the real one preserving a part of Voldemort's soul. Bellatrix, instead of thanking Griphook, cuts his face and pushes him aside after he gives her the helpful information (pp. 383-384).

In addition, she casts a spell over Greyback and other criminals who bring Harry, Ron and Hermione to her and to other death eaters at the Malfoy's Manor. Seeking to take the credit for finding the three friends and the Gryffindor sword they have, Bellatrix bends Greyback to her will with magic and assigns Draco the task of killing him. By controlling a most-feared werewolf such as Greyback and leaving him to be killed by Draco Malfoy, whom she does not think is competent enough as a wizard, Bellatrix shows disrespect to and lack of fear of who and what a lot of witches and wizards fear (Rowling, *Hallows*, 2007: pp. 375-376).

According to Duriez (2007), Bellatrix's name means "warrior", which refers to phallic existence in a female bodily structure (87). Bearing this and Bellatrix's skills in mind might reveal a tendency on the part of the author to underestimate women's power in the series. Since Bellatrix is one of the strongest witches in the novels, choosing a name with masculine connotation for Bellatrix rids her of her femininity. This, consequently, supports the stereotype that powerful women are less feminine and that they have to imitate men and follow their ways to gain power.

Bellatrix is always eager to obey her master that she can get really angry and out of control if something ever stops her from that (Lundhall, 10). Bellatrix is the most loyal follower to Voldemort as she describes herself: "I was and am the Dark Lord's most loyal servant, I learned the Dark Arts from him" (Rowling, *Order*, 2003: 746). Bellatrix is rarely seen as more than Voldemort's most loyal servant. She designs and executes plans for him, yet he is the one inducing the most fear.

Bellatrix is one of the few death eaters who are depicted killing or ending the future of characters, some of whom are major ones, on the opposing side to Voldemort. She destroys the lives of the Longbottoms by driving them into insanity, and kills her cousin Tonks, and Sirius Black, who is also Harry's godfather, and Dobby, Harry's house-elf friend (Rowling, *Order*, 2003: 741; *Hallows*, 2007: pp. 386-387).

Bellatrix's efforts to satisfy her master, Voldemort, are not met with the anticipated reactions. During the battle at the ministry, the prophecy ball that Voldemort is seeking is smashed. Bellatrix, who is the only one to fight till the end with Voldemort at the ministry (Rowling, *Order*, 2003: 752), shows sincere guilt. Despite her great efforts of plotting and fighting, Voldemort meets these with dissatisfaction with the results and with threats of "deal[ing] with [her] in a moment" (748). Although Bellatrix seems to be a powerful woman most of the time, her fascination with Voldemort makes her nothing more than a follower to her male master. She is sometimes silenced by Voldemort and mistreated by him, yet she glorifies him and lets him dominate her: "'My Lord —' Bellatrix had spoken: She sat closest to Voldemort, disheveled, her face a little bloody but otherwise unharmed. Voldemort raised his hand to silence her, and she did not speak another word, but eyed him in worshipful fascination.'" (Rowling, *Hallows*, 2007: 574).

Whatever she does, she does it for him. She spends long years in Azkaban prison for supporting him and she fights with him till she is killed, too (602). Her sacrifices extend to the family sphere, as well. As mentioned earlier in this part of the paper, Bellatrix loses ties with her cousin, Tonks, and kills her for Voldemort's sake (540). Bellatrix also murders her cousin, Sirius, as she fights against Harry and others at the ministry to retrieve the prophecy that Voldemort is seeking (Rowling, *Order*, 2007: 741).

Judging by the previous analysis, Bellatrix is cunning powerful, confident, ruthless, and fearless. Thus, she seems to be a warrior of major importance to her side. However, she is not completely free from male domination. Thus, she is not an entirely empowered character.

#### **4. Hermione as a Fighter**

Hermione Granger is Harry's classmate and best friend along with Ron. Hermione is a smart student and talented witch. During the seven books of the series, Hermione has largely contributed to the events and has developed as a character. One of the sides of Hermione's character is that she is a powerful witch who uses her powers and skills for the sake of good. She helps her friends numerous times, and it is her skills throughout the series that enable Harry, the protagonist, to overcome many challenges. During her first year at Hogwarts, Hermione may not seem at her best as a fighter compared to her male colleagues. She is attacked in the girls' bathroom by a troll, and only Harry and Ron could help her by defeating the giant creature (Rowling, *Philosopher*, 1997: 187).

