The Effacement of Post-9/11 Orphanhood

Re-Reading the *Harry Potter* Series as a Melancholic Rhetoric

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The Politics of Harry Potter

After 9/11, anxiety about loss and its effects was treated as both a social concern about the welfare of children who may be enduring the loss of a family member and/or parent, and a public concern about the other children who may need to come to terms about loss and death as a result of exposure to images of 9/11. The United States Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee gathered on November 2, 2001, for a hearing on "Kids and Terrorism: Supporting Our Children in Times of Crisis," where Chairman Christopher Dodd argued that the fears children have about terrorism should be treated as "a national priority." Citing a study conducted by the Sesame Workshop (creators of Sesame Street) that was submitted for public record, Chairman Dodd explained how one child imagines him/herself as a literal orphan:

> Now kids are scared of losing parents to terrorists. A child wrote: "My worries is [sic] that terrorists will harm my family and I'll be left with no family like the kids in New York."

Throughout the hearing, Chairman Dodd pointed to the public need to inscribe and engender children as well-tempered[1] subjects of and to post-9/11 rhetoric. Not only

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[1] I borrow this term from Toby Miller (1993), who describes the well-tempered self as a subject that recognizes the social and political expectation that self-management is a moral obligation and therefore, should make contact and engage with culture and government.

are the children of those who died on 9/11 and children who are expected to be knowledgeable about 9/11 all positioned as in need of healing and consolation, but also, by virtue of (re)staging loss through efforts to remember 9/11, children must learn how to heal and recover. With doctors, scientists, and therapists to testify at the hearing, the suggestions for supporting children ranged from drafting legislation that would ensure the protection and security of children in the event of a future attack to ceasing the mediated repetition of images of 9/11 and planes hitting the Twin Towers.

Chairman Dodd's call for public support for children did not go unheeded. On the first anniversary of 9/11, First Lady Laura Bush requested that parents keep children from watching, or at least restrict their exposure to, the images of 9/11 ("First Lady," 2002). Byron York (2004) reports that after the ABC special program with Peter Jennings, "Answering Kids' Questions," ABC (with other networks following suit) instituted a policy of only showing still images of 9/11 "because of that possible effect on children." Websites for the National Center for Children Exposed to Violence (2006) and the University of Michigan Health System (2007) featured pediatricians and therapists advising parents on *why* and how to discuss 9/11 as well as how to quell their fears and insecurities once they have talked about it. In addition to reading campaigns targeted at children that began April, 11, 2002, such as "Find Comfort in Books, Read Together" also dubbed "The 4/11 Call to Action on 9/11," book publishers met to address the importance of finding authors and illustrators to write children's books about 9/11. As children's book illustrator Brian Selznick confirms what was defined as his public duty, "It was the sort of thing that I felt I couldn't say no to" (qtd. in Frederick, 2002). Along with this interest in producing a new market for children's books on 9/11, other children's books that had been popular were ascribed with similar post-9/11 objectives of healing and consolation, such as *Harry Potter* and *A Series of Unfortunate Events*.

It was with the publication of *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (Rowling, 2005) that critics and readers alike were sure that the series was becoming darker and more mature for its widening audience. Each volume of the series tracks a year of Harry's schooling at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, where he will learn to

control magical powers he did not know he possessed. Although he usually uncovers more information about the momentous conflict between his parents' 'good' magic and the dark magicians led by Lord Voldemort, this volume makes more direct references to contemporary life and current events. *Half Blood Prince* opens with the Minister of Magic discussing the seemingly "random" acts of violence with the British Prime Minister. Characters deal with the issuance of security guidelines that advise the Wizarding community to contact the Magical Law Enforcement Squad if someone they know is acting in a "strange" manner, and the imprisonment of wizards who have yet to be determined as affiliates of Lord Voldemort. Reviewers of this particular volume had little doubt that, if *Harry Potter* referenced our world at all, those references were (favorably or unfavorably) directed at post-9/11 politics.

Responding to BBC correspondent Robert Winder's "hatred" of the series because it "conjured up a cozily imagined 1950s Britain," Jerome Weeks (2005) argues, "*Half Blood Prince* is clearly a post-Sept. 11 Potter—eerily enough, even a post-London-subway-bombing Potter." According to Paula Simons (2005), this is "no simple-minded political allegory" (Simons, 2005, p. B1); it has lessons for both young and old readers. In Michiko Kakutani's (2005) review in *The New York Times*, the post-9/11 evocations help explain how a children's series has become increasingly popular among adults. Like Kakutani, Nathaniel Rivers (2008) of *Sycamore Review* opines that these books show that their value lies in the "all too realistic vision of the young reader's world" where terrorism and incompetent administrations reign, and that their resonance emanates from "places other than the magical world of Potter." In a less celebratory review, Julia Turner (2005) of *Slate Magazine* argues that the reason why the newer volumes of *Harry Potter* resonate with readers young and old is because the abstract "evil" and fear of Voldemort bears similarities to the fear brought on by the rhetoric of War on Terrorism. These political references invite Justin Taylor (2005) to consider whether Harry is a positive, anti-Bush role model for young adults. John Eberhart (2005) of *The Kansas City Star* goes as far to say that, because it addresses the fear characteristic of post-9/11, this volume is "the best of the Potter series" (Eberhart, 2005, p. A3).

To understand the ways in which the *Harry Potter* series is situated as a text illustrative of post-9/11 anxieties, I will begin by asking: What rhetorical features enable critics[2] to read the diegetic level of the narrative as a post-9/11 text? What makes it possible for critics to rhetorically shift to a claim that certain characters are more than fictional manifestations and their struggles and conflicts do not simply belong to or take place at the imaginary scene conjured up in and through the series? In their hopes that *Harry Potter* will function therapeutically and productively, that is, help children cope with a post-9/11 world, what kind of subject-position are critics expecting that readers will adopt by way of identification with Harry's struggles? What does our cultural fascination with Harry and the *Harry Potter* series say about what it means to be a citizen post-9/11? To these ends, this essay will rhetorically analyze the *Harry Potter* series and the discourses about the series, in order to show how readers are (re)constituted as melancholic subjects within a post-9/11 context.