However, during the same year, Hermione shows a good knowledge of jinxes that help her save her best friend. Harry once experiences a lack of control over his movements during his play as a Seeker in a Quidditch match. Hermione saves him from getting killed as she accidentally hits Professor Quirrell who is jinxing Harry. Though it was an accident, Hermione was already on her way to intentionally jinx Professor Snape whom she thought was responsible for casting the curse over Harry. Hermione, then, shows courage and self-confidence as she attempts to attack a professor to save her best friend's life (pp. 204-205).

Once more, Hermione saves Harry's life by turning his eyeglasses waterproof by magic. Harry has to attend Quidditch practice sessions and a real match during the rainy weather. Because he cannot see without the glasses which would definitely get wet in the rain and obscure his vision, Hermione helps him with a special spell to enable him to wear the eyeglasses and still see during the rain (Rowling, *Azkaban*, 1999: 186).

However, Hermione's behaviors in these two situations are not received as they should be. On the first occasion, Harry is praised on the pitch for surviving the sudden trouble, and no one knows of Hermione's quick and smart reaction except for Harry and Ron (Rowling, *Philosopher*, 1997: 205). On the second situation, though "the team [watch] in amazement", Hermione is seen "disappear[ing] in the crowd" (Rowling, *Azkaban*, 1999: 186). This indicates a lack of attention to Hermione's resourcefulness during tough times, compared to the praise that Harry gets for his performance in the match, which goes well thanks to Hermione's skill at spell-casting.

During the Triwizard Championship, Hermione helps Harry pass the dragon challenge in the first task although the contestants should work on the challenges by themselves. On the second task, Hermione asks their colleagues to let Harry work on the challenge by himself. Harry who could not do without Hermione on the dragon challenge, reminds her that she should not have helped him, then, if it is not allowed. Hermione, as a result, feels guilty and embarrassed. So, instead of being grateful for her help, Harry makes Hermione feel bad for what she does for him only because she tries to set things right. Moreover, as usual, Hermione



does not take the credit for her help, while Harry gets it, instead, winning the Championship, eventually (Rowling, *Goblet*, 2000: 309).

Hermione stands up for Harry again as she joins the Weasleys and some aurors to cover his transportation from the Dursley's to the Weasley's by shape-shifting into Harry in order to distract the death eaters who are looking for him (Rowling, *Hallows*, 2007: 41). Hermione also saves Harry from Voldemort's Snake, Nagini (282). In the third book, she helps both Professor Lupin and Harry to disarm Professor Snape for fear that the latter might attack Lupin or Sirius Black (Rowling, *Azkaban*, 1999: pp. 383-384).

One of Hermione's best skills as a fighter is her quickness and her ability to act fast. The three friends are once cornered by a group of prize hunters whose job is to find Voldemort's enemies for a price. Knowing that Harry is the number one target for the hunters, Hermione curses Harry's face instantly to change his appearance so that they would not recognize him. Although Harry is later recognized by Draco Malfoy at the Malfoy's Manor, Hermione's reaction wins them some time to think of a way out (Rowling, *Hallows*, 2007: pp. 363-387).

At Xenophilius Lovegood's house, the three friends undergo another attack by the death eaters who try to capture Harry. Again, Hermione acts very quickly and moves all of the three friends instantly to their safe house. Although the three friends are under attack, Hermione is alert enough to remember to hide Ron from the eyes of the death eaters. It is important that the death eaters do not see Ron because his family has falsely announced that he is bed-ridden, in an attempt to deny any connections with Harry to mislead Voldemort's followers. Thus, Hermione also saves Ron's family from expected troubles if he is ever found to be running away with Harry (Rowling, *Prince*, 2005: pp. 343-344). She saves Ron, again, as she unties Ron off the ropes that one of the death eaters has used against him during an attack, following the three friends' escape from Bill's wedding (133).

After she and her friends are caught by Professor Umbridge in the latter's office trying to communicate with Sirius Black through the fire place, Hermione manages to save the day. Umbridge is about to exercise an Unforgivable Curse over the students to get them to reveal what they were doing at her office. Hermione quickly comes up with a smart idea to save herself and her friends. She pretends that they were communicating with Dumbledore who has hidden a secret weapon at the Forbidden Forest. She and Harry accompany Umbridge to the forest to reveal the whereabouts of the alleged weapon. There, centaurs appear and attack Umbridge as she addresses these creatures inappropriately. The centaurs take her away, freeing Harry and his friend from Umbridge's grip (Rowling, *Order*, 2003: pp. 688-695). As Andrade suggests, Hermione's intelligence and ability to persuade saves her and her friends from a terrible fate (7).

Hermione's interest in knowledge adds to her skills as a fighter against evil. As Harry, Ron and Hermione decide to go after Voldemort's Horcruxes to destroy them, Hermione does some research to enable them to know what they are about to confront. She summons a number of needed books from the library so that they might be ready for their task (Rowling, *Hallows*, 2007: 81). She spends time thinking about and preparing the necessary tools that the three of them would need on their journey (pp. 129-130). During her third year, Hermione uses the Time-Turner she is given to save the day. By going back in time with Harry, both of them rescue Buckbeak, Hagrid's bird that is sentenced to death. They also change other events so that Sirius Black, Harry's godfather, can flee the Azkaban prison guards and go to a safe hide (Rowling, *Azkaban*, 1999: pp. 417-435).

Hermione shows effective leadership skills, too. On their quest to save Sirius at the ministry, Harry, Ron, Neville, Ginny and Luna are all led by Hermione. She directs them inside the ministry building and takes them away from roads they should be neglecting (Rowling, *Order*, 2003: pp. 712-714). She also fights bravely against the death eaters along with the rest of the group. Furthermore, she abides by war ethics as she refuses to let Harry attack a death eater who has just been turned into a child, warning Harry not to “hurt a baby” (pp. 719-729). Because Hermione is very humane, she does not allow Malfoy to insult Hagrid. As a result, she slaps Malfoy in public (Rowling, *Azkaban*, 1999: 326). In doing so, she challenges the norm about the female characters being timid (Andrade, 2008: 7). Hermione also fights for the rights of the house elves. She feels sorry for Winky, the house elf that is unjustly accused of sparking the Dark Mark during the Quidditch World Cup. Hermione expresses her disappointment at how the elf is misjudged by her own master (Rowling, *Goblet*, 2000: 115).

Hermione even starts a movement for the support of the house elves’ rights. This starts as she realizes that the house elves who serve at Hogwarts or any other place do not get paid for their work, and are treated terribly by their masters. Hermione decides to stop eating the dinner that the elves have prepared as a form of protest against their conditions (pp. 154-155). Noticing that the house elves are not going to choose freedom, Hermione decides to force it on them. She knits some hats, and distributes them around the school so that the elves can find the gifts. Once house elves receive gifts, they are set free (Rowling, *Order*, 2003: pp. 236-237). Hermione insists on helping these elves no matter what. Another example of her attempts, is how she defends another house elf, Kreacher, although the latter is very hostile to her. Hermione reminds Harry that the reason why Kreacher betrayed Sirius Black is that the latter was mistreating Kreacher (Rowling, *Hallows*, 2007: 160).

By defending the house elves, Hermione is suggested to be defending women rights because the living conditions of the house elves resemble the traditional life conditions of women. The life of house elves is one spent at home where they are supposed to cook, knit, and clean for their masters. Women are expected to stay at home, care for the house and perform chores. House elves are more of a commodity of their masters. They have no right to claim something as their own, and they are only freed if they are given a gift or a piece of clothes. Good women are to be extremely selfless, just like the house elves who lack any personal possessions. House elves are pleased when they are praised for their services, and when they are asked to perform more of them. They feel insulted, on the other hand, when they are encouraged to defy or disobey their masters. Similarly, a woman, or particularly, a wife, who can do well in the kitchen and around the house, and who is obedient to her husband is regarded positively and considered “a good wife” (Rowling, *Chamber*, 1998: pp. 12-18; *Goblet*, 2000: 154).

Winky, the elf that Hermione defends, is an example of how the house elves are a symbol of women restricted to traditional roles. After accusing her of sparking the Dark Mark, Mr. Crouch lets go of his house elf Winky who has served him and his family for years. Although he was mistreating her like most masters are to their elves, Winky is devastated as he leaves her. As she is brought to Hogwarts to be with other house elves, Winky spends her time crying. She is also angry at Dobby, another house elf, because he enjoys the life of freedom that both of them now have. She uses unhealthy coping mechanisms in response to her new status as a free elf. She drinks, lets herself be dirty and keeps herself disillusioned as, according to Dobby, “she still thinks Mr. Crouch is her master” (Rowling, *Goblet*, 2000: pp. 117-118, 321-323, 452). Most elves see freedom from their masters as a sign of shame, lack of competence, and dishonor. The same goes with women in the past who regarded staying in their oppressive marriages as a sign of being good wives who are performing their duties toward their husbands and families. If these women are not desired or needed anymore by their

husbands, it means they are no longer good wives. Similar to how feminists are ridiculed for defending women's rights, so is Hermione as she calls for humane treatment of the elves. Hermione's movement is not regarded with much respect. Her friends make fun of her, and the headmaster does not show interest in the cause.