Contrary to the critics who have promoted the series for its therapeutic potential to help children overcome the trauma of 9/11, I argue that the *Harry Potter* series employs a therapeutic rhetoric, but *does not* offer productive ways to heal and mourn loss after 9/11. While the series uses the language of mourning and healing in order to make sense of a public traumatic event, the process of mourning this public trauma takes place on the familial scene. The journey to find oneself after losing parents—orphanhood—is configured as a conservative, melancholic desire for familial and institutional intimacy that is fulfilled by public expressions of parental love. In simplifying the mourning process as a patriotic mission to avenge one's dead parents, the therapeutic solutions offered in the series are *anti-therapeutic*. Healing in the series occurs by way of not freeing, but maintaining, repeating, and holding onto a passionate attachment to lost objects. I suggest that the therapeutic value ascribed to

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[2] Although the *Harry Potter* series is often classified as children's literature, it is important to note that scholars on children's literature have long argued that children's literature is rhetorically constituted by adults, such as librarians, teachers, publishers, prize-awarders, and parents. See Colin Manlove (2003).

Harry Potter indicates a hope that it will serve as a pedagogical device to produce patriotic citizen-subjects post-9/11 that will be circumscribed with the melancholic promise of transmitting and passing on the values of familial and institutional fidelity. In short, the *Harry Potter* series serves to not impose political identities or projects on young readers, but to relieve them of the civic responsibility for the international violence in the War on Terror.

Melancholic Rhetorics in Post-9/11

With the efforts to learn about and remember those who died on 9/11 came the constructed need to heal and recover. The study of the therapeutic functions of rhetoric is not new. Dana Cloud (1998) argues that discourses that have adopted the language of healing and consolation encourage subjects to improve upon their private familial lives rather than act for and through political redress and reformation. Exploring Cloud's insights, Mari Boor Tonn (2005) shows that the formal shift from deliberation and debate to conversation and dialogue is illustrative of how therapeutic self- and interpersonal improvement has taken the place of democratic goals of policy reformation in public talk. Both Cloud and Boor Tonn encourage rhetorical critics to attend to how the language of healing can inhibit subjects from engaging and confronting the ways in which pain and affect operate and constitute the social and the political. In other words, therapeutic rhetoric functions anti-therapeutically—while it adopts the language of consolation, this rhetoric does not help subjects to heal.

The functions of therapeutic rhetoric have been explored further through psychoanalytic terms, like mourning and melancholia. Whereas melancholia is the process by which the subject repeats and maintains his/her fixation on the lost object, mourning is the process by which the subject is able to heal and slowly release one's attachment to the lost object. Barbara Biesecker (2007) argues that the trauma post-9/11 rhetoric attributed to that day has affected a melancholic longing for an ideal democratic way of life 'lost' on 9/11. Through three specific features, post-9/11 rhetoric bids citizen-subjects to hold onto that 'loss' in order to legislate and justify, in advance, unprecedented policies and actions. First, this rhetoric operates in the future anterior tense, grammatically

positioning citizen-subjects to think, see, and act "as if" future attacks have already happened and will happen again. This is melancholic to the extent that it reorganizes social and political life around an imagined 'loss.' Second, this rhetoric creates the conditions that enable and subsequently call for citizen-subjects to abandon their capacity to read at the level of the sign by both calling into question conventional ways of interpreting signs and simultaneously generating a vast and often incoherent new lexicon of representations and referents. Since "nothing and no one anywhere is safe or above suspicion" (Biesecker, 2007, p. 162), the phantasmatic 'loss' of conventional syntax becomes grounds to urge citizen-subjects to "perceive," see, and act differently. Third, this rhetoric, notably the repetition of images of 9/11, reproduces the affective attachment to the 'lost' object, rather than therapeutically enabling citizen-subjects to mourn by slowly freeing their attachment to the 'lost' object. In other words, post-9/11 melancholic rhetoric is anti-therapeutic—it deliberately keeps citizen-subjects from healing, overcoming, and mourning 'loss.' Together, these functions of a post-9/11 melancholia sustain and (re)enable patriotism at the level of the subject and of the 'nation.'

An analysis of the *Harry Potter* series organized through this perspective of post-9/11 rhetoric will account for the ways in which 'loss' structures the social order within and outside the pages of the series as well as how the anecdotal references to the War on Terror are explicit manifestations of a larger cultural framing of the texts at work. These features of post-9/11 patriotic melancholic rhetoric are made salient through the orphaned protagonist in the *Harry Potter* series. The first section will illustrate the ways in which the orphan functions to ensure the affirmation of the phantasmatic politics of the 'as if.' In the second section, the analysis will show how the orphan's suspicions and hesitations emphasize what I describe as the aesthetic of dematerialization. Finally, the third section will consider how losing parental figures is repeated throughout the series. A figure whose 'loss' comes to function as the point of departure for reconstructing the past and reinventing the present for the future, the orphaned protagonist illustrates the social and political import of a personalized fixation on the 'lost' object post-9/11.

An Affirming Orphan of the 'As If'

If the phantasmatic politics of the 'as if' is a feature of post-9/11 melancholic rhetoric, the orphan testifies and serves as a 'witness' of the imperatives inscribed in the call to arms. Instead of frustrating and transgressing the War on Terror, Harry Potter provides the impetus for it. While the institutions and the nation-state are preoccupied with their own credibility and slowed by bureaucratic politics, Harry takes their place. His orphanhood functions as a condition of possibility not for a new politics or opening up the field of action and agency, but for reinvigorating a conservative politics of revenge and preemption. The deaths of his parents operate as an event that happened to him, will happen again, and should organize belief and behavior in the Wizarding world.

Though references to post-9/11 politics became explicit to readers and reviewers in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, one scholar had already taken notice of these references in prior volumes. In his analysis of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (Rowling, 2000), William MacNeil (2002) argues that the text is actuated by a suspicion of the adequacy and equity of the institution of the law.[3] Referencing a crucial plot point, he explains:

> [W]hat Harry witnesses in the pensieve are not *bona fide* judicial proceedings but, rather, those curial performances beloved of totalitarian regimes, the show trial, where legality is staged as a show of governmental force…So the "vision of judgement" that emerges from the pensieve's rebus is a grimly forbidding one: of a society "judged and found wanting," wanting in the very legality it purports to stage, but that here, in the trials and elsewhere, resembles nothing less – in its tactics of forced confessions (Barty Jr. under the veritaserum) and grudge informers (Karkaroff) – than a police state. Now one could argue, as indeed Sirius Black does, that this alegality, even anti-legality is an extreme but necessary response to an emergency situation…(MacNeil, 2002, p. 550).

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[3] MacNeil's work contrasts with that of Noel Chevalier (2005). Also writing on the early volumes of the series, Chevalier argues that the suspicion of law leads to moral ambiguity and rule by reason.