One of Hermione's roles as a fighter is fighting against mischief or rule violations inside the school. On her fifth year at Hogwarts, Hermione is appointed a Prefect. Being a Prefect means that she is given the duty of helping younger students around the school while making sure to stop or report acts of breaking the school rules. As Fred and George start selling and distributing their Joke Shop products among other school students, Hermione tries to stop them and threatens to report them to the school administration. Hermione's authority, however, is challenged as Fred and George show indifference to what she says. Moreover, Hermione asks Ron to back her up against his brothers because she feels she cannot make the required effect. However, Ron does not cooperate. Hermione does not give up and manages to get the twin brothers, at least, worried when she threatens to report their actions to their mother (Rowling, *Order*, 2003: pp. 210, 235-236). Thus, Hermione knows her limits and is able to change her ways to meet an end. She is also flexible and resourceful as to seek different methods to achieve a goal.

Hermione is skillful, knowledgeable, resourceful, cooperative, quick, and she takes the initiative to do good. On the other hand, she is not always given her due credit. Thus, her situation resembles that of strong female fighters at war whose great contributions might be attributed to their male leader who is put under the spotlight.

### **5. Fleur as a Fighter**

Fleur is one of the contestants in the Triwizard Championship. This championship is one that involves very difficult challenges that only the best can overcome. She is the only female among the four contestants. Fleur is partially a Veela. Veela are witches who are so beautiful that they can have a mesmerizing effect over men, wizards or muggles, causing these men to act mindlessly only to impress the Veela (Rowling, *Goblet*, 2000: pp. 88, 212, 213).

Fleur comes last in the overall score of the first two tasks assigned to the contestants, following Cedric, Harry and Viktor as she does not manage to save her sister from the lake in the second task. Fleur tries to fulfill the task by using the Bubble Charm. Fleur tries to fulfill the task by using the Bubble Charm. However, she does not succeed. Harry is the one to step in to save her sister, instead. Though she is awarded twenty-five points on this task, Fleur sees herself undeserving of any credit, claiming that "[she] deserve[s] zero" (pp. 423-428). During the third task, which is performed in a maze, Fleur is attacked by another contestant, Viktor Krum, who was put under a controlling charm. Again, Harry steps in to save her and Cedric attempts to stun her attacker (pp. 525-527). Adding to this, she is not even admired by her school colleagues, unlike Cedric and Victor who are very popular among their school peers. Fleur's colleagues show contempt as she is selected to take part in the championship, while Cedric and Victor receive cheers from their colleagues when these two are announced to be contestants (pp. 226-227).

There are, then, two main problems with Fleur as a female fighter, which further limits women's power in the series. Including only one female contestant into the championship, a female who is also a Veela, supports a certain traditional view about women who occupy important positions, like Fleur's position as a contestant the Triwizard Cup. This view is that women sometimes rely on their beautiful looks, rather than their skills or talent in what they do, to reach success. The second problem with Fleur's character is that although the tasks she is given are equally assigned to her and her male colleagues, she needs her colleagues to protect her from other men, as she appears clumsy and shows incompetence during the tasks.



The magic wand is a weapon for the witch or a wizard. The magic wands that the four contestants use are symbolic for their personality and skills. First, Fleur's wand contains a hair of her grandmother, a Veela. The wand maker says that the Veela hair "makes for rather temperamental wands" (Rowling, *Goblet*, 2000: 260). The characteristics of Fleur's wand suggests that the owner is one who uses her attractive physical appearance to either defend herself or attack others.

Cedric's wand, on the other hand, contains a hair of a male unicorn. A unicorn, as depicted in the first book of the series, is a magical creature that is beautiful, strong and rare (Rowling, *Philosopher*, 1997: pp. 269-270). Cedric, indeed, is represented as attractive for girls, and skillful as a Quidditch player (Rowling, *Azkaban*, 1999: pp. 177, 183, 190; *Goblet*, 2000: pp. 62, 261). The unicorn is specified to be male which further asserts the masculine presence in the competition. Krum's wand includes a heartstring of a dragon. It is described as a "rigid" wand. This also relates to Krum's personality. He is known to be physically masculine and tough as a Quidditch player (Rowling, *Goblet*, 2000: pp. 54, 209, 262). For Harry, his wand has a phoenix feather (262). Since the phoenix is known for burning on the inside and then rising from its own ashes, it symbolizes Harry's power of sacrifice for others, and his continuous resilience against tough life events which is a personality trait that empowers him. With this comparison of the wands that the four contestants have, it seems that all of the champions have something special that sets them apart from the rest. Fleur's skill is presented to be her beauty and physical appearance which further supports the researcher's assumption that Fleur is a character whose major skill is being beautiful and who uses that beauty to impact others.