MacNeil shows that the performances of judicial proceedings are staged demonstrations of the force of law where, even though justice does not translate evenly in the processes of adjudication, the Wizarding world when governed by the Ministry of Magic appears to be bound by rules. With the menace of the "ruthless" Death Eaters lurking at every turn, not only does it become necessary to transgress rules in a state of emergency, but also transgression itself becomes a constitutive part of the rule of law.[4] Because "the law is not enough," the institutions in place cannot effectively combat terrorism. What "displaces" the institution is not collective action[5] or the community that would "tap into the transformative potential of substantive justice," which MacNeil hopes for the later volumes, but the melancholic citizen-subject who "rebels" by acting on the state's behalf.

As what Laura Peters calls "a continual remembrance of the event of loss" (L. Peters, 2000, p. 26), the orphan stands in for familial and national evidence of the event of 'loss'—out of which victims, heroes, and enemies will be constructed for the community—whether that be for or against his or her own self-identifications.[6] Likewise, Harry Potter exists to evoke the evil of Voldemort. It should not come as a surprise that the main protagonist of a series understood to exemplify post-9/11 anxiety is an orphan. Harry is an apt figure for post-9/11 politics because he is without parents and the access that parentage symbolizes – identity and the protection it promises – and without a home and the belonging that home-land epitomizes:

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[4] Helpful here is the work of Giorgio Agamben (2005).

[5] See Jennifer Sterling-Folker and Brian Folker (2006), who discuss the potential in collective action in the series.

[6] For the *Daily Prophet*, a commonly read newspaper in the Wizarding world, Rita Skeeter fabricates her interview with Harry in order to position Harry as an orphan in 'mourning': "Tears fill those startlingly green eyes as our conversation turns to the parents he can barely remember." And again, when it appears in print, "I suppose I get my strength from my parents. I know they'd be very proud of me if they could see me now…. Yes, sometimes at night I still cry about them, I'm not ashamed to admit it…. I know nothing will hurt me during the tournament, because they're watching over me…" (Rowling, 2000, pp. 306; 314).

British (Anatol, 2003) as well as Western cultural centrism. Although warned of the consequences of wishing for parents and remaining in the past (Natov, 2001), Harry passionately justifies his longing. From his first quest of going through the trapdoor to protect the Sorcerer's Stone because "Voldemort killed [his] parents!" (Rowling, 1997, p. 270) to despising the Malfoys and other Death Eaters for their warnings about how he will be "go[ing] the same way as [his] parents" (Rowling, 1997, p. 109),[7] Harry's actions revolve around the event of 'loss.' Harry's wish for a different past with both parents as imagined in front of the Mirror of Erised summons up an image of a private, protected life equal to all others, an image of a 'normal' life that is like his peers. In other words, Harry's pain as an orphan is due not to confinement or the constraints of agency (which he does experience, but is not characterologically debilitated by living, at the Dursleys). Rather, his pain as an orphan is in longing for the affection and love of a family, an institution, and a nation-state that his peers take for granted and never knew they already have. The 'loss' of his parents is constructed as not a loss of tradition, past, or knowledge (since Harry has his teachers and Dumbledore to fill in those gaps), but as a pain of having too much freedom to determine the trajectory of his future and the distressing 'loss' of familial, institutional, and national intimacy.

But, like Harry Houdini's magical skill at displaying mastery and dominance over objects,[8] this potentially unmanageable pain is controlled over the course of the series, even though Harry's rebellious acts appear to be transgressive. Foreshadowed from the beginning, descriptions of Voldemort also entail descriptions of what will have been lost if Voldemort were to return. Rubeus Hagrid, the Keeper of the Keys and Grounds at Hogwarts, tells of what happened some twenty years ago:

> Anyway, this – this wizard, about twenty years ago now, started lookin' fer followers. Got 'em, too – some were afraid, some just wanted a bit o' his power, 'cause he was getting' himself power, all

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[7] See other examples in Rowling, 1997, p. 294; Rowling, 1999, p. 361.

[8] See John Kasson (2001).

right. Dark days, Harry. Didn't know who ter trust, didn't dare get friendly with strange wizards or witches... terrible things happened. He was takin' over. 'Course, some stood up to him – an' he killed 'em. Horribly (Rowling, 1997, pp. 54-55).

With classmates Hermione Granger, too preoccupied with school and with school rules, and Ron Weasley, who is too timid, a convinced Harry shouts out his uncompromising resolution to act as early as the first volume of the series: "Don't you understand? If Snape gets hold of the Stone, Voldemort's coming back! Haven't you heard what it was like when he was trying to take over? There won't be any Hogwarts to get expelled from!" (Rowling, 1997, p. 270).[9] In this example and many others from the series, Harry is figured as and accepts his role as "the Chosen One" who is to act on behalf of the institutions in place, thereby mitigating the pain of too much freedom that is involved in being orphaned from his parents and institutions.

Harry's repeated encounters with Lord Voldemort teach that the Ministry of Magic's worst mistake was not so much its unsuccessful and unjust efforts at improving international security but how, despite Harry's testimony and perhaps his very being, the Ministry acted as if the enemy was defeated before those reactionary policies were implemented. An undaunted Harry explains to Rufus Scrimgeour why he refuses to act as a "mascot" for the Ministry as follows:

You never get it right, you people, do you? Either we've got Fudge, pretending everything's lovely while people get murdered right under his nose, or we've got you, chucking the wrong people into jail

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[9] See also Rowling, 2007, p. 321. Rowling narrates:

 "He was about to go home, about to return to the place where he had had a family. It was in Godric's Hollow that, but for Voldemort, he would have grown up and spent every school holiday. He could have invited friends to his house....He might even have had brothers or sisters....It would have been his mother who had made his seventeenth birthday cake. The life he had lost had hardly ever seemed so real to him as at this moment, when he knew he was about the see the place where it had been taken from him."

and trying to pretend you've got 'the Chosen One' working for you! (Rowling, 2005, p. 347).

The Ministry of Magic's unsuccessful efforts at improving international security are mocked not merely for their failure to safeguard terrorist insurrection, but also for being too late and *not* preemptive. Harry's unrelenting, brave affirmation that the phantasmatic politics of the 'as if' was in place before the Ministry of Magic came to the realization is what absolves Harry's insolence and defiance of rules and institutions.