Though Fleur is largely depicted as a silly girl with excessive beauty, she makes some heroic contributions in the last book. She takes part in Harry's transportation from his aunt's house into the Weasleys'. Six people are to shape-shift into Harry, which puts them in danger of being tracked or killed by the death eaters during the transportation. Seven others are to accompany these six and the real Harry. Fleur takes a huge risk as she is one of the people who adopt Harry's appearance during this operation (Rowling, *Hallows*, 2007: 41).

Witches, then, can be strong and courageous. Some witches prove to be as powerful and resourceful as their male colleagues. They are sometimes even better than wizards, as in the case of Hermione, who keeps saving Harry and Ron throughout the series. However, these witches are not always appreciated by those around them. Though a successful witch, like Hermione, can be regarded highly, it is her male counterpart that is given the largest share of fame, interest, and glory. Other witches are depicted as more of a burden though they are also fighters. Fleur is an example.

Not all witches are powerful witches. Some witches experience forms of violence that they cannot deal with or challenge. This violence takes the forms of: blackmailing, threats, physical violence or sometimes death. Rita Skeeter, Bertha Jorkins, and Professor Trelawney will be the three characters to be dealt with as victims.

Fleur is chosen to take part in a major Wizarding competition. However, she is depicted as the weakest among all the other contestants. She constantly needs help from her male colleagues. Thus, Fleur might seem to be a fighter. Yet, she is a weak fighter who limits the progress of her party, rather than help it.

To conclude, Bellatrix, Hermione and Fleur are given fighting roles. The first two of them, Bellatrix and Hermione, are very skillful fighters, indeed. However, they are either dominated or overshadowed by male leaders. The third of them, Fleur, is not as powerful as the male characters against whom she is competing.

## 6. Rita as a Victim

Rita Skeeter is a journalist in the Daily Prophet newspaper. The author depicts Rita as a woman of odd appearance; she has “two-inch nails” and “curiously rigid curls that contrasted oddly with her heavy-jawed face”, and she also wears too colorful clothes (Rowling, *Goblet*, 2000: pp. 256, 515). She is made to look like a joke. Eventually, she is degraded into an insect. Hermione later finds out that Rita is an illegal animagus, i.e. she can take the shape of another creature. Rita can turn herself into a beetle. Hermione, then, captures her into a jar during Rita’s transfiguration (pp. 611-613). Being a woman of a high position, a popular journalist who can get into the most mysterious secrets of her article subjects, Rita’s ridiculous description and fate might be understood as a tendency to ridicule women of power.

As Rita meets Harry for the first time, she is described by the author as a woman who has: “... large, mannish hands” (259). This description suggests that there is a tendency in the novels to strip powerful women, like Rita, as well as Bellatrix who was mentioned earlier, of their femininity. This attitude reinforces the stereotype that women can be only one of the two categories: strong and masculine, or weak and feminine, as in the case of Fleur, who is discussed earlier in this paper.

To further support the bias against Rita, Harry is rather unjust in his judgment of Rita’s method of collecting information. He thinks that she does not have the right to hide under an invisibility cloak to get the information she publishes about Hagrid’s mother being a giantess (372). Ironically, Harry himself puts on the cloak to fulfill his goals, even the illegal ones. He sneaks out of bed during bedtime hiding under the cloak, and also uses it to deliver Norbert, Hagrid’s illegal dragon, to Charlie who can take it safely to Romania (Rowling, *Philosopher*, 1997: pp. 220-230, 254-259). Harry, then, uses the cloak, a method of hiding, to do things he thinks are necessary, though they are, sometimes, banned. Rita, too, uses her talent of transfiguring herself into a beetle to get the information she thinks is necessary for her job. By rejecting Rita’s use of the same method he is using, Harry is belittling the importance of Rita’s goal, hence, her job itself.

Rita’s profession is manipulated for the good of Harry, the main male character. Hermione asks Rita to write Harry’s side of the story about the return of Voldemort. Rita will receive no money for publishing his story, though. In fact, Hermione threatens to report her to the authorities for being an illegal animagus if she does not cooperate with her and Harry (Rowling, *Order*, 2003: pp. 521-526). Hermione is usually kind and forgiving, and she rarely pays people back, yet she is more vengeful towards Rita who published lies about her in the newspaper a year before. Hermione’s particular anger with Rita may reveal the former’s hidden jealousy of Rita, being a famous, successful woman. Since Hermione is a very smart and talented witch herself, it seems that her attitude supports the notion about how women are intolerant and reluctant to other women in high positions. Harry and Hermione’s treatment of Rita may also suggest intolerance towards mistakes made by women.

Rita is a professional, ambitious woman. On the other hand, she is depicted as a manly, annoying woman. This depiction does not help to empower women in professional places.

## 7. Bertha as a Victim

Bertha is an employee in the ministry of magic. She is one of the few female employees mentioned in detail in the series. She is regarded as “dim”, and “talkative”. By disappearing without notice, she causes the ministry, represented in Ludo Bagman and Barty Crouch, the pains of searching for her. According to Sirius Black, Harry’s godfather, she would put herself into trouble, suggesting how much of a burden she is. Although Bertha has the talent of a remarkable memory, this talent is mentioned as an asset that has helped her to gossip, not to achieve success as a ministry employee (Rowling, *Goblet*, 2000: 449).

Presenting a working woman who causes her male colleagues to waste their time and effort searching for her, supports the traditional idea of women being in need for help from men, as in the case of Fleur. Plus, the fact that this working woman has a special skill, yet she uses it for a very trivial matter as gossip, suggests that women misuse their gifts or do not know how to better handle them for their own benefit.

Moreover, Bertha could not defend herself against Crouch's memory Charm that he uses against her to prevent her from revealing his dark secret of breaking his son out of prison. Winky, the mistreated house elf of Crouch, blames Jorkins for finding out about Crouch's secret, instead of feeling sorry for Bertha being hurt by Crouch. Crouch, however, is, of course, the one to blame for misusing his authority to break a criminal out of prison and to silence a witness (pp. 576-577). So, Bertha, who finds out important information that would give her power over Crouch is punished by having her most prominent asset, her strong memory, manipulated and changed. Bertha's strong memory causes her to be later captured and tortured by Voldemort to reveal secrets about the ministry, after which he kills her (551).

Bertha's power, then, is either belittled as it is referred to only as a tool for gossip, taken away from her by a man as punishment, or made to be the reason for her doom. This depiction of Bertha reveals the tendency to imply that women's power is not to be taken seriously, is better handled by men and can put these women in real danger.

Bertha, like Rita, is a professional woman. Yet, she is drawn as a burden; a mere victim. Her special skill, embodied in her strong memory, gets her into trouble. So, just like Rita's case, the depiction of Bertha does not help to empower professional women.

## **8. Professor Trelawney**

Professor Trelawney is a professor of Divination at Hogwarts School. She has made some major prophecies that are indeed fulfilled. She foretells the reunion of Voldemort with his servant, Peter Pettigrew, which, indeed, does happen (Rowling, *Azkaban*, 1999: pp. 344-345). In addition, she sees signs of the death of Buckbeak, the magical creature that Hagrid breeds and that is sentenced to death. Again, her prophecy of Buckbeak's death is fulfilled, and it is only the Time-Turner device that saves this creature, as both Harry and Hermione use the device to go back to the past to set the bird free (pp. 343-344). It is also Trelawney's prophecy that anticipates the death of Voldemort or Harry on the hands of the other, and this prophecy, too, proves eventually to be correct (Rowling, *Prince*, 2005: pp. 453, 456). Though Trelawney's talent manifests itself in grand matters for the characters and the plot as mentioned before, her skills are rejected by fellow powerful female characters. Even Hermione, a female student in Harry's class, does not trust her. Trelawney is thought of as a fraud who pretends to possess foretelling abilities while she does not.

Trelawney's abilities are a symbol of the unknown, feared future. Those who are scared of being punished, or who are afraid to face a destiny they abhor, are more likely to try to either silence her, or deny her skills altogether. Umbridge chooses Trelawney of all professors to be sacked and sent out of the school property for reasons related to Trelawney's competence as a teacher (Rowling, *Order*, 2003: 549). As a school inspector assigned by the minister, Umbridge joins the professors' classes to evaluate their work. During Trelawney's class observation, Trelawney's claims to see something concerning Umbridge's fate (292). A couple of weeks after her prediction, Trelawney is fired by Umbridge. The revelation Trelawney experiences is eventually made into a reality as Umbridge is attacked by a group of centaurs at the Forbidden Forest (695). The denial of Trelawney's talent highlights women's prejudice against each other in Hogwarts. Finding out about one of Trelawney's prophecy that predicts Harry's death, McGonagall takes the matter lightly and underestimates her colleague's foretelling abilities (Rowling, *Azkaban*, 1999: pp. 114-115). Besides, McGonagall belittles Trelawney's concerns

in public, as the latter is reluctant to be the thirteenth teacher to gather around a feast for fear of bad luck (242).