A Rightly Suspicious Orphan of the Aesthetic

As I have been arguing, an aesthetic of dematerialization prepare citizen-subjects for the removal of civil rights by suggesting that the lack of visual evidence and grounds for terror is enough to suspend disbelief and to err on the side of safety, prevention, and preemption. Scarred with an ability to see Voldemort's moves and with the pain of 'loss,' Harry's orphanhood functions to substantiate this aesthetic (as a way of seeing what is visible and invisible as much as what is beautiful and ugly) in advance. Harry's distinctive orientation to the world, which is perpetuated through participating in the Wizarding world, is constant suspicion complemented by his aptitude to detect. Over the course of the series, Harry's persistent suspicion is rewarded with information that calls for preemptive action.

Strategies such as "unplottable" magic sites and unmarked magic travel are normal for "the signified wizard world, which exists largely in the gaps in Muggle perception" (Behr, 2005, p. 122). In her analysis of legality in the Wizarding world of Harry Potter, Susan Hall (2003) explains that a strict adherence to a policy of open secrecy[10] and public concealment is mandated for all

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[10] I borrow this term from Jack Bratich (2006). In his discussion of how "secrecy has now become central to [what Vice President Dick Cheney has called] the New Normal," Bratich argues that whereas the American strategies of engagement within the population and with the enemy, such as the operations of Homeland Security, torture, and sexual humiliation at Abu Ghraib, are seen as secrets that are willingly open, visible, and disclosed to and for the American public, the strategies used by Iraqis and racial others are seen as secrets that are closed off from and against the interests of the American public. He writes, "Whereas truth is often attached to notions of exposure and the

wizards and witches when interacting with the Muggle world. While these strategies of unmarked perception and policy of open secrecy appear normal to other wizards and witches who defer to the Ministry of Magic and other institutions, our orphaned protagonist is positioned to maintain and be rewarded for his personal investment in setting out, insisting, and detecting that "few things *are* as they seem" (Bursztynski, 2005) everywhere.[11]

Though *Harry Potter* is often read as a *Bildungsroman* (a novel of personal education), Anne Hiebert Alton (2003) argues that Rowling fuses other genres as well, notably, mystery and detective fiction. She describes the main character of detective fiction:

> This detective figure is generally an outsider of some sort—someone who is not a member of "regular" society—and thus not only holds different values than the norm but also can see the problem differently and more clearly than other people. He/she is able to discover the solution and solve the mystery by interpreting a variety of physical and psychological signs and, at times (like the prototypical detective, Sherlock Holmes), by thinking like the villain (Alton, 2003, p. 144).

Harry's detective abilities are doubly effectual, since he is scarred with insight into Voldemort's sinister emotions and actions. His emphatic testimonies about his encounters with Voldemort and his unyielding efforts to suspect that the Sorcerer's Stone will be stolen or that the Chamber of Secrets will be opened (Rowling, 1998) illustrate that his commitment to the War on Terror is more pronounced than all others and that his internalization of the call to action is not only solitary and unpopular, but will have

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elimination of secrecy, we see in the current conjuncture that secrecy, if anything, has become more visible [emphasis in original]. We are spectators to the fusion of generalized secrecy with a state of permanent war, in which the 'making visible' of secrecy (turning it into a spectacle) is integrated into a Terror/War" (Bratich, 2006, p. 496).

[11] As I have alluded to at the start, the reviews and criticisms of Harry Potter as a post-9/11 rhetoric are manifestations of the suspicion that Rowling is challenging her readers to "look deeper." See also Schanoes (2003).

been "right."[12] Not formally tasked with discerning signs of the Wizarding world or with solving a mystery, Harry is encouraged to "allow [his] eyes to see past the mundane" aspects of everyday life (Rowling, 1999, p. 105). With such heightened detection, Harry is singularly privileged to know about the threats to come and, in a tautological way, as the only one who is aware, he also is solely privileged to act preemptively against those impending threats.

In fact, his acute scrutiny is validated and rewarded with secret information (e.g. the prophecy, knowledge about the horcruxes) of the threats that he will be compelled to confront through the logic that emphasizes what will have already been lost. Each mystery reveals threats to come (that can traced to the indisputable threat of Voldemort), which a prepared and ready Harry must combat in order to prevent the 'loss' of everything the Wizarding world holds dear. Having admitted the prospect of death in Book 1, the prophecy that was described in Book 5 was already fitting. Notice the tense when Divination Professor Sibyll Trelawney reveals the prophecy about Voldemort and "his equal," an infant Harry:

> The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches...Born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies...and the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not...and either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives...The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the seventh month dies (Rowling, 2003, p. 841).

Trelawney's prophecy promises and even guarantees in advance that the pre-Voldemort way of life would be restored by the one who assumes the call to kill Voldemort. The restoration of the pre-Voldemort way of life is inscribed with the promise that Harry also will get what has always been denied to him: love from the institution.

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[12] When Carolyne Zinko (2006) of the *San Francisco Chronicle* speaks with children five years after 9/11, 10-year-old Elina Ansary says, "Anyone who does something to help someone else in a time of crisis is brave." The reporter paraphrases Ansary, "In the Harry Potter books, which is among her favorites, she learned that the people who do what is right versus what is easy are brave."

Stoic Love and Inheritance in the Post-9/11 West

The melancholic embrace of 'loss' is characterized by the desire to endlessly repeat and hold onto the object that was never possessed. This way of remembering and commemorating through repetition not only discourages a therapeutic form of mourning, but also facilitates the re-organization of social and political life around the 'lost' object. Harry's orphanhood in the series is repeated in ways that do not help him constructively come to terms with the pain of 'loss.' With the prophecy and the help of his mentors, his externalization of pain onto Voldemort guarantees that Harry will not mourn, but will remain melancholic about 'loss' and the way of life he never had.

As suggested at the outset of this essay, critics have proposed that the series is a useful therapeutic tool for younger readers. One review in particular specifically engages the relationship between post-9/11 citizenship and therapy. Edmund Kern (2003) argues that the *Harry Potter* series promotes a Stoic philosophy that is akin to a therapeutic form of citizenship where citizen-subjects were encouraged to participate in volunteer work and charity by the Bush administration post-9/11. He claims that emotions were displaced through sound reason and civic action:

> Yet, unease and fear are often being met with calls for resolve, vigilance, and patience, and justice—Stoic responses for governing the emotional reactions of anger, panic, rash behavior, and a desire for vengeance (Kern, 2003, p. 20).