As for Trelawney's students, Hermione, who is more concerned with logic, detests Trelawney and decides to drop her Divination class, choosing Magical Mathematics, instead. Hermione's lack of interest in Trelawney's class may be explained by Hermione's lack of talent in foretelling, rather than in Trelawney being a fraud as Hermione claims. During her first class on the subject, Hermione rejects Trelawney's prophecy foretelling Harry's near death. This happens as Hermione fails to see the "Grim", i.e. a symbol of death taking the shape of a dog, in Harry's cup, which her colleagues claim they can see (pp. 106-114). Though this particular prophecy is not fulfilled, the dog in Harry's cup most likely refers to Harry's reunion with his godfather, which happens during the same school year. His godfather, Sirius Black, is an animagus, who can shape-shift into a dog (360).

Trelawney is not tolerated by Harry or Ron. Though he finds her prophecy about Harry's death quite terrifying, Ron later starts doubting her, calling her "a right old fraud." (342). Trelawney tests Harry on what he can see on Buckbeak's fate, asking if he sees any symbol of the bird's dead body, the executioner, or Hagrid's pain. Harry, in response, gets irritable and feels sick. Harry's denial of the possibility that what Trelawney suggests could happen might be the reason why he does not really like her.

Trelawney serves as a symbol of women being violated and used. As mentioned earlier, Trelawney is the one who made the prediction that caused Voldemort to target Harry and his parents, believing that Harry is the child who would grow up to oust him. Severus Snape eavesdrops to her giving the prediction and rushes to Voldemort who decides to kill Harry, ending up killing Harry's parents as they defend their son (Rowling, *Prince*, 2005: pp. 453, 455). Trelawney herself does not remember the prediction she made or that she made any prediction at that time at all. She is ignorant of the effect she makes. She does not know that her prophecy could change the entire magical world as Voldemort is thought to be gone after baby Harry because he heard about the prophecy (pp. 452-453). This lack of knowledge signifies lack of power. Moreover, the fact that she cannot remember her own prediction deprives her of control over the product of her talent, her predictions. This renders her unable to celebrate her success as a foreteller. She is, then, left to struggle against others doubting her abilities. Thus, her ability as a Seer is taken from her as she does not remember her predictions. Her ability is also used against her will for causes she does not choose.

Trelawney is not strong enough to protect herself. Both McGonagall and Dumbledore stand up for Trelawney as Umbridge fires her. McGonagall is the first to support Trelawney at this time, although she does not have any actual authority to decide who stays and who leaves. It is Dumbledore's power as a headmaster of the school, however, that allows Trelawney to continue to live inside the school walls although she is no longer a teacher (Rowling, *Order*, 2003: 549). Dumbledore saves Trelawney once more. As Trelawney is sacked in Harry's fifth year and replaced by another Divination teacher, Dumbledore allows her to stay inside the castle. In the following year, he reappoints her. Trelawney is not happy with having to share her subject with another teacher. Dumbledore reveals to Harry that he cannot sack either of them for two different reasons. The reason that concerns Trelawney is that it is too dangerous for her to be out there in such times. This is because she is the one who made the prediction about Voldemort and Harry which Voldemort is in a dire need to fully hear (Rowling, *Prince*, 2005: 355). Trelawney is, thus, saved by a male authority figure twice. Trelawney is even attacked by a male student. As she enters the Room of Requirement in Hogwarts, she is forcefully sent out of the room. Malfoy, who is inside, throws his teacher out of the room so that she would not discover his plan of allowing the death eaters into Hogwarts (pp. 449-451).



So, Trelawney's life is in danger because of her power as a Seer. This might be used to support the anti-feminist assumption that women's possession of power can be dangerous for them, and that they cannot use their powers for their own good. It further supports the researcher's suggestion that Trelawney is a symbol of women in wars and hard times. Her current situation is one of weakness, and she needs support and protection from stronger men, like, Dumbledore, in this case.