For Kern, Harry's self-examination and self-discipline from participating in dark magic, prompted by the guidance of Dumbledore, temper the "desire for vengeance." Kern concludes that the series shows that Harry Potter has chosen the "right" (Kern, 2003, p. 44) path by selflessly and expediently acting for the "greater good" (Kern, 2003, p. 39). Although he credits his understanding of Stoicism to the scholarship of Martha Nussbaum (1994), Kern overlooks what role the cultivation of grief and other emotions, apart from "anger, panic, rash behavior, and a desire for vengeance," contributed in consolidating public support for 9/11. For example, he writes, "An outpouring of support—shared grief, volunteerism, and charitable contributions—alleviated the shock and restored an imaginative, empathetic connection to those harmed by the

attacks" (Kern, 2003, p. 39). While there is a connection between Stoicism and post-9/11 citizenship insofar as privatized responses to the trauma of human loss are produced to publicly 'cope' with 9/11, Kern's reading excuses the way in which "support" and "shared grief" were in fact not subjected to the kind of Stoic scrutiny that he claims had occurred post-9/11.[13] Rather, this "shared grief" was allowed in as a way of bending citizens to the state.

Contrary to Kern, the acts of publicly shared grief and other reenactments of 'loss' that incited volunteerism and charitable contributions ensure that the trauma will not disappear. The emotional and melancholic attachment to the parents he never knew or had ("love," as Dumbledore puts it) becomes the rhetorical crux out of which Harry acts on behalf of or for the community. His actions are predicated on the equation of vengeance with love, a predication that animates his passionate attachment as dis-passioned. Indeed, Harry passionately holds onto a private 'loss' that becomes a public demonstration of what is to be considered 'proper' political action post-9/11 through civic service that externalizes his pain for his parents onto Voldemort. This externalization is constructed as an act of familial love expressed on behalf of the nation that, in turn, promotes social responsibility to the nation as both familial and moralistic.

The repetition of 'loss' takes place throughout the series, such as when Harry imagines the deaths of his parents during lessons on conjuring the Patronus spell (Rowling, 1999, pp. 179; 239; 240) and, when he

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[13] Kern's reading of Harry Potter as generative of Stoic ethics may not correspond with Nussbaum's more nuanced reading of Stoicism because Kern's understanding of Stoicism seems to disregard the ways in which emotions that have been infused with reason can be a generative source of action. However, both Kern and Nussbaum neglect to consider the relationship between Stoic attitudes and philosophy and governmentality. Though Nussbaum claims that Foucault's reading of the Hellenistic philosophers is short-sighted due to his interest in how this philosophy functions as a technology of the self, Nussbaum's hope for a notion of "universal respect" vis-à-vis Stoic philosophy may need to account for the social, political, economic, and historical conditions out of which such "universal respect" might become feasible. See Nussbaum. Consider, also, the discussion of Stoicism and militaristic values in John Peters (2005).

encounters Nagini, Voldemort's snake/horcrux, (Rowling, 2007, pp. 343-345) and the 'losses' of his other parental-like figures. This repetition ensures that Harry as well as readers will be fixated on the loving, familial way of life that would have already been lost. With the foresight of Voldemort's inevitable attempt to kill him and destroy the Wizarding world, Harry's choices already are determined by the prophecy that willed him to assume his unique role in the War on Terror. In conversation with a curious Harry, Dumbledore proclaims that the significance of the prophecy and Voldemort's choice to mark Harry as his equal and what this means for Harry:

> "But, sir," said Harry, making valiant efforts not to sound argumentative, "it all comes to the same thing, doesn't it? I've got to try and kill him, or—"

> "Got to?" said Dumbledore. "Of course you've got to! But not because of the prophecy! Because you, yourself, will never rest until you've tried! We both know it! Imagine, please, just for a moment, that you had never heard that prophecy! How would you feel about Voldemort now? Think!"

> Harry watched Dumbledore striding up and down in front of him, and thought. He thought of his mother, his father, and Sirius. He thought of Cedric Diggory. He thought of all the terrible deeds he knew Lord Voldemort had done. A flame seemed to leap inside his chest, searing his throat.

> "I'd want him finished," said Harry quietly. "And I'd want to do it."
> "Of course you would!" cried Dumbledore. "You see, the prophecy does not mean you *have* to do anything! But the prophecy caused Lord Voldemort to *mark you as his equal*…. In other words, you are free to choose your way, quite free to turn your back on the prophecy! But Voldemort continues to set store by the prophecy. He will continue to hunt you…which makes it certain, really, that—"

> "That one of us is going to end up killing the other," said Harry.

> "Yes." (Rowling, 2005, pp.511-512).

This overdramatized and manipulative conversation demonstrates that Harry's precarious future and uncertainty about how to act is put back on track by Dumbledore's fervor about the affective accuracy in the prophecy. The prophecy is no more than a mere excuse or alibi to guarantee that repetition of 'loss' will rouse Harry to repeat that which has been inflicted upon him. The scenes where the (magically materialized) ghosts of Harry's parents help him fight against Voldemort (Rowling 2000, p. 667; see also Rowling, 2007, pp. 699-700) to the visit to the war memorial in the Potters' honor at his childhood home-now-monument (Rowling, 2007, pp. 324; 332-333) suggest that each action Harry makes is not for the sake of the prophecy itself. Harry acts for the sake of preventing the future 'loss' that his parents and other parental figures symbolize—the loving, privatized way of life that Harry could have had (and will have). In short, each action Harry makes is for the sake of vengeance. Harry's potentially disruptive orphanhood and the uncertain future that typically comes with it is effectively disciplined through the promise of a patriotic melancholic rhetoric, through the promise that avenging his parents will compensate for a past 'loss' by thwarting a future 'loss.'

Refiguring Harry's Vengeance as Love

The significance of the orphan's melancholia in children's literature can be discerned by attending to the differences between Harry's and Voldemort's orphanhood.[14] Whereas Harry's orphanhood enables, justifies, but purifies his desire for vengeance, Voldemort's orphanhood arrogates and perpetuates his desire for vengeance. Covered over by the love of his mother as demonstrated through his mother's sacrifice for his life, Harry's orphanhood functions to separate his violence from morality. On the other hand, a never loved Voldemort is motivated by the

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[14] Though there are other orphans or characters figured as orphans in the text, such as Neville Longbottom, Severus Snape, and Rubeus Hagrid, critics often make note of and focus on the contrast between Harry and Voldemort.

lack of maternal sacrifice and paternal abandonment. Thus, Harry's desire to be attached, responsible for, and engage with institutions distinguishes, but effaces his orphanhood.

Literary critics of the *Harry Potter* series[15] have hinted at how Rowling's use of a common enemy who is motivated by the aim of the 'racial' purification of Wizarding blood and whose aims are to destroy all Muggles or non-magical folk does little to critique race relations. However, interpretative readings of the series vis-à-vis identity politics do not facilitate a critical understanding of the ways in which this series has been attributed with affective meanings for post-9/11 subjects. In other words, this allegory about 'race' relations and about ineffectual anti-terrorist measures deflects how the main character's orphanhood naturalizes the transmutation of *our* vengeance into love and the transmutation of *their* vengeance into hate. At a time when President Bush's call for vengeance ten days after 9/11 both remembered the victims of 9/11 and denounced the terrorists as being motivated by a hatred for Americans and by a desire for anti-democratic rule, vengeance seems to be a one-sided term. The transmutation of vengeance into love constructs the principal injustice in the War on Terrorism as the potential/actual loss of parents—orphanhood.

According to Heather Chapman (2005), Harry is suitable for a post-9/11 world because he is an orphan whose motivations empower him to select admirable, heroic choices. Chapman explains:

> Over and over, the characters demonstrate how the more you love someone, the more you have the power to hurt him or her, whether purposefully or not. That the resulting heartache doesn't have to dictate your actions, that people are ultimately in charge of their own destinies, is another major motif in the book. For example, though Harry and Voldemort have much in common as orphans with great power, they used their talents differently:

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[15] See Suman Gupta (2003), Elaine Ostry (2003), Elizabeth Heilman and Anne Gregory (2003) for examples of this kind of argument.

> Voldemort to injure and dominate, Harry to heal and help.

In Chapman's reading, whereas Voldemort errs by simply fulfilling a prophecy, Harry makes his choices in order to save his friends and his community. So his vengeance and violence against Voldemort is construed as love and as provoked by love. But we may ask, what makes it possible for Harry's vengeance to be transmuted into love and Voldemort's into hate when both characters will not cease until they kill each other and their respective enemies?

Harry's desire to fight Voldemort is presented as revenge until Dumbledore reconstructs that desire into love. Harry ardently states to Hermione and Ron that his motivation is vengeance: "I'm going through that trapdoor tonight and nothing you two say is going to stop me! Voldemort killed my parents, remember?" (Rowling, 1997, p. 270; see also Rowling, 2005, p. 510). Although he understands his ability to survive his near-death battle with Voldemort as an effect of luck and chance (Rowling, 1997, p. 286; see also Rowling, 2003, p. 328), Dumbledore tells him otherwise: "Your mother died to save you. If there is one thing Voldemort cannot understand, it is love" (Rowling, 1997, p. 299).[16] According to Dumbledore, Harry is a special, not arbitrary, survivor-orphan whose mother's choice to sacrifice her own life in order to save his was motivated by love. He, as it were, inherits love, and when Harry comes to this realization, he repeats this information to Voldemort: "No one knows why you lost your powers when you attacked me. I don't know myself. But I know why you couldn't *kill* me. Because my mother died to save me. My common *Muggle-born* mother" (Rowling, 1998, p. 316). In this riposte, Harry describes how his mother's 'racialized,'[17] loving body served as protection from Voldemort's 'racist,' dark, evil magic. But when

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[16] My reading contrasts with that of Alice Mills (2006), who analyzes the relationship between Harry and his mother and between Voldemort to others as signifying the abject.

[17] It is important to underscore that Gupta and others read blood relations as synonymous to racial relations, even though Rowling does not make this rhetorical move herself. I put race in scare quotes or use the word 'racialized' in order to emphasize the ways in which this aspect of the series should be read as a post-racial discourse.

Voldemort's minions use this information to their advantage by extracting Harry's blood for Voldemort's resurrection in Book 4, Dumbledore claims that Voldemort has prevailed over the loving protection of Harry's mother, although to a certain extent Dumbledore contradicts this in the last volume. In this explanation, the expression of love is sealed not by emotion but through blood. As Dumbledore clarifies:

> He took your blood believing it would strengthen him. He took into his body a tiny part of the enchantment your mother laid upon you when she died for you. His body keeps her sacrifice alive, and while that enchantment survives, so do you and so does Voldemort's one last hope for himself (Rowling, 2007, p. 710).

Harry's blood and 'racial' identity, which was provided through his mother and her love, supplied him with immunity from Voldemort. Having the desire to return the love and care of his mother (and for other women), Harry is also immune from a transmutation of his violent motivations into anything other than a love that is heroic, familial, and nationally admirable.

Harry's orphanhood is distinct from Voldemort's and others', then, not only because the magic of his mother's love is stronger than any form of magic Voldemort can conjure but also because Dumbledore assigns Harry and to no one else the task to kill Voldemort. Whereas Voldemort was raised in an orphanage, Dumbledore was both a father-figure and a representative of an institution for guiding Harry's future. Harry's choice to perform the task bestowed upon him by Dumbledore and to forgive Dumbledore for setting him up to die illustrates his patriotic love and fidelity to a paternal institution and to the protection of the feminine, racialized body. Harry's acts are not simply for protecting familial and institutional intimacy, but also are refigured as indisputably genetic simulations of his parental figures.[18] For example,

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[18] Other examples abound. For example, when Harry is told that his Quidditch abilities are similar to his father's in Rowling, 1997, p. 152. See also Rowling, 1999, p. 371. Also, Sirius claims that Harry's act to save Ron is similar to what Harry's father would have done for Sirius on Rowling, 1999, p. 339. Harry is said to have his mother's genes as a potionmaker in Rowling, 2005, p.

Dumbledore explains that Harry's extraordinary ability to conjure a Patronus[19] was actually because of his father: "You think the dead we love ever truly leave us? You think that we don't recall them more clearly than ever in times of great trouble? Your father is alive in you, Harry, and shows himself most plainly when you need him" (Rowling, 1999, pp. 427-428).[20] Harry's extraordinary acts are thus refigured as unadulterated (re)enactments of what his parental figures would have done. In other words, Harry's orphanhood is effaced[21] in order to put his longing for familial intimacy to work for the purposes of the nation-state by mandating that Harry act on his impulse for revenge. Harry never mourns or confronts the violence and pain of the loss of his parents. His loss has a predetermined "cause"—Voldemort—that can be avenged and cancelled out and, in doing so, at the political level, can restore the lost idealized world of the family and the nation. Accordingly, Harry's orphanhood enables a rearticulation of the reasons for entering the War on Terror as based out of privatized, depoliticized, and

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475. When Harry refuses to help the Ministry of Magic, he affirms that he is "Dumbledore's man through and through" on Rowling, 2005, p. 348.

Not only are Harry's acts refigured as simulations of his parental figures but also how Harry is treated is as if he were his parental figures. For example, Snape treats Harry as if he were as arrogant as his father. See Rowling, 1997, p. 300.