Professor Trelawney is a skillful witch. Moreover, her foreseeing ability is crucial to the events. However, she is put in danger because of her ability. She is mocked and ridiculed by other witches and wizards who do not believe she is capable of foreseeing. She is not empowered as much as her skill allows her to be.

Although Rita, Bertha, and Trelawney all have something very unique about them, these witches are confined to the victim role. They are smart and achieving witches, yet they are belittled and mistreated. Qualities which set them apart might be the exact same cause of their doom. Their talents and skills are diminished. They can be made a laughing stock, or they can be threatened and/or abused by dangerous men.

## 9. Conclusion

To conclude, witches in *Harry Potter* novels play main roles in the times of war. This paper used the words these female characters use to describe themselves, the attitudes of the surrounding characters towards them, and the narration of the events, to find which roles the female characters play at such times. According to the analysis the paper conducted, women have two main roles at war; they can be powerful fighters or weak victims. Some tough witches put a great deal of effort in the fight against evil, while some of them fight for the sake of gaining power, just as effectively. However, these strong characters are not put under the spot light, and the credit they deserve is usually given to their male leaders, instead. Thus, *Harry Potter* novels only partially encourage women to be bold and fierce, since they deprive them of sufficient recognition. Other witches in the series are portrayed as victims. They face mistreatment by other characters and are not appreciated for their talents or hard work. Although they are successful women of some sort, their own success causes them more trouble than good. This result reveals a tendency on the part of the *Harry Potter* novels to marginalize women of success, and to insinuate that women would need male protection no matter how much they achieve. *Harry Potter* novels, then, give mixed messages with regard to women's status in the times of war, showing women as courageous fighters who can do a lot for the cause or side they defend, while also denying women their well-deserved acknowledgment, or putting them down as helpless victims.

## REFERENCES

- Annandale, E., & Clark, J. (1996). What is gender? feminist theory and the sociology of human reproduction. *Sociology of Health and Illness*, 18(1), 17–44.
- Brownmiller, S. (2013). *Against our will*. Open Road Media.
- Connell, & Wilson. (1974). *Rape: The first sourcebook for women*. New American Library.
- Connors, J. (2013). United Nations Approaches to 'Crimes of Honour'. In Welchman, L., & Hossain, S. (Eds.), *"honour": Crimes, Paradigms, and violence against women* (pp. 22–41). Zed Books.
- Andrade, G. (2008). Hermione Granger as Girl Sleuth in the Harry Potter Series. In *Critical Readings of Nancy Drew and Other Girl Sleuths*. Ed. Cornelius, M. McFarland.
- Duriez, C. (2007). *The Unauthorized Harry Potter Companion*. Sutton.
- Firestone, S. (1972). *The Dialectic of Sex: the Case of Feminist Revolution*. Morrow.
- Friedan, B. (2013). *The feminine mystique*. W.W. Norton & Company.
- Griffin, S. (1971). *The politics of rape*. Friends of Malatesta.



**Fighters or Victims: Women at War as Depicted in Harry Potter Novels**

- LaHaie, J. H. (2012). *Girls, mothers and others: Female representation in the adolescent fantasy of J.K. Rowling, Philip Pullman, and Terry Pratchett* (dissertation). Western Michigan University.
- Lundhall, Rebecca. (2017). *Evil Women in Harry Potter: Breaking Gender Expectations and Representations of Evil*.
- Nussbaum, M. (1995). Objectification. *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 24(4), 249–291.
- Pilcher, J. (2004). *50 Key concepts in gender studies*. Sage Publications Inc.
- Rowling, J. K. (1998). *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. Bloomsbury.
- Rowling, J. K. (2007). *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. Bloomsbury.
- Rowling, J. K. (2000). *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. Bloomsbury.
- Rowling, J. K. (2005). *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*. Bloomsbury.
- Rowling, J. K. (2003). *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. Bloomsbury.
- Rowling, J. K. (1997). *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. Bloomsbury.
- Rowling, J. K. (1999). *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. Bloomsbury.
- Sanders, V. (2010). In *The routledge companion to feminism and postfeminism* (pp. 15–24). Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.
- Saunders, D. G. (1988). Wife Abuse, Husband Abuse, or Mutual Combat. In Yllö Kersti and Bograd, M. L. (Eds.), *Feminist Perspectives on Wife Abuse* (pp. 90–113). Sage Publications.
- Woolf, V. (1929). *A room of one's own*. Alma Classics.
- Woolf, V. (1940). *The Legacy*. Harper's Bazaar.