[19] Interestingly, the word, 'patronus' is derived from the Latin term for father, 'patria.'

[20] Although Harry's acts can be read as reenactments of both parents, it is interesting that, in this volume, Harry struggles to conjure a Patronus because his concentration is interrupted by Lily's last screams and cries before her death. In fact, Lily's last screams are reheard when Harry would need to conjure a Patronus—at the appearances of the dementors, who threaten and can destroy one's magical identity. In this instance, Dumbledore's explanation of Harry's exceptional ability as due to James effectively quiets and cancels out Lily's sacrifice and contribution to Harry's ability.

[21] Furthermore, the effacement of orphanhood cannot be seen as willful and proclaimed. When Remus Lupin wants to join and help Harry in the last volume of the series, Harry insults him for "abandoning" his child in order "to go on an adventure." See Rowling, 2007, p. 214.

irretrievable 'losses.' *Harry Potter* teaches readers that the nation-state cannot heal on its own; healing, consolation, and (re)unification after loss are possible only through patriotic, if also violent, acts of allegiance to the nation-state.

Refiguring Voldemort's Vengeance as Hate

Harry's efforts to avenge his parents, which are cloaked by the body of his loving mother and transmuted into patriotic love, stand in stark contrast to Voldemort's motivations and familial past. Not only was Voldemort born out of a relationship where his mother manipulated his Muggle father with a love potion, but also his poor, heartbroken mother made a deliberate "choice"[22] to not stay alive for herself or for her son after giving birth. In short, Voldemort was not born out of true love, was never loved, and did not learn to love others because of his mother's "choices." Voldemort's evil is rooted not so much in a hatred of miscegenation or 'racial' impurity. Rather, in these (re)constructions of his past over the course of the *Harry Potter* series, Voldemort's violence to others is figured an effect of bad mothering. As Ellen Feder (2007) argues in her analysis of public examinations that explicitly target the violent individual, the violent individual is deracialized in order to put the bad mother, who is figured as the cause of the dysfunctional family, in the violent individual's place. This practice of deracialization rearticulates public programs as blind and neutral to race, and it redeploys the figure of the mother as vital to the rhetoric of family values (Feder, 2007). Voldemort's orphanhood is constructed as a double loss (without both parents and without love) from which he is both figured as 'racially' inferior and as 'racist.' Indeed, what makes Voldemort and other terrorists so evil, beyond the savagery and uncivilized ways attributed to them, is the fact that they have no family values or "homeland," and, therefore, no interest in nation-building. Voldemort's interests do not

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[22] My analysis is informed by Farah Mendlesohn (2002), who contends that, although Rowling attempts to distance the series from a conservative tradition explicitly, the dislike toward characters that support Voldemort, such as the Malfoys, is depicted as due to "bad blood," not the structures of aristocracy. Voldemort's mother's actions are figured as choices rather than an effect of the economic and political structures.

operate for the protection of the feminine body or for institutional survival. His motivations are *apolitical* or at best *merely* political. In this way, Voldemort's orphanhood is not effaced. His acts, his character, and his motivations are treated as if they are all due to maternal dereliction and paternal/institutional hatred.

Whereas Voldemort does not want familial and institutional intimacy, Harry's wish for familial and institutional intimacy is what makes his orphanhood noble. Thus love as a choice solution to the political conflicts in the *Harry Potter* series naturalizes vengeance as a motive for endless war on behalf of and mobilized by the orphaned protagonist. This implication is reiterated as well through the redemption of certain Death Eaters, such as the character of Professor Snape, whose love for Harry's mother inspires him to betray Voldemort for Harry's sake, and the Malfoy family, in which Narcissa is made into a good mother by worrying about her son's safety. Love also obscures the ways in which the orphan functions as superior in regards to familial, 'racial,' and national relations constituted through bloodlines. While racial or national identity is not explicitly mentioned in Rowling's texts, for Giselle Anatol (2003), this is due to the fact that the texts "wobble between seeking a way out of the imperialist agenda and experiencing a certain nostalgia for the safety and security attributed to the empire" (Anatol, 2003, p.174). Foreign to the Muggle world for his misunderstood abilities and foreign to the Wizarding world for his unrivalled abilities and famous parents, Harry's excursions both to and away from Hogwarts, Anatol argues, maintain the British cultural centrism and isolationism. However, Anatol goes on to conclude, after considering the racial characters that disappear into the national landscape, that Rowling's uses of the discourse of difference effectively "propose that in order to be accepted, popular, and successful, one's differences must be ignored" (Anatol, 2003, p.174). Although multicultural differences are elided for the interests of producing a British and Western empire, one difference that remains unequal to all others, Harry's orphanhood, trumps the cultural contradictions about other differences and inequalities in the Wizarding world.

With Voldemort's reemergence and the War on Terror becoming a more prominent concern in the Wizarding world, all other struggles—from Hermione's Society for the

Promotion of Elfish Welfare, which campaigned for rights and wages for enslaved house-elves, to Arthur Weasley's pursuit to spread Muggle tolerance in the Wizarding world—are slighted (see Westman, 2002). Notwithstanding some ill treatment to house-elves as well as some prejudices against Muggles and Muggle-born wizards and witches from Death Eaters and their sympathizers, Tom Riddle, Voldemort's birth name and manifestation in the second book of the series, makes it clear to Harry that his intention in the second war is revenge: "Haven't I already told you that killing Mudbloods doesn't matter to me anymore? For many months now, my new target has been – *you*" (Rowling, 1998, p. 312). Similarly, Harry's quest to defeat Voldemort was not to right racial or economic or other inequalities but to right the injustice that brought Harry to want to fight Voldemort in the first place, the injustice of that fact that, as Harry puts it succinctly to Dumbledore (and others in more places than one), "He killed my mum and dad!" (Rowling, 2005, p. 511). Harry's persistent fixation on his private 'loss' as irrefutable, factual evidence of Voldemort's terror creates a point of identification for readers that shores up a patriotic and national identity as unifying a collection of persons on the basis of familial longing that is assumed to be biologically inherent,[23] while covering over the complex operations of race, gender, and class.

What this analysis suggests is that the orphan with requited love for his or her parents figures as the 'perfect' melancholic patriotic citizen-subject whose unruly orphanhood is tempered by answering the call to preemptive arms for the nation. If an orphan is a figure who has lost, detached, and/or alienated from a parental figure, a home, a past, and a nation, Harry Potter is reattached to his (lost) world throughout the series. By reenacting his father's abilities and reiterating his mother's sacrifice, Harry's 'sacrifice' is not only a reciprocal exhibition of familial love, but also an authentically genetic simulation of maternally approved service for the 'renewal' of the paternal nation. By effacing Harry's orphanhood through positioning him as a son, his actions as a simulation of his mother's sacrifice are author(iz)ed by his

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[23] See Michel Foucault's (1997) account of how national identity is constructed in biological-type terms, especially 239-64.

absent father-figure and by the State. Indeed, important to the melancholic patriotic citizen-subject's answer to post-9/11 service is the public image of a sympathetic and proud mother who accepts the necessity assumed in the call to service that "justif[ies] the death of her child, should that occur" (Slattery & Garner, 2007, p. 441). By avenging fatherly 'loss' and by acting as the father would have, the mother's son attempts to recover and compensate for an irretrievable loss of familial and institutional intimacy and find meaning as a son/daughter of the State. To resist the fixation on 'loss' is also to oppose the very (re)founding of national identity on the dead bodies and ruins of 9/11 that have become revived and restituted through predetermined individualized acts of love to the nation-state.

The Reception of Harry Potter as Therapeutic

In sum, Harry is not a character who mourns by thinking, engaging, and openly contending with the pain of being orphaned. Harry's melancholia is made possible by reattaching him to the institution, thereby effacing his orphanhood. Disguised as a rebel, Harry becomes the hero of the War on Terror by constructing, actualizing, and defeating the threat that demanded his 'rebellion.' Thus readings of Harry as a post-9/11 figure are fitting because of his melancholic affection for a particular event of 'loss.' To discern the rhetorical force of attributing therapeutic value in effacing orphanhood through melancholia, I will conclude with an examination of the arguments about the alleged importance for young subjects to read the *Harry Potter* series.

The concern about the appropriateness of the series' content or its status as a "classic" or its allegorical quality points to the more fundamental question of whether it is possible to make readers, particularly younger ones, into productive, healthy citizen-subjects. In fact, many of the articles printed in *Readings on J.K. Rowling* from familiar writers, like Harold Bloom, Judy Blume, and William Safire (see Wiener, 2004), are centered not simply on the controversies about the content in *Harry Potter*, but on the instructive value of reading the series.

In their essay pointedly entitled "Controversial Content in Children's Literature: Is *Harry Potter* Harmful to Children?" Deborah Taub and Heather Servaty (2003), for

example, advocate that, on the issue of appropriateness of death in the series, readers are presented with a "realistic" version of coping with grief in "the safer context of books" (Taub and Servaty, 2003, p. 68). They reason that the series is appropriate for children because a melancholic Harry grieves his parents by magically maintaining and cultivating a relationship with them. They write:

> Although Harry cannot grieve actual, physical relationships with his parents, he can and does grieve the relationships he was never able to establish with them.
>
> Related to this idea is the continuing relationship Harry *is* able to maintain with his deceased parents. Harry makes frequent references to his parents and actually interacts with them… Although these are instances when magical forces allowed Harry to have contact with his parents, his relationships with his deceased parents are examples of "continuing bonds," an emerging and strengthening concept within the grief and bereavement literature (Taub and Servaty, 2003, pp. 65-67).

For Taub and Servaty, *Harry Potter* is instructive for its child and young adult readers precisely because they will learn to passionately hold onto the imagined dead parent. Reading *Harry Potter* provides a "safer" place that enables readers to (re)inhabit a patriotic melancholic subject-position and to reaffirm that familial and institutional intimacy will not be lost after 9/11 or after a future loss.

According to advocates of the productive capacity of *Harry Potter*, not only does reading *Harry Potter* offer a "safer" place to (re)enact melancholia, but, like other media, it effects a separation between violence and morality. In order to learn about children's contemporary relationship to technology (in *Harry Potter*, technology is represented as magic and vice versa) and, hence, forge a better understanding of children, Peter Appelbaum (2003) proclaims that educators and parents "need" to read *Harry Potter*. Appelbaum explains that, as is evident from his conversations with child readers, they "can easily separate these violent events from the moral contexts in which they take place" (Appelbaum, 2003, p. 33). He goes on to reason that this separation between violence and morality

occurs in *Harry Potter* (and other texts and media) because another disconnection takes place at the level of its readers: "In the end, as I talk with and work with children, my own evidence is that they are genuinely living an independent trajectory" (Appelbaum, 2003, p. 34). According to Appelbaum, *Harry Potter* will help put the estranged child reader back on track and governable (again). Appelbaum contends that the child "must save the world even as the clueless adults sit idly by, paralyzed by the threats that they themselves have unleashed" (Appelbaum, 2003, p. 31). While Appelbaum argues that reading *Harry Potter* is a Foucauldian-esque technology of the self, his bid to educators and parents to read the series enunciates an anxiety about how agency seems to be inhibited to the point that only children, who are not strictly speaking, yet citizens, can act in ways that adults cannot. In other words, *Harry Potter* teaches its young readers that, not only has a loss seemed to have taken place and accepted as so (that is, the adults are now "clueless" and "paralyzed"), but also the course of action is in their hands if only they work against their own estrangement and orphanhood.

To attribute therapeutic (and allegorical) value to the *Harry Potter* series in these ways is to say more about the interests of authoritarian adults to have readers fulfill what Miller (1993) calls their "ethical incompleteness" through texts than about the series' critical or political intentions and goals. In a period in which the future anterior positions subjects to live as if agency has been radically inhibited because of (in)security, the therapeutic value assigned to *Harry Potter* suggests that the series has the productive capacity to relieve readers, especially young adults, of political responsibility for the violence made possible by the War on Terror. The series has, in reality, reconfigured the violence in our actions for 9/11 as an expression of familial love and as an apolitical or depoliticized necessity consequent on the much 'needed' enlargement of state protection. *Harry Potter* confirms to parents and teachers concerned about a future attack that the family, the institution, and tradition will survive in a post-9/11 world in spite of unruly and undomesticated orphans. The defense of *Harry Potter* taken up by parents and teachers does not come out of any cultural moralism against censorship, religious extremism, and protection of children's rights. The desire to embrace therapeutic effects

to *Harry Potter* illustrates that post-9/11 citizen-subjects want to precisely *not* overcome parental, institutional, and generational loss, but instead to remain resolutely attached to this loss and continue to structure our social and political actions around it. *Harry Potter* offers a fantastic and speculative image of the future that other post-9/11 texts do not—a promise fulfilled, "mourning" by way of preventing a future loss, an act of vengeance completed, a social and political world without cultural contradictions and tensions recovered, a 'new' family remade.

